GANDHI AND THE PROBLEM
OF INDIAN UNITY,
1944 – 48.

A thesis
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of the requirements for the Degree
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in the
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Kevin Luke Daley

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### ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>A.I.C.C.</td>
<td>All-India Congress Committee</td>
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<td>H.M.G.</td>
<td>His Majesty's Government</td>
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<td>I.C.S.</td>
<td>Indian Civil Service</td>
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<td>N.W.F.P.</td>
<td>North-West Frontier Province</td>
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The last four years of Gandhi's life saw the end of British rule in India and the emergence of the sovereign states of India and Pakistan. This thesis examines Gandhi's political progress during the period. It provides an account of how and why it came about that the independence of India was accompanied by partition.

As late as 1946, the partition of India seemed an unlikely prospect: the British preferred a unitary India, Congress was committed on principle to Indian unity, and the Muslim League leaders intended to use their demand for "Pakistan" as a means of securing separate representation for Indian Muslims in an all-India Union. However, while partition seemed unlikely, independence was known to be imminent: from mid-1945, H.M.G. was increasingly determined to effect a rapid transfer of power.

The central argument of this study is that Gandhi played an important role in determining the outcome of Indian independence. At a profound level, the spirit of Gandhianism had long informed the Indian political culture within which the independence debate took place. In the period 1944 to 1948, the impact of Gandhianism contributed to the rise of sentiments which eventually compromised Indian unity. Furthermore, changing political conditions during this turbulent period often brought Gandhi to the front rank of the Congress leadership. On such occasions, fired by the Gandhian vision of an idealized future Indian society, his was a voice raised in consistent opposition to proposals likely to promote an equal, or nearly equal, distribution of power between Congress and the League at the Centre. Moreover, Gandhi's enthusiasm in this respect impelled him to attempt to subvert British intermediary
efforts when, from time to time, such efforts appeared likely to succeed in reconstructing the power structure so as to accommodate the essence of the demands of the Muslim political separatists.

By early 1947, in the absence of a power-sharing arrangement, the only alternative was partition: H.M.G. had placed a time limit on the Raj, and communalist forces were so aroused at the social level as to require that independence be informed by some form of Muslim separatism. This thesis contends that the Congress leaders settled upon partition as the preferred form of separatism to be implemented in the independence scheme. It analyzes the nature of Gandhi's eventual acquiescence to the Congress leaders' decision for partition, and examines the Mahatma's militant response to the reality of Pakistan.
INDIA 1945-6

The representations of boundaries are reproduced from the map in the "India Office List, 1940," prepared by the Edinburgh Geographical Institute and printed by John Bartholomew and Son Ltd. They are not necessarily authoritative.

British India

Indian States and Territories

Scale Miles

[ T.P., Vol. VI ]
INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the part played by Gandhi in Indian politics from his release from prison on 6 May 1944 to his death by assassination on 30 January 1948. It is an analysis of Gandhi's efforts to shape India's progress towards independence, and to deal with the growing possibility of a division of the country along communal lines.

There is an immense body of literature on the subject of the coming of independence in India, about the events which took place there and about the people who took part in the drama. Gandhi figures in most of the accounts, but more often as a marginal character - a politician on the sidelines, proposing schemes which fail to gain acceptance - not as an actor playing a central constructive role. This is especially the case in regard to the last twelve months of the Raj: in practically all accounts of the period from September 1946 to August 1947, Gandhi is relegated - so to speak - to the footnotes of the text. Increasingly, so it seems, as the independence of India approached, Gandhi played an ever more marginal role.

On the surface there are obvious reasons for this perception of Gandhi: he held no official position in an India rapidly acquiring sovereignty; the new India failed both to model itself on Gandhian values or to reflect Gandhian characteristics; and the Mahatma was dead within six months of independence. For those searching more deeply for an explanation, this initial perception can be readily reinforced: Gandhi's advice to the British and to his own Congress colleagues on how to proceed with the transfer of power was rarely accepted and acted upon.
This thesis will argue that this perception needs qualifying: that, indeed, at times and in certain ways, Gandhi significantly contributed to the political process determining the shape of Indian independence. While it is true that Gandhi's proclaimed views on how the transfer of power should take place were not adopted, the Mahatma's public pronouncements sometimes placed limits on the constitutional options which the power brokers were willing to put on the agenda at the all-India level. For, during this period, Gandhi was a symbolically important figure within the Indian nationalist movement; the Mahatma's acquiescence to political arrangements was an important source of legitimation - important for the British, as well as for the Congress leadership. Repeatedly summoned to take counsel with the British and Congress power brokers, Gandhi was able to influence the process by which a scheme for independence was finally agreed upon. Narrowing the focus somewhat, it will be argued that the Mahatma played a significant role in torpedoing Jinnah's project of engineering a British guaranteed power-sharing arrangement between Congress and the League at the Centre.

The political situation aside, the Mahatma's final years probably merit attention for their own sake. While Gandhi's activities during most periods of his life can be rationalized when seen through the prism of his political interests, he himself often held that politics were not his ultimate concern - that religious, moral and social uplift concerns provided the rationale for his activities. His claim deserves investigation. This thesis, while not setting out to provide a comprehensive analysis of Gandhi's priorities in this respect, is nevertheless in part a study of Gandhi's personality.
In his two volumes of *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase* published in 1956 and 1958, Pyarelal has, in a sense, 'covered the period'. From his viewpoint as Gandhi's secretary, Pyarelal has provided a detailed narrative of Gandhi's activities along with an intimate analysis of the Mahatma's relationship with the Congress establishment. However, in assessing Gandhi's impact on the political scene, Pyarelal was at some disadvantage. Gandhi's principal source of power during this period at the all-India level was the Imperial summons: it was the British party to the transfer of power which repeatedly called the Mahatma back to the political centre-stage. Between 1970 and 1983, long after Pyarelal's book had been published, Her Majesty's Stationery Office published the twelve volumes of *The Transfer of Power 1942-7*, edited by P.N.S. Mansergh, E.W.R. Lumby and Sir Penderel Moon. This thesis relies heavily on that source. Nor did Pyarelal have access to *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, edited by Sir Penderel Moon and published in 1973, which provides very useful insight into Gandhi's political function at the all-India level as seen through the eyes of the Viceroy. And while Pyarelal undoubtedly had access to most of the material published between 1979 and 1983 in the eleven volumes (77 to 87) of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, he does not appear to have had all of it at hand as he wrote. In any case, an account of the master's progress by a disciple inevitably has a deferential (perhaps even a devotional) flavour. At the same time, it must be said that in Pyarelal's case - judging from his frequent use of emphasis in the script - his account is not so much a paean to his guru as a protest at the interpretation of Gandhi which has attributed to him qualities which accord with the Western Christian pacifist
model, an interpretation which apparently fits ill with his memory of the militant Mahatma.

Judith Brown, in her two books *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915 - 1922* and *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: the Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928 - 34*, published in 1972 and 1977 respectively, has rewritten the history of the Gandhian phenomenon in Indian politics. She has addressed the Mahatma's most active periods on the Indian political stage. But she has not revised the established interpretation of Gandhi's activities during the period on which this thesis is focused - not yet, anyway. The opportunity beckons; the present writer is emboldened to attempt the exercise.

Others have gone before. In 1974 Murray R. Ryburn submitted a thesis entitled "Mahatma Gandhi: 1922 - 1928" as part of his Masters Degree at the University of Canterbury. Ten years later, at the same university, Brett Clark followed suit with a thesis entitled "Mahatma Gandhi in Indian Politics: August 1934 - December 1939". Both theses dealt with periods during which Gandhi is popularly perceived as having been relatively inactive - and, by implication, relatively unimportant - in Indian politics; both writers reexamined the historical evidence supposedly underlying such a view. This thesis completes the trilogy.

One other work perhaps deserves mention at this point: Sandhya Chaudhri's *Gandhi and the Partition of India*. Except for the last five months of Gandhi's life, the time span covered by Dr. Chaudhri - 1937 to 1947 - includes most of the period studied by the present writer. However, despite the parallel in time, duplication of analysis has not, apparently, taken place. In
setting the tone of her dissertation, Dr. Chaudhri maintains in her preface:

The Congress leadership, in spite of their strong commitment to the idea of a united India, could not prevent the partition of the country. Gandhi, who averred repeatedly that he would never agree to the vivisection of India, had to witness the tragic scene of partition smeared with bloodshed and unprecedented violence.¹

Such an explanation is far removed from the central finding of this thesis; the present writer holds that the Congress establishment engineered the partition of British India, and that Gandhi played a part in support of the project.

The credibility of the present writer's claim of Congress responsibility for the partition of India relies heavily on the revision of the role played by Jinnah in the period under study. In the established explanation of India's partition, Jinnah is portrayed as the leading protagonist, even the villain of the piece - a view in many ways reaffirmed as recently as 1984 by Stanley Wolpert in his Jinnah of Pakistan. However, Ayesha Jalal disagrees with this view. In her superbly written - though, some might say, rather cynical - book, The Sole Spokesman published in 1985, Jinnah is seen as wanting the British to engineer a political arrangement in which power at the Centre would be shared equally by the Congress and the League, a division of the political structure of a united India which secured for the representatives of the Muslims of India a half share of central state power in an India rapidly acquiring sovereignty. In Jalal's view, to achieve this end Jinnah needed to block progress towards Indian independence, by expressing at the all-India level the

desire of Indian Muslims for a separate political identity which would rescue them from the promised collective humiliation of political domination by India's Hindu majority community; he had to work against the historic Congress claim to the subcontinent on the basis of its identity with secular Indian nationalism. Two potential perils attended Jinnah's strategy. On the one hand, if Indian Muslims could not be aroused at the mass level to press for a separatist deal, Jinnah's demands might well be ignored by the British. Alternatively, if Congress should decide to lower its sights and to settle for a contracted India shorn of its Muslim majority areas, the impasse brought about by Jinnah would be transformed as the force of an aroused Indian Muslim separatism was released, to be channelled by the British into the mould of an Indian Muslim state. In Jalal's analysis, the territorial partition of India was a measure of Jinnah's failure to perform his political balancing act at the Centre.

It is necessary to remember that the partition of the subcontinent also signalled the failure of another Indian leader's plans: from the time the Muslim separatist proposal had been first mooted, Gandhi had opposed the "vivisection" of India. The cause of the perplexity of the Mahatma in finding himself written into an Indian independence script which owed so little to Gandhian ideals has provided the inspiration for the title of this thesis. The problem of Indian unity dogged the steps of the Mahatma as he made his way through the labyrinth of Indian politics during the last four years of his life. The confessional divisions within Indian society had long been a spectre in Gandhi's political consciousness. The Mahatma's anxiety in this respect was understandable: no Indian leader had done as much as
Gandhi in bringing religious considerations to bear in his efforts to discover ways of mobilizing the Indian masses for the cause of Indian nationalism. The period of this study were years of bitter harvest for Gandhi. And thirty nine years after the Mahatma's death at the hands of a Hindu communal enthusiast, the subcontinent still rings to the communal clash of arms.

The present writer has not had privileged access to any unpublished material. He has, however, been able to benefit from the British Government's decision in 1966 to relax to thirty years the previous fifty year rule barring access to official archives. Sardar Patel's Correspondence, edited by Durga Das (published rather belatedly in 1972) has also been available for use. Otherwise, a wide range of earlier publications has been employed. These include Gandhi's Delhi Diary (1948); Alan Campbell-Johnson's Mission with Mountbatten (1951); V. P. Menon's The Transfer of Power in India (1957); Abul Kalam Azad's India Wins Freedom (1959); H. V. Hodson's The Great Divide (1969); R. J. Moore's Escape from Empire (1983); The Indian National Movement 1885-1947: Select Documents edited by B. N. Pandey (1979); and Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents, 1906-1947 edited by Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (1970). Newspapers of the period have also been consulted (sometimes on microfilm): The Times of London, the Statesman of Calcutta, the Bombay Chronicle, and Harijan of Ahmedabad to name the more notable.

The story opens in mid-1944 with the Mahatma in prison, the legacy of his activities during the early years of the war. Then, in the context of the Cripps Offer of a post-war transfer of power, Gandhi had given evidence of what was his preferred pathway to Indian independence: that Jinnah be denied his demand that the
representatives of Indian Muslims receive a share - some Muslims hoped for a structurally guaranteed half share - of central state power, and that the British be driven to retire in confusion from India. Gandhi wanted Congress to inherit the rule of the subcontinent along with the freedom to sort out the problems of Indian society according to its own lights. To the very end of the formative period of India's progress towards independence - up to mid-June 1947 - the Mahatma remained constant to these aims, the rationale arising from them informing his behaviour. This thesis shows how Gandhi went about this task. It reports on what he did, with whom he chose to associate, and on the nature of his attempts to influence the flow of events.

In the course of his research, the present writer has found that the nature of the guest imposes certain constraints. To bring coherence to this dissertation, the author has organized his material in a chronological, sequential order. The actions of an individual provide the main subject - Gandhi's progress through the maze of Indian politics. The thesis which emerges is an example of the descriptive mode of historical writing in which analysis, to a considerable extent, is implicit in the narrative. The present writer offers no paradigmatic model against which to analyse his subject; instead, analysis, argument and theme arise from the descriptive base. The reader is invited to consider the complexity of the central character, the fluid nature of the perception of interests informing the Mahatma's actions. The Gandhian phenomenon was an ongoing search for truth, not the

2 For a discussion on the merits of this method of historical writing, see Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History": Past and Present, No. 85, November 1979, pp. 3-24.
application of an established verity. In tracing the Gandhian political trajectory, the present writer has had to remain adaptable to the many changes of course. The elasticity of the narrative mode recommended itself.

* * *

Gandhi's objectives were hardly modest: the principle of separate representation for Muslims had been written into the Indian constitutional script during the earlier stages of political reform (in the Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935). Furthermore, during the early years of the Second World War the British Government had given assurances that Indian minorities would not be forced to accept a system of government fashioned by the dominant nationalist political elements. Though the British - especially on the Labour side of the political spectrum - were anxious to be rid of their Imperial entanglements in India, commitment to constitutional form was strong in British official circles, constitutionalism providing the principle measure of legitimacy in British politics. Nevertheless, there was room for manoeuvre in dealing with the Raj - as Gandhi knew from long experience. There were British leaders whose empathy with Indian nationalists made them open to persuasion, there were others who could be deceived, and still others who were vulnerable to moral blackmail; the Mahatma had resources to draw on in his relations with all three types. But in 1944 the situation did not look promising: their respective past performances on matters Indian suggested that it was unlikely that Churchill, Attlee, Amery and
Wavell would prove receptive to the usual Gandhian avenues of approach.

Conditions in the Indian Muslim separatist camp did not look any more favourable for the realization of Gandhian political objectives. Jinnah was an embittered opponent of Gandhi from the days of the Mahatma's first arrival (in 1920) in the front rank of the nationalist leadership. The political stature of the Muslim League had risen to an unprecedented level since 1939, brought about by the combination of a rising Muslim separatist consciousness and British encouragement of political elements likely to act as a counterweight to a Congress which had steadily adopted ever more anti-Imperial policies as the tide of war - up to the end of 1942 - had gone against Britain. And within the Indian Muslim community, in a more amorphous way, there was rising evidence of political material stirring into life which was alien to both the reformed Hindu and liberal Western aspects of the Gandhian political message. At the very least, it was an open question whether the integrity of the foundational Gandhian political claim - that the Mahatma was striving for the political interests of all Indian groups - could be sustained in the face of the Muslim separatist challenge.

If, by 1944, there were grounds for doubting Gandhi's ability to make profitable contact both with significant elements of the British power structure and a significant segment of Indian society, it was also uncertain whether the Mahatma would be likely to resume a leading role in Congress. Traditionally, the Mahatma had been periodically summoned by the Congress establishment to perform on the adversarial interface of British - Indian relations: in late 1939 it had been deemed appropriate for the
Congress to issue such a call. However, by 1944 it was evident that Britain would be counted amongst the victors of the global war. For Gandhi - indeed, for Congress as a whole - this was an uncomfortable development: the circumstances of the early years of the war, combined with the misreading by Gandhi - along with others - of what appeared to be Britain's inexorable progress towards defeat, had by 1942 led sufficient Congressmen to commit the party to an anti-Imperial agitational campaign. But by 1944, the changing tide of war had rendered an anti-British policy, certainly one focused on world events, practically - and, in the Hindu cultural context, perhaps even morally - obsolete. By 1944, it was time for a change in direction in Congress policy towards the British. This in itself posed no great difficulty: in the Indian political milieu, sudden and fundamental changes of course could be readily - even gracefully - executed. Of course, the myths of Empire - loyal martial races, shared values, a common destiny and the like - had taken a battering: British memory of Indian nationalist activities in the early years of the war would remain in the minds of many to bedevil British-Indian relations; there would be scepticism, if nothing else. Furthermore, it would take time for the more concrete aspects of the wartime anti-Imperial legacy to work their way out of British-Indian political relations; more importantly, the imprisonment of the Congress leadership, the text of Congress resolutions of 1942, and the existence of upwards of twenty thousand Indian National Army personnel in South-East Asia - whose activities Indian nationalists at large had lauded - collaborating alongside the Japanese Army. With Gandhi active in the forefront of the Congress leadership, the pendulum of Congress policy had been
swung in an anti-Imperial direction about as far as it could have gone. By 1944 it was apparent that this was much further than could be justified in terms of serving Congress interests. The further progress of the nationalist movement could realistically be found only in an accommodationist direction. The logic of the situation in 1944 was stacked against the prospect of the Congress establishment turning to the Mahatma for leadership.

A tactical variable remained: the order of release of the nationalist leaders from the Raj's prisons might give some leaders a head start over others in the race to reassert their authority over the nationalist movement. The liberal humanitarian self-image of the British ruling class (often enough in accord with the personal instincts of many of its members) had given rise to the policy of suspending or even cancelling sentences or detention orders on the grounds of ill health for those in state confinement, should the physical condition of the prisoners in question appear to warrant it. Gandhi - the health fanatic, the willing object of an ever-tightening dietary formula - was very much in his element so far as this aspect (and, indeed, many other aspects) of the British way of doing things was concerned. Familiar with the interior of British Imperial jails from the Transvaal to Bihar, in fifty years of active political resistance to the Imperial status quo he had had a lot of practice. Outside the prison walls, his supporters (indeed, by 1944, the general public) knew the Gandhian release routine - along with their part in it. After a false start in early 1943 (the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, having been unmoved by both the execution and the effect of a three week fast by the Mahatma), there were
indications in early 1944 - a new Viceroy, Lord Wavell, having assumed office in October 1943 - of fresh stirrings.
CHAPTER ONE

May 1944 - June 1945

No student of Islam can but be struck by the violent contrast the Quran presents between the believers and their opponents.... Perhaps in no other religious system has the power of antagonism toward adversaries been so successfully harnessed in the cause of communal solidarity as in Islam.1 Gopal Krishna, 1972.

I had realized early enough in South Africa that there was no genuine friendship between the Hindus and the Musalmans .... [My] South African experiences ... convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu - Muslim unity that my Ahimsa would be put to its severest test.2 M.K. Gandhi, 1927.

[Political mobilization which appealed to sacred symbols ... was necessarily separative in its effects.]3 Satish Saberwal, 1985.

Gandhi Unbound: The Mahatma's Return to Indian Politics

On 6 May 1944 Gandhi was unconditionally released from state custody. This ended the period of his absence from the Indian nationalist political arena dating from 9 August 1942, when the British had detained most of the Congress leaders as part of their effort to suppress the "Quit India" initiative.

Lord Wavell had consented to the aged Mahatma's release in view of a sudden deterioration in the prisoner's health, beginning

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3Satish Saberwal, "Elements of Communalism"; D.N. Panigrahi (editor), Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India, New Delhi, Vikas, 1985, p.216.
with a mid-April bout of malaria. The Bombay Surgeon — General had confirmed the judgement of Dr. B.C. Roy, a leading Calcutta physician of "known nationalist proclivities,"⁴ that Gandhi's condition had become critical. This had raised the apprehension in high official circles that Gandhi's death might occur under circumstances offering scope to hostile political elements who could broadcast calumnies about his treatment at the hands of the Raj. The British had been encourage to think along these lines partly, at least, by promptings from certain Indian sources. Indeed, the Mahatma's more prominent supporters at large, particularly in the Indian merchant community, had supplied a steady stream of material for the nationalist press, alerting the authorities to "the risk ... [of] continuing to keep him under detention."⁵ On 5 May a telegram from the President of the Bombay Stock Exchange had drawn to the Viceroy's attention the "country-wide concern about Gandhiji's health", and advised his "immediate unconditional release."⁶ But it was probably the belief that Gandhi's physical decline would be likely to constrain him from playing a future active political role which decided His Majesty's Government (hereafter H.M.G.) in approving such a move. This at least was the line taken by Sir Evan Jenkins, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, in recommending the Mahatma's release: Gandhi, he said, was "never likely to be [an] active factor in politics again."⁷ Wavell had had his doubts on this score, being somewhat

⁵Press Statement by Pranlal Devkaran Nanjee, President of the Indian Merchants Chamber; cited in Bombay Chronicle, 4 May 1944, p.2, c.4.
⁶Bombay Chronicle, 5 May 1944, p.1, c.1.
⁷Wavell to Amery, 4 May 1944; T.P., Vol IV, p.949.
sceptical of the medical opinions, but had still consented to Gandhi's release.\(^8\)

This was a development which attracted international attention. With Britain's war effort heavily dependent on assistance from the United States, the American perspective on British-Indian affairs needed to be taken into account by H.M.G. when deciding on Imperial policy. However, if the editorial comment of New York's *World Telegram* on 6 May was a fair indication of American attitudes to the turn of events, H.M.G. had little cause for concern that the affairs of the Raj would seriously affect Anglo-American wartime solidarity.

Britain was justified in jailing the Mahatma on the ground that with the Japs advancing in Burma he might lead nationalists in welcoming the invaders .... Gandhi said some silly things and did some dangerous things but he was fighting for Indian freedom - not to be a Jap puppet.\(^9\)

* * *

Upon release, Gandhi moved from the Aga Khan Palace, where he had been held, to the nearby city of Poona. On 11 May he travelled down to Bombay where he took up residence in a cottage near the sea front at Juhu. Though he occasionally put in an appearance at public prayers, his main interest at this stage was absorbed in attending to the details and assessing the progress of his convalescence. Within a week of his arrival at Juhu, his


health had improved sufficiently to enable him to be driven on a
tour of inspection of an area of the Bombay docks which had been
devastated some weeks before by a munitions explosion and
resulting fire. ¹⁰ So by 23 May, Wavell was able to report to
Leopold Amery, the Secretary of State for India and for Burma
(1940 - 45), that "Gandhi seems now certainly on the mend,"¹¹ if
not as "dangerously well" as Amery had previously indicated he
feared he might become.¹²

For the first month following his release, Gandhi did little
to substantiate Amery's anxiety: namely, that the Mahatma might
attempt to initiate a fresh and unwelcome round of high level
constitutional consultations, ostensibly to "break the deadlock"¹³
of Indian politics. This "deadlock" had come about in the wake of
the breakdown in British-Congress relations, attendant on the
Congress "Quit India" campaign of mid-1942 and British action in
August 1942 to suppress it. At this stage, Gandhi was the only
Indian political leader likely to bring about a change in the
situation, as most of the members of the Congress High Command
remained in detention. But upon his release, the Mahatma - at
least initially - exhibited some caution towards the Raj. He had
cause to do so. With the imperatives of war confirming
Churchill's position at the helm of British affairs, the response
of the British to any political activity giving embodiment to the
Congress stance adopted in mid-1942 remained predictable - in

¹⁰For an account of the Bombay explosion, see W.L., 25 April 1944, p.67.
For an account of Gandhi's tour of the area, see D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma:
Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, New Delhi, Government of India
¹¹Wavell to Amery, 23 May 1944; T.P., Vol. IV, p.983.
¹²See Amery to Wavell, 11 May 1944; Ibid., pp.965-6.
¹³Ibid., p.965.
their adamant opposition and their willingness to enforce Imperial rule. On 20 May, in a letter to M.R. Jayakar, a leading lawyer and Liberal politician, Gandhi gave his view of the factors which were constraining his political performance.

The country expects much from me. I do not know how you feel about this release. I am not at all happy.... I feel that they will imprison me as soon as I am declared free from the present weakness. And, if they do not arrest me, what can I do? I cannot withdraw the August [1942 "Quit India"] resolution.14

A garbled account of the contents of Gandhi's communication was leaked to the press, making politic Jayakar's release for publication on 1 June of the full text. Amery took comfort from this exposition of the politically "ineffective existence"15 of India's foremost nationalist leader at large. In assessing Gandhi's impact on the Indian political scene since his release, Amery offered Wavell his opinion that "it is beginning to look increasingly as if it isn't going to matter much what he does say or do, and after a while I dare say interest in him will flag."16

It was apparent that Amery's new found optimism was based on his expectations of Gandhi's future political irrelevance, as much as on his continuing ill-health. There were some good reasons for this. The political environment in which Gandhi had originally risen to power in the nationalist movement, and over which he had held sway for a quarter of a century, had fundamentally changed. The traditional Indian political dichotomy between the Imperial status quo, as represented by the Raj, and the nascent forces of

16Ibid.
Indian nationalism, as represented by Congress, had by 1944 been made obsolescent. Since the outbreak of war in 1939 a triangular political situation had developed, with the arrival of a third force on the Indian political scene: the movement among Indian Muslims for a separate political identity in any independence scheme. From 1940 onwards, this movement had increasingly coalesced into an identifiable political force, centred on the rallying cry - if not the coherent political programme - of the demand for "Pakistan". If Gandhi was to resume playing a leading role at the all-India level, it was apparent that he would first need to adjust his style to meet the new requirements. He would need to join in debate with Indian Muslim leaders on their claims to a separate political existence, as well as address the familiar issues arising on the British-Indian constitutional front.

On 9 June an outline of the triangular political balance was provided for the Mahatma in a letter from Homy P. Mody, a Bombay industrialist and erstwhile member of the Viceroy's Executive Council (1941-3).

[T]he issue seems to lie between acceptance of the Muslim demand, and determination to uphold the political integrity of India even at the cost of an indefinite postponement of swaraj... [In these circumstances] there is an increasing number of people who feel that nothing is to be gained by postponing a Hindu-Muslim settlement.\textsuperscript{17}

In his reply to Mody a few days later, Gandhi accepted that Indian politics had reached an impasse. But he did not attribute this condition primarily - or even at all - to political issues which had arisen as a result of Muslim separatist claims.

\begin{quote}
I feel that I know the way out but I am helpless not merely because I am ill, but principally
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17}Mody to Gandhi, 9 June 1944; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 77, p.314, n.1.
because the censorship tightens round me like the coil of a snake. I am taxing God to show me how to disengage myself from the coil. I shall take no hasty step. Before I take any step, I shall certainly correspond with H.E. the Viceroy.

As to communal unity, I am wedded to it. All I can say is that I shall leave no stone unturned to make my contribution towards a just solution.\textsuperscript{18}

It was evident, as late as mid-June 1944, that Gandhi still perceived the spirit of British intransigence, operating through the instruments of state power, to be the principal obstacle to the further progress of the Indian nationalist cause. In his mind, the issues generated by the development of the Muslim separatist movement were still to be addressed in terms of efforts to achieve communal harmony at the social level, not in power-sharing formulas aimed at bringing to pass Hindu-Muslim cooperation at the all-India political level.

* * *

On 15 June Gandhi travelled from Juhu to Poona where he took up residence at Dr. Dinshah Mehta's Nature Cure Clinic. Two days later, he began his efforts to re-enter the all-India political arena. As he had promised Mody, his first move was to write to Wavell. There was a symbolism expressing continuity in this action: the day before his arrest in August 1942 he had announced his intention to communicate first with the Viceroy before launching the agitational campaign authorized by the All-India Congress Committee's "Quit India" resolution.

\textsuperscript{18}Gandhi to Mody, 12/13 June 1944; ibid., p.314.
In his letter to the Viceroy, Gandhi raised an issue which he had repeatedly raised when in prison\textsuperscript{19}: he pleaded for permission to meet with the Congress Working Committee detainees. He also angled for an invitation to meet the Viceroy, expressing his willingness to "gladly go wherever you want me to"\textsuperscript{20} should Wavell summon him. He went on to request that his correspondence with the state authorities, conducted during his detention, be published in the press - this being something for which he had already indirectly made arrangements to put in train\textsuperscript{21}. These tactical manoeuvres aside, the current theme of his heavy responsibilities, the general expectation for him to perform, and, perhaps, his uncertainty of how to proceed, was given resonance early in his letter.

Though there is little cause for it, the whole country and even many from outside expect me to make some decisive contribution to the general good.\textsuperscript{22}

In his reply of 22 June, Wavell declined Gandhi's requests. This was in keeping with Churchill's instruction, which Amery had privately communicated to Wavell\textsuperscript{23} after giving official clearance for Gandhi's release,\textsuperscript{24} that "there will be no negotiations between ... [Gandhi] and the Viceroy."\textsuperscript{25} So Wavell, appropriately, justified the negative tone and substance of his reply on the grounds of Gandhi's unrepentant adherence to

\textsuperscript{19}See Gandhi to Wavell, 9 March 1944; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. IV, p.792. Gandhi had earlier addressed similar requests to the previous Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow (1936-43).
\textsuperscript{20}Gandhi to Wavell, 17 June 1944; ibid., p.1032.
\textsuperscript{21}For Wavell's reaction to Gandhi's "impudence" in this matter, see Wavell to Amery, 20 June 1944; ibid., pp.1035-6.
\textsuperscript{22}Gandhi to Wavell, 17 June 1944; ibid., p.1032.
\textsuperscript{23}See Amery to Wavell, 4 May 1944; ibid., p.952.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p.951.
\textsuperscript{25}Churchill to Amery and Bridges, 4 May 1944; ibid., p.951.
the Quit India resolution, which I am afraid I do not regard as a reasonable or practical policy.... If after your convalescence and on further reflection you have a definite and constructive policy to propose ... I shall be glad to consider it.26

Behind this curt dismissal lay a certain personal lack of esteem for the Mahatma on the part of the Viceroy. As Commander-in-Chief (India) during the 1942 "Quit India" campaign, it had fallen to Wavell to conduct the military operations to assist the civil arm in maintaining internal security, in the face of widespread disturbances inspired - if not, perhaps, guided - by Congress. Gandhi had been the foremost Congress leader in initiating the anti-Imperial campaign, which had occurred at the nadir of Britain's prospects of victory in the war against the Axis Powers. This experience had helped shape in Wavell's mind a perception of Gandhi as essentially anti-British in his political orientation, sheltering behind an insincere moralist front so as to advantage his constitutional bargaining position. Nor had the Mahatma's more recent moves - to escape the constraints of the censorship ordinances - done anything to modify the unfavourable attitude the Viceroy harboured towards him. On 19 June Wavell recorded in his diary his opinion of the frame of mind to which, he felt, Gandhi's recently published correspondence was a pointer.

[I]t seems ... to show him as verbose, petty-minded, and quite devoid of any constructive statesmanship, bent only on his own self-justification.27

For Gandhi, the Viceroy's negative reply confirmed just how much of an incubus - moral, as well as tactical - his close

26 Wavell to Gandhi, 22 June 1944; ibid., p.1040.
27 W.J., 19 June 1944, p.75.
association with the "Quit India" Congress stance was in his endeavours to re-enter politics at the all-India level. The basic purpose of the Hindu way of life, it can be argued, was to shape one's lifestyle so as to be in alignment with manifestation of the cosmic forces governing the movement of the universe. Such a purpose gave rise to an intelligence constantly on the lookout for "signs of the times", and a frame of mind with an inbuilt anxiety to move into accord with them. In 1942, with the British apparently losing the war, it had been appropriate - perhaps even morally imperative - to adopt a confrontational attitude towards the Raj. But by mid-1944, with the media hailing the recent capture of Rome and the successful landings in Normandy, it had become clear that the British had made their stand on the right side of history. If the British stood with the gods, it was now appropriate that they be placated.

* * *

On 29 June Gandhi made his first public speech since his release, addressed to about fifty representative Congressmen of Maharashtra assembled at the Nature Cure Clinic in Poona. He used the occasion to distance himself from the ramifications of his leadership of the "Quit India" movement. Making no reference to the rights or wrongs of the campaign, he offered instead a legalistic argument focused on the inadmissibility - according to Gandhian lore - of any move on his part to resume its progress.

I would like to make it clear that I do not meet you as a representative, in terms of the August [1942] Resolution, to conduct the civil disobedience campaign adumbrated in that resolution. In the language of satyagraha, I
ceased to occupy that status, as soon as I was jailed... I am here holding no better status in the eye of the Congress than any single one of you.28

The substance of Gandhi's speech to the Maharashtrian Congressmen was undoubtedly primarily intended for the British, it being a secondary consideration in his current priorities that the Indian public should work out its meaning and future portent. Wavell deduced from it what the Mahatma had wanted to signal to the Raj: that "at the moment he does not intend to revive any general civil disobedience movement."29 However, the meaning of his address aside, Gandhi's mere presence on a public rostrum was enough to elicit a warning growl from the British Imperial lion. Issued over Amery's head, this took the form of a direct communication from Churchill to the Viceroy.

Surely Mr Gandhi has made a most remarkable recovery as he is already able to take an active part in politics. How does this square with medical reports upon which his release on grounds of ill-health was agreed to by us? In one of these we were told that he would not be able to take any part in politics again.30

The importance apparently attached by the Prime Minister to the activities of Gandhi did not extend, however, to Indian affairs generally. The Viceroy's representations to H. M. G. concerning his principal official preoccupation - the current Bengal famine - had entirely failed to generate anything like the same level of interest. This difference exercised Wavell's mind when privately recording the event.

Winston sent me a peevish telegram to ask why Gandhi hadn't died yet! He has never answered my telegram about [a request for] food [shipments to

30Churchill to Wavell, 5 July 1944; ibid., p. 1070.
India].

On 2 July, Gandhi moved his residence from Poona to the hill station of Panchgani. From there he stepped up the momentum of his political activity. His objective, now openly pursued, was to reassure the British that he intended to initiate no activity which might impair the Allied war effort: that, indeed, he was on the Allied side. He approached this task by priming the press with signals of a conciliatory nature addressed to the British. The main act of this process was consummated on 11 July, when the Times of India published an account of an interview between Gandhi and Stuart Gelder, a British journalist working for the News Chronicle.

A new Mahatma was portrayed in explicit terms. It was one who had no intention of offering civil disobedience: that would "embarrass the British Government." His desire was for the transfer of power to a national government controlling the civil administration, leaving the Viceroy and the Commander - in - Chief in "complete control" of military operations. Gandhi fully acknowledged that Allied forces would need to have access to Indian base facilities, as otherwise, said Gandhi - hinting at a shared objective -" they cannot defeat Japan." Lest any doubt remain, Gandhi had assured Gelder that his interest in meeting with the Viceroy was based on his desire "to help and not to hinder the allies."

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31W.I., 5 July 1944, p. 78.
33Ibid., p. 256.
34Ibid.
35Ibid., p. 255.
In Gelder's account, the issues raised for Indian nationalists by Hindu - Muslim differences were dealt with by the Mahatma in a perfunctory aside. Gandhi was apparently still holding to the nationalist rationale that Muslim separatism had been induced to develop - and, by implication, could only survive - in the context of British rule: that Hindu - Muslim political divisions had derived from British Imperial tactics of government. Thus, the communal issues of Indian politics would present no barrier to progress towards self-government; if "the British meant well, there would be no difficulties."36

* * *

Since his release Gandhi had avoided directly addressing the political issues arising from Indian disunity. But, during the second week of July, an event occurred which brought the political ramifications of Indian communal separatism on to the agenda of all - India politics. Gandhi was no longer able to avoid responding to the issue.

On 10 July the publication occurred of the correspondence which had passed between Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League, and Chakravati Rajagopalachari, a prominent Congressman from Madras. Rajagopalachari had been inspired by the circumstances of the breakdown of the Cripps Mission of early 1942 to work out a formula for a possible settlement of Congress "nationalist" and Muslim League "separatist" differences, having first resigned from the Congress Working Committee in April 1942

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36 Ibid., p. 257.
when the "Quit India" initiative had first been mooted. The essence of his formula\textsuperscript{37} was that the Muslim League would co-operate with the Congress in working for independence and in a provisional national government; after the war, a commission should demarcate those contiguous districts ... where the Muslims were in a majority ... [followed by] a plebiscite for or against separation from [the rest of the subcontinent] .... In the event of partition, a mutual agreement would be entered into for ... defence, communications and commerce. These terms would be binding only if Britain finally transferred her power.\textsuperscript{38}

The spatial similarity between Rajagopalachari's projected demarcation of Indian Muslim majority areas, and the sovereign state of Pakistan which came into being in August 1947, has often been noted. But two important points of the formula, which differentiate it from the actuality of Pakistan, need to be emphasized. First, Rajagopalachari held that the creation of any separate Indian Muslim political entity would take place subsequent to, rather than prior to, British withdrawal from India. Second, this separate political entity would exist within a context of continuing subcontinental unity, as given embodiment by an all - India polity exercising the state functions of defence, communications and commerce. These considerations, especially, need to be borne in mind when recalling that, in early 1943, Gandhi had privately given Rajagopalachari's formula his basic approval.

In his correspondence with Jinnah, Rajagopalachari had disclosed Gandhi's assent to the formula. This disclosure

\textsuperscript{37}Rajagopalachari drafted his formula in early 1943; Gandhi gave the formula his approval in February 1943; the formula was first published in April 1944.

attracted Amery's attention. The Secretary of State dispatched a telegram to the Viceroy, enquiring whether there was "any clear evidence that Gandhi is committed to Rajagopalachari's propositions?" In reply, Wavell affirmed that there was such evidence, citing the Mahatma's "repeated assertions in correspondence ... [his] recent interview with Gelder, and ... [the] fact that he has not repudiated the formula". But the Viceroy offered Amery his reassurance that Muslim separatists were unlikely to be attracted into an alliance with Congress on the basis of a "Pakistan" as determined by the formula: it would be seen as deficient in its territorial extent, in its degree of autonomy, and in the fact that a British guarantee was precluded. However, Wavell believed Rajagopalachari was not acting on his own, that he was undertaking a Gandhian initiative in producing his formula, and the Viceroy thought he knew what the Mahatma intended.

[The best] view seems to be that [the] formula is a try-out and that Gandhi will adapt [his] future policy to [the] reactions aroused.

The imprisoned members of the Congress Working Committee also perceived Rajagopalachari's formula as having been brought forward as part of a Gandhian political initiative. They gave this move a mixed reception. This was not surprising, as the formula articulated Indian nationalism in terms which reflected Hindu-Muslim social separatism. For the members of a party expressly committed to a secular political future for India, any move which lent political significance to an individual's communal origins

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40 Wavell to Amery, 12 July 1944; Ibid., p. 1084.
41 Ibid., p. 1085.
was likely to be received with ambivalence. Moreover, such feelings would be generated unevenly, perhaps giving rise to divisions within Congress ranks. Hindu Congressmen would be less affected, but non-Hindu Congressmen would need to come to terms with their suddenly redefined political status as members of minority communities. Signs of such varying responses to Gandhi's initiative by his fellow Working Committee prisoners did not escape the attention of Jawaharlal Nehru.

What have been the reactions ... on me and on others here? They vary; Maulana [Abul Kalam Azad] has been feeling depressed and annoyed; others also ... are put out to some extent, though not much. Some are in the habit of accepting everything that Bapu \(^{42}\) says or does. As for me ... I have not felt any depression as I usually do when things go wrong. Perhaps it is just relief at something having been done to break up the impasse which tied us all up.\(^{43}\)

It was not surprising that the response of Azad, the Congress President (1939-46), provided Nehru with his example of the most negative reaction to Gandhi's political initiative. Azad was the most prominent Muslim in the ranks of the imprisoned Congress leadership at Ahmednagar Fort, and as such had arguably the most at stake in any development which threatened to undermine the party's received non-communal Indian nationalist criterion.

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In the face of the rise in political interest generated by the publication of the Jinnah - Rajagopalachari correspondence, it

\(^{42}\)Gandhi was addressed as 'Bapu' - the Hindustani for Father - by most of his Indian associates. It was his preferred title to the more formal 'Mahatma' which means Great Soul.

dawned on H. M. G. that - with Gandhi having been on the loose for only two months - the Indian political scene was being primed for action. A change of emphasis was perceptible in the policy communications sent from the India Office to the Viceroy. Instead of seeking continuation of the conditions underpinning the Indian political impasse, the desirability of stalling the movement which had been generated was now the dominant policy theme.

Wavell's own reaction to the apparent revival of Indian nationalist political activity was more ambivalent: unlike H. M. G., he perceived a need for early action by the Raj to promote progress towards Indian self - government. But even Wavell reacted with some trepidation to the prospect of Indian politics developing its own movement, independent of the Raj. However, Wavell's concern was brought about not so much by his perception of the condition of British - Indian political relations, but rather by his appreciation of the personal qualities held in common by the elderly political leaders at the helm of affairs. On 11 July he privately recorded:

We are undoubtedly in for a period of political manœuvreing which may lead to trouble. I wonder if we shall ever have any chance of a solution till the three intransigent, obstinate, uncompromising principals are out of the way: Gandhi ... Jinnah ... Winston.44

On 13 July Wavell travelled to Simla for an intended fortnight's stay. Even as he settled into his summer residence, he found himself involved in moves intended to bring into contact the trio of politicians who had figured in his forebodings.

Gandhi initiated these moves. On 15 July he wrote to Wavell apologizing for the "premature publicity" of the Gelder interview,

44W. J., 11 July 1944, p. 79.
though expressing the hope that the conciliatory nature of his responses to the British journalist might enable the Viceroy "to grant at least one of my requests"\footnote{Gandhi to Wavell, 15 July 1944; T.P., Vol. IV, p. 1096.} as earlier communicated.\footnote{See n. 20 above.} Wavell refused to take the bait, still being under specific instructions from H. M. G. not to meet with Gandhi.\footnote{See n. 25 above.} Instead, on 22 July, Wavell replied that he could not "usefully comment at present"\footnote{Wavell to Gandhi, 22 July 1944; T.P., Vol. IV, p. 1115.} on the proposals put forward in the Gelder interview. The brevity of his reply contrasted greatly with the lengthy communications sent from Simla to London on 18 and 19 July.\footnote{See Wavell to Amery, 18 July and 19 July 1944; ibid., pp. 1097-9 and 1105-10.} These were sent in response to Amery's request for Wavell's view "on the nature of the replies which should be given"\footnote{Amery to Wavell, 15 July 1944; ibid., p. 1095.} to parliamentary questions on issues raised by Gandhi's recent moves. A Commons debate on India was scheduled for late July, and the Mahatma had attracted media attention. So, on 19 July, Wavell was privately noting that the "[c]hief business in the last day or so has been drafting telegrams to ... [Amery] about Mr Gandhi's activities."\footnote{W.L., 19 July 1944, p.80.}

There were in fact some significant recent activities of Gandhi with which Wavell had not yet caught up. On 17 July Gandhi had addressed a letter to Churchill, offering himself as the "naked fakir" of the Prime Minister's own description,\footnote{On 23 February 1931, in a public address, Churchill had described Gandhi as "a fakir... striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal Palace" in reference to the meetings between Gandhi and Lord Irwin at the time. Cited in T.P., Vol. V, p.43, n.4.} and asking
him to "trust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world." Rajagopalachari, in attendance on the Mahatma, had disapproved of this form of address to the Prime Minister, describing it as "naughty" and predicting it would touch Churchill "on the raw." Others too in Gandhi's following may have doubted the wisdom of the Mahatma's choice of words. The letter went astray, and it was not until 20 September 1944 that a copy was dispatched which reached Churchill. Even then, as Gandhi's secretary somewhat indignantly recalled, the "only reply it fetched was an acknowledgement with thanks through the Viceroy!" However, Gandhi had better luck with the postal services - or perhaps with his own staff - when, also on 17 July, he sent another letter which, on receipt, was to elicit a response of great potential political promise. This second letter was addressed to M.A. Jinnah.

I have not written to you ... [since being released from detention]. But today I am prompted to do so. Let us meet when you wish to. Please do not regard me as an enemy of Islam and the Muslims here. I have always been a friend and servant of yours and of the whole world. Do not dismiss me.

Gandhi had finally moved to address the problem of Indian unity. It was symptomatic of the change which had occurred, since 1940, in Indian political conditions, that this move would place him - along with Jinnah - in the centre of attention of the all-India political arena.

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57 Gandhi to Jinnah, 17 July 1944; C.W.M.G., Vol. 77, p.393.
The communication from Gandhi was a personal political triumph for Jinnah: it offered an opportunity to establish publicly his claimed status as the sole spokesman for Muslims at the all-India level. Ever since Gandhi's release, Jinnah had been angling for this boost to his leadership position. He had used his line of communication to Rajagopalachari for this purpose, indicating that he "wanted to enter into negotiations with Gandhi directly," given the Madras Congressman's then somewhat marginal position in the Congress hierarchy. On 24 July Jinnah moved to secure the prize with a letter of acceptance, sent from Srinagar in Kashmir.

I shall be glad to receive you at my house in Bombay on my return, which will probably be about the middle of August .... I would like to say nothing more till we meet.59

Gandhi had made the opening move: the mountain, it could perhaps be said, was coming to Muhammad.

Armed with Gandhi's invitation, Jinnah proceeded to try to delimit the terms of the promised negotiations. Jinnah intended to use the episode to establish more firmly the principle of parity of status between Hindus and Muslims at the all-India level - on the rationale that each group constituted a separate nation. Not that he was expecting Congress to accept the notion: it was the British towards whom Jinnah was pitching his message, hoping that when they came to transfer power they would deem it politic - it not appropriate - that a half share be given to the

58 Sandhya Chaudhri, op. cit., p.119.
59 Jinnah to Gandhi, 24 July 1944; Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. 6, p.268.
representatives of Indian Muslims. At the Muslim League Working Committee session held in Lahore in late July, Jinnah brought forward for deliberation Rajagopalachari's formula and Gandhi's approval of it. But he did not urge acceptance of the formula's provisions: it was the principle of the division of India, which the formula conceded, that he drew to his colleagues attention. With that consideration uppermost, the Committee gave their leader full authority to negotiate with Gandhi. Unveiling this development in a concluding address, Jinnah summed up the import - along with the faults - of Rajagopalachari's formula. Significantly, he preferred to identify the formula as Gandhi's.

Mr Gandhi has ... accepted the principle of partition .... What remains now is the question of how and when this has got to be carried out .... As regards the merits of the proposal, Mr Gandhi is offering a shadow and a husk - a maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan.60

Jinnah concluded this address by making public Gandhi's letter containing his invitation to meet, as well as his own letter of acceptance.

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While Jinnah had been engaged at Lahore, capitalizing on the opening Gandhi's initiative had given him for parading his pre-eminent Indian Muslim leadership role, the Mahatma was still trying to develop movement on the British-Indian political front. The British were his preferred adversary, but H.M.G. was proving a good deal less receptive to his inducements than the Muslim League.

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leader. On 27 July, Gandhi had responded to Wavell's challenge for him to propose a "definite and constructive policy."\(^{61}\) As the viceroy had refused to meet with him, the proposal needed to be communicated by letter. In committing to writing what he would have preferred to unveil orally in the course of an interview, Gandhi put his signature to the new placatory policy.

I am prepared to advise the Working Committee to declare that in view of the changed conditions, mass civil disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942 cannot be offered and that full co-operation in the war-effort should be given by the Congress, if a declaration of immediate Indian independence is made and a national government responsible to the Central [Legislative] Assembly be formed subject to the proviso that, during the pendency of the war, the military operations should continue as at present but without involving any financial burden on India.\(^{62}\)

Nearly three weeks passed before Wavell replied to Gandhi's offer. During this interval, a Parliamentary debate on India took place. On the floor of the House of Commons, Amery held that H.M.G. intended to retain the power to ensure coordination of the Indian civil administration with the war effort, as well as the authority to safeguard the constitutional position of Indian ethnic and religious minorities.\(^{63}\) In his reply to Gandhi on 15 August, Wavell drew to the Mahatma's attention the press reports of Amery's statement in the Commons, pointing out that in the light of this statement "no purpose would be served by discussion on the basis which you suggest."\(^{64}\) But the time for curt British

\(^{61}\)See n. 26 above.


\(^{64}\)Wavell to Gandhi, 15 August 1944; T.P., Vol. IV, p.1198.
refusals to parley with Indian nationalist leaders had passed. Instead, the Mahatma was pointed towards the aspect of the Indian situation which presented the British wartime Government with its most promising material for stalling Indian constitutional progress.

[If] the leaders of the Hindus, the Muslims and the important minorities were willing to cooperate in a transitional government established and working within the present constitution, I believe good progress might be made. For such ... to succeed there must before it is formed be agreement in principle between Hindus and Muslims ... as to the method by which the new constitution should be framed. This agreement is a matter for Indians themselves.

By mid-August 1944, Gandhi's efforts to reopen constitutional negotiations with the British had steered him towards the same problem of Indian disunity that pressures from within the nationalist movement had already forced him to address. All roads now led to Jinnah.

* * *

Three months after his release from prison, Gandhi's efforts to placate H.M.G. - thereby improving British-Congress relations - had failed to open up an avenue of advance: Britain's wartime priorities were best served, in Churchill's perception, by postponement of any Indian constitutional move. However, Gandhi's placatory probes on the British-Congress front, and his increasing, if reluctant, involvement with the issue of Muslim separatism, had not been pursued without cost. As his activities

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65 Compare Wavell's earlier blank rejection of Gandhi's approach; see n. 26 above.
had unfolded, Gandhi's Congress colleagues still in detention had cause to feel that the political ground on which they had made their stand during 1942 was shifting under them. This brought even Jawaharlal Nehru to abandon his sanguine acceptance of Gandhi's moves, as expressed in mid-July.67 He gave vent to his feelings in his journal on 5 August.

I am very much put out, angered and out of temper. The floods of statements, interviews, correspondence ... that have emanated from Bapu ... have overwhelmed me and others .... All these explanations without end and toning down of everything - this grovelling before the Viceroy ... [and] Jinnah .... This may be the satyagraha technique. If so, I fear I do not fit in at all.68

The discomfort of many established Congressmen was noticed by the international press. In its 2 September issue, the Economist ran an overseas leading article entitled "Stirrings in India" from its Calcutta correspondent, dated 11 August. Here it was reported that

since July 30th ... [when Jinnah made public Gandhi's invitation to meet,] opinion has been rapidly crystallising. Hindus of the older school, Congressmen and otherwise, have received a severe jolt. Few of them seem to have noticed the tremendous strides in the political organisation of the Moslems ... or the solidarity which the League and the community have attained under Mr Jinnah's leadership during the war. Pakistan may remain undefined and undefinable, but it is none the less a live political issue for every Indian today.69

Even so, Muslim solidarity had recently suffered a set-back in the Punjab. The Unionist Ministry of Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana had managed - with Wavell's encouragement - to fend off Jinnah's demand for a League-Unionist coalition. The advantage arising to

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67See n. 43 above.
Jinnah both from Gandhi's invitation and the way it had come to pass, did not escape the notice of the Economist correspondent.

Jinnah ... is in terrific form. The fact that the Mahatma made the first approaches for a meeting is ample compensation for his earlier political reverse in the Punjab.70

A secondary theme - implicit in Nehru's response, more resonant in the Economist report - seems to emerge from these reactions to the projected Gandhi-Jinnah meeting: that of two elderly political leaders providing one another with mutual support in their respective difficulties. In both cases these difficulties threatened the foundations of their political power. For Gandhi, Wavell's refusal to enter into negotiations had removed an ingredient necessary to his successful political performance: the British Imperial summons, and its promise of a possible denouement. If the Raj failed to provide this service, the danger was that the complications of an over-lengthy period of apparently pointless political activity on Gandhi's part might lead ultimately to the hopeless confusion of Indian nationalists. Lord Willingdon had failed to respond adequately in the period 1932 to 1934, and the frustrations attendant on his negative attitude had led to Gandhi's "resignation" from Congress in late 1934. In 1944, Wavell's attitude was posing a similar threat to Gandhi's ability to perform.

In the case of Jinnah, the need was to keep the public spotlight on all-India political happenings. It was arguably only at the all-India level that the political attitudes of Indian Muslims, especially those in the Muslim majority provinces, were noticeably and identifiably Muslim. At the provincial level,

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70Ibid.
political alignments tended to reflect socio-economic circumstances, language group identity, or other factors not necessarily communal in character. The appeal of Pakistan could override provincial political preoccupations only if all-India political events loomed as more important and more immediate than provincial political issues. In any case, the Economist, when first commenting on the public announcement by Jinnah of Gandhi's invitation to meet, openly express this secondary theme.

There can be little doubt that the two politicians have decided that they must meet and talk partly, at any rate, because they are afraid of their thunder being stolen. Events ... were threatening to leave them behind.71

* * *

Indian Unity? The Gandhi-Jinnah Talks

There was nation-wide excitement during the period leading up to the proposed Gandhi-Jinnah meeting. The subcontinent was rife with appraisal and speculation on the event's significance and likely outcome. Even the international press contributed to the debate. The Times of London took a rather pessimistic view of the prospects for success. On 10 August it held that while there were "possibilities of agreement ... many observers fear that whatever else might be agreed upon, the negotiations will break down on the question of the numerical representation of the communities in the central government."72 Five days later, The Times further elaborated on the subject, noting that "it is evident that in the

72The Times, 10 August 1944, p.5, c.7.
Hindu and Congress camps there are many who would be quite content to see the negotiations fail."\(^{73}\)

Hope that the talks would fail was not only to be found in the Hindu Mahasabha\(^{74}\) and the Congress. On 11 August, Tara Singh, one of the leaders of the Akali Sikhs,\(^{75}\) was interviewed in Lahore by a correspondent of the *Statesman* of Calcutta, which published the results the next day. Tara Singh had apparently accepted as an accomplished fact Jinnah's endeavours on the public stage at Lahore on 30 July to delimit the terms of the approaching negotiations.\(^{76}\) Tara Singh had reacted negatively to the prospect of the partition of India. If such an event came to pass he maintained, "the Sikhs would not rest content without a sovereign State of their own, comprising Lahore and Amritsar, the two most important centres associated with Sikh history and culture."\(^{77}\) He openly gave expression to the possibility that violence might accompany a transfer of power from the British to Indians. For if the British departed, and the Hindu and Muslim leaders failed to meet the Sikh demand, "the Sikhs would be left only one course, that of open rebellion."\(^{78}\)

Wavell viewed the approaching talks from a more prosaic angle. He apparently anticipated that the coming event would develop into yet another tactical variation on the Mahatma's political theme of

\(^{73}\)Ibid., 15 August 1944, p.3, c.4.
\(^{74}\)The All-India Hindu Mahasabha was a political party, representing the Hindu communalist perspective.
\(^{75}\)The Akalis were the most important Sikh political party, representing extreme Sikh nationalism.
\(^{76}\)See n. 60 above.
\(^{77}\)Statesman, 12 August 1944, p.3.
\(^{78}\)Ibid.
the past two years. In mid-August he recorded in his diary how he expected things to turn out.

I am sure that the ... [Gandhi-Jinnah] meeting will result in a demand for the release of the [Congress] Working Committee, but I doubt whether it will have any other result.\(^{79}\)

Gandhi's own level of expectation of a fruitful outcome was soon to be about as low as was the Viceroy's. This was a condition brought on, at least in part, by Jinnah's preliminary behaviour. The meeting of the two leaders had at first been scheduled for 19 August, but had had to be repeatedly postponed owing to a sudden deterioration in Jinnah's health. From the tone of several communications sent by Gandhi to enquire whether Jinnah was ready to proceed with the event, it was evident that the Mahatma suspected his rival of wilfully prolonging the lead up to the talks.\(^ {80}\) Jinnah had a strong motive for so acting, as he benefited in terms of his leadership status from being paired with Gandhi. It was not until 1 September that it was finally arranged that the talks would begin at 4 p.m. on 9 September. On 8 September, as he travelled from Wardha towards his rendezvous in Bombay, Gandhi wrote to Tej Bahadur Sapru, providing the prominent Liberal politician with an insight into his frame of mind on the eve of the talks.

I am going in hope but without expectation. So if I return empty-handed, I shall not be disappointed.\(^ {81}\)

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\(^{79}\) W.J., 15 August 1944, p.87.
\(^{80}\) See Gandhi to Jinnah, 18, 23, 29 and 31 August 1944, and 1 September 1944: C.W.M.G., Vol. 78, pp.39, 44, 53, 57 and 60.
\(^{81}\) Gandhi to Sapru, 8 September 1944; ibid., p.87.
The Gandhi-Jinnah talks began on 9 September; they were conducted in the privacy of Jinnah's Bombay mansion. The different and conflicting objectives of the two leaders emerged as soon as the discussions opened. Gandhi had been hoping to persuade Jinnah to close ranks with the nationalist movement, on the basis of a compromise between the Congress preference for a strong all-India Centre and Muslim separatist demands. Rajagopalachari's formula was, to date, the only basis of compromise on offer; at the very least it needed to be employed as a point of reference for any alternative formulation which had a Congress-League compromise as its objective. But at the first day of the talks, Jinnah took the initiative by endeavouring to annul any flow-on effect which the Jinnah-Rajagopalachari exchanges might have had, as a preliminary basis for agreement with Gandhi.

On the evening of 9 September, Gandhi reported what had transpired to Rajagopalachari, who as a member of his entourage was present in Gandhi's camp at Birla House in Bombay.

[Jinnah's] contempt for your Formula and his contempt for you is staggering. You rose in my estimation that you could have talked to him for all those hours . . . . I almost felt like saying . . . 'I will go away.' But I resisted the temptation.\(^{82}\)

Gandhi continued to resist the temptation to cut short the talks for another seventeen days. This did not represent, however, the number of days devoted to negotiations with Jinnah. The period from 10 to 20 September was taken up by tactical manoeuvres conducted by the two leaders. They were initiated by

\(^{82}\)Gandhi's Report to Rajagopalachari, 9 September 1944; ibid., p.88.
Jinnah's (quite uncharacteristic) devotion to the observance of Muslim holy days: the twenty-first day of Ramadan (10 September), Koran Revelation Day (16 September), and the first three days of the festival of Id (19, 20 and daylight 21 September). Gandhi replied by observing two twenty-four-hour intervals of silence which also contributed to the times of suspension (daylight 11 September, and 18 September) of the talks. When the two men did have exchanges, these took the form of obfuscating interpretative and semantic exercises.\textsuperscript{83}

Jinnah had initiated this period of manoeuvring, and Jinnah terminated it. On 21 September he sent a letter to Gandhi in which he brought into focus a definition of "Pakistan" which could not possibly be accommodated by Rajagopalachari's formula.

The right of self-determination which we [Muslims] claim postulates that we are a nation ....... There cannot be Defence and similar matters of 'common concern' when it is accepted that Pakistan and Hindustan will be two separate independent sovereign States.\textsuperscript{84}

The pattern of the negotiations had at last emerged, with Jinnah thus stating the extreme case for partition and Gandhi trying to formulate a basis for a Congress-League compromise settlement. Jinnah did not budge from his position – at least, not on this occasion. Subsequent events were to prove that it was not in direct negotiations with Indian nationalists, but rather in British-sponsored power-sharing schemes, that Jinnah was prepared to move from his extreme position, so as to explore terms of Hindu-Muslim settlement within the functioning of an all-India polity. If Gandhi saw the British as his preferred adversary,

\textsuperscript{83}For an example, see Jinnah to Gandhi, 17 September 1944; ibid., Appendix VI, pp.406-8.
\textsuperscript{84}Jinnah to Gandhi, 21 September 1944; ibid., Appendix VII, p.411.
Jinnah also wanted a British involvement - as the underwriters of a Hindu-Muslim power-sharing settlement.

But, with the British wartime Government having decided - at Churchill's insistence - to remain aloof from Indian constitutional concerns, for the moment at least the avenue of advance was closed for Jinnah. So having, for the benefit of his following, sounded the clarion call of partition - which, since 1940, had brought such unprecedented numbers of Indian Muslims to his standard - Jinnah left to Gandhi the burden of keeping the discussions afloat. For a few days longer the Mahatma proved equal to the task. On 24 September, he refurbished Rajagopalachari's formula with phrases drawn from Jinnah's new definition of a "sovereign Pakistan", and brought it forward as a formulation supposedly satisfying Jinnah's extreme case for partition.85 This attempt to square the circle, by stretching Jinnah's "sovereign Pakistan" terminology, failed to be taken up by the League leader, who was clearly seeking the substance, not the symbolisms, of power. On 25 September, Jinnah rejected Gandhi's refurbished formula as "fundamentally opposed to the Lahore Resolution"86 of 1940, which had proclaimed the League's intention to pursue a separatist course, and with which Gandhi had claimed his latest formula accorded.

Gandhi called a halt to the meetings and exchanges of correspondence on 26 September. His tactical approach to this exercise was to try to unload Jinnah back on to Rajagopalachari, who was standing in the wings dutifully awaiting the Mahatma's bidding. In a letter of 25 September, Gandhi had begun to develop

85See Gandhi to Jinnah, 24 September 1944; ibid., pp.126-7.
86Jinnah to Gandhi, 25 September 1944; ibid., Appendix IX, p.414.
the theme of the talks having "come about as a result of . . . [Jinnah's] correspondence with Rajaji in July last over his Formula and . . . [Jinnah's] consultations with the League Working Committee thereon." 87 The next day, in bringing the great occasion to a close, he gave this theme resonance by informing Jinnah that he had "deferred to Rajaji's advice to finish the chain of correspondence." 88 Gandhi departed Bombay on 30 September, arriving the next day at his ashram in Sevagram in time to be on hand when celebrations began, on 2 October, in observance of his seventy-fifth birthday.

Jinnah held on grimly to the elevated leadership status with which the pairing with Gandhi had endowed him. He rejected the notion the Rajagopalachari had played a role in bringing about the talks, attributing the event instead to Gandhi's letter of invitation of 17 July. 89 On 27 September, Jinnah delivered the public statement, which had been vetted by Gandhi, giving formal notice of the end of the talks, and authorizing the release for publication of the correspondence which had passed between the two leaders. This last act of the eighteen days of the talks expressed their joint hope that "the public will not feel embittered" at the disappointing outcome, and their joint trust that "this is not the final end of our effort." 90

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87 Gandhi to Jinnah, 25 September 1944; ibid., p.130.
88 Gandhi to Jinnah, 26 September 1944; ibid., p.131.
89 See Jinnah to Gandhi, 26 September 1944; ibid., Appendix X, p.415.
90 Jinnah's Statement, 27 September 1944; ibid., Appendix XII, p.418.
Public reaction to the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks varied according to the degree of expectation or anxiety with which the negotiations had originally been greeted. The nationalist press viewed the outcome with disappointment. The Bombay Chronicle attributed the failure to Jinnah's attitude during the talks, "that of an advocate, mechanically pleading for his brief."91 Outside the nationalist camp, newspapers were inclined to extend such unfavourable assessments of Jinnah's performance to include both elderly protagonists. For its part, the Times of India apportioned the blame equally, and in so doing allowed a suggestion of irritation to colour its tone.

It is indeed difficult to understand why the talks lasted so long and why the leaders ever gave the impression that success might be achieved. The reason of the failure is not far to seek. Both leaders approached the problem from completely different angles and both proved completely intransigent.92

At the other end of the political spectrum, Dawn, the Muslim League's New Delhi publication, predictably absolved Jinnah from any responsibility for the failure, instead attributing it solely to Gandhi. In Dawn's analysis, the main lesson of the talks was that "Mr. Rajagopalachari had not really succeeded in winning over Mr. Gandhi to the historical inevitability of self-determination for the Muslims of India."93

The outcome of the talks elicited press comment from outside the subcontinent. Like its namesake in India, The Times apportioned responsibility for the outcome equally between the two

91 Bombay Chronicle, 28 September 1944, p.4, c.1.
92 Times of India, 28 September 1944; cited in the Statesman, 29 September 1944, p.5, c.4.
93 Dawn, 29 September 1944; cited in the Statesman, 30 September 1944, p.3, c.5.
leaders. But in doing so it aimed a polemical shaft at the core of Gandhian moral claims, holding that neither leader had proven able "to rid himself of communal pledges in measure sufficient to enable him to face the problems of the present day with the necessary breadth of vision." Central place in The Times analysis was given to the dire consequences which could be expected to arise from such a failure.

The sole alternative to agreement is partition; and if that principle is forced upon the minorities as the only means by which their existence can be secured, the consequences . . . may be very grave.95

* * *

Wavell was not surprised at the result of the talks: it merely confirmed the low esteem in which he held the two leaders. He privately gave expression to his view, noting in his diary that the "two great mountains have met and not even a ridiculous mouse has emerged." However, the leaders' failure to Bombay was a source of concern to him. His anxiety shaped a diary entry:

I wonder what the effect on H.M.G. will be . . . . I am afraid it will increase their dislike of any attempt at a move.97

For Wavell, like Gandhi, was endeavouring to resume Indian constitutional progress. However, unlike the Mahatma, Wavell was able to address his efforts to the Imperial seat of power: it was not his fate to be required to engage in a sterile public

94The Times, 29 September 1944, p.5, c.3.
95Tbid.
96N.W., 30 September 1944, p.91.
97Tbid.
relations joust with the Muslim League President. On 20 September, without waiting to observe the outcome of the talks, Wavell had despatched a letter to Amery. Enclosed was a memorandum, giving the Viceroy's appreciation of the current political situation, and outlining his proposal for a British political initiative in India. The objective on which he proposed British policy should now focus was "to form as soon as possible a transitional Government at the Centre representative of the main political parties." 98 Anticipating that "the post-war period will be one of great difficulty," 99 he held that the relatively stable period the Raj was enjoying would be an appropriate background for recommencing the British-Indian political dialogue.

This communication to Amery, long in gestation, constituted the most important constitutional action of Wavell's viceroyalty to date. But also on 20 September, duty required the Viceroy to send a second letter to Amery. Gandhi had written to Wavell on 10 September, 100 enquiring whether the Viceroy had forwarded his "naked fakir" letter of 17 July to Churchill, 101 as requested. With his engagement with Jinnah now under way, the Mahatma was puzzled at the lack of response from the Prime Minister. An exchange of communications had ensued, culminating ten days later with the arrival on Wavell's desk of a copy of Gandhi's original message to Churchill. The Viceroy duly despatched it to Amery with an accompanying note from himself. It was evident that the burden of viceregal feeling of responsibility, for a political

99 Ibid., p.38.
100 See Gandhi to Wavell, 10 September 1944; ibid., p.42.
101 See n. 53 above.
situation in which the Mahatma and his ilk exercised a formative influence, was weighing ever more heavily.

I think it shows that Gandhi's mental powers are failing. I can well imagine the . . . [Prime Minister's] reactions, and I hope that this stupidity will not make him refuse to consider my proposals for a move.\textsuperscript{102}

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**A Political Limbo: Sapru-Desai-Wavell**

In the aftermath of the breakdown of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Indian politics seemed to enter a vacuum. For the rest of the year Gandhi remained based at his ashram in Sevagram, bound up in the operations of a Gandhian world. This included spinning, a long-proposed (though never executed) fast in protest at the world's three "exhibitions of violence,"\textsuperscript{103} and a four-week interval of inactivity (4 to 31 December). Jinnah's tactical dependency on other Indian leaders - to make proposals for a communal settlement which he could veto - ruled him out as a prime mover of any fresh bout of all-India political activity. Only Wavell remained on the political centre-stage, both capable of acting and willing to act in order to resume India's political advance.

But the Viceroy was an agent of H.M.G., and a resolute aspect of British policy was to avoid Indian constitutional negotiating activity for the duration of the war. This resolve was not likely to be modified, let alone reversed, by the Viceroy's efforts. The

\textsuperscript{102} Wavell to Amery, 20 September 1944; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. V, p.41.

\textsuperscript{103} These were identified by Gandhi as corruption, untouchability and communal bitterness. See Gandhi's Talk with Mridula Sarabhai, 26 October 1944; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 78, p.234.
imperatives of war had summoned to the seat of power British political personnel whose Imperial inclinations made likely their unfavourable reception of Wavell's proposal. Earlier in his career, in the political debate attendant on the formulation and passage of the 1935 Government of India Act, Churchill had sacrificed ministerial prospects in order to be free to express his opposition to progress towards Indian self-government. Sir John Anderson (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Viscount Simon (Lord Chancellor) and Sir James Grigg (Secretary of State for War) - all of whom had had political experience in India - generally shared the Prime Minister's feelings on the matter, and in Cabinet were supportive of his approach to Indian affairs.

So Wavell's proposal of 20 September, for a British political initiative to be launched "as soon as possible," was not acted on by H.M.G. for the duration of the war in Europe. This decision not to proceed did not take the form of a blank refusal communicated to the Viceroy - though, on 10 October Amery gave Wavell on indication of the way things were: owing to the "vital importance of not breaking up the coalition [Government] before Germany at least is finally defeated . . . the Cabinet have always hitherto deferred to the Prime Minister's passionate feelings about India." Instead, H.M.G. considered Wavell's proposal to recommence the constitutional dialogue and, after due process during which it was more comprehensively formulated, gave him permission to proceed: this permission being granted on 31 May 1945. In this demonstration of the working of the British official mind, as manifested by the delaying technique arising

104 See n. 98 above.
from it, the prolonged process of putting Wavell's proposal into effect constituted in itself the decision not to put it into effect. The Viceroy's effort to launch a political initiative was thus consigned to a political limbo. As a result, the period of the vacuum into which the Indian political situation had drifted, in the wake of the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, was commensurately prolonged.

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But if nature abhors a vacuum, perhaps this could also be said of politics. In any event, during the closing months of 1944, the Indian political scene provided some evidence to support such a belief. With the main actors of the Indian political drama absent from centre-stage, the opportunity was presented for lesser personalities to perform in their stead. Several figures entered from the wings with a view to seizing this opportunity.

There is evidence to suggest that Gandhi coaxed one of these lesser figures forward. He went about this rather surreptitiously. On 28 September, the day following the breakdown of his talks with Jinnah, he sent a telegram to Vijayalakshmi Pandit,106 the elder of Jawaharlal Nehru's two sisters, requesting her presence in Sevagram by 2 October. Mrs Pandit presumably undertook the journey, met with the Mahatma, and returned to her home in Allahabad soon afterwards. For on 14 October, her neighbour, T.B. Sapru, wrote to Gandhi informing him that "Mrs Pandit conveyed to me your message about the possibility of my

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106See Gandhi to Pandit, 28 September 1944; C.W.M.G., Vol. 78, p.135.
calling a conference."\(^{107}\)

Sapru had his doubts about the utility of such a course of action. In his letter to Gandhi, he queried whether "Mr Jinnah or the Hindu Sabha men . . . [would] make any response"\(^{108}\) to any effort on his part, owing to his lack of political party credentials or personal following. He also pointed to the danger that a conference of party representatives might be used as a rostrum for party posturing, with the result the "differences will come to the surface."\(^{109}\) Gandhi replied - perhaps as Sapru had been hoping - by committing himself in writing.

[If] a representative conference is held it might prove profitable. Anyway it can do no harm. No one is better able than your good self to take the lead in this matter. This conference should confine itself to an examination of the Pakistan issue.\(^{110}\)

Armed with this evidence of Gandhi's authorization, Sapru expressed his willingness to proceed. On 29 October, he wrote to the Mahatma assuring him that he would try his utmost "to promote

\(^{107}\) Sapru to Gandhi, 14 October 1944; ibid., p.230, n.3. It was significant that Gandhi - frustrated in his own efforts to reach a settlement with Jinnah, the leading Muslim separatist - should at this juncture look to Sapru for assistance. Sapru (and for that matter, Jinnah) had been a prominent Congress leader prior to 1920, but had turned away from Congress in view of the changes brought about in the wake of the Gandhian seizure of power within the party. Sapru preferred the British political constitutional mode - a mode which was evidently less divisive to Hindu-Muslim political communion than the Gandhian mode which (after 1920) so strongly influenced Congress. As late as 1930, Sapru - in the face of Congress opposition, during the events leading up to Gandhi's Salt March - had striven to rally those Indian parties which were in favour of participation in the Round-Table Conference organized by the British. In an article on Sapru, D.A. Low comments: "There were difficulties in securing the co-operation of the Hindu Mahasabha, and there was considerable Hindu - Muslim acerbity . . . . [Sapru] interviewed first the Muslim leaders and then the Hindu leaders. Both . . . ended up by agreeing to attend an All-Parties Conference under Sapru's Chairmanship which was fixed for the end of February [1930]". D.A. Low, "Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the First Round-Table Conference"; D.A. Low (editor), Soundings in Modern South Asian History, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1968, p.307.

\(^{108}\) Sapru to Gandhi, 14 October 1944; C.W.M.G., Vol. 78, p.230, n.3.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., p.231 (continuation of p.230, n.3).

\(^{110}\) Gandhi to Sapru, 25 October 1944; ibid., p.231.
By comparing the substance of this October exchange between the Mahatma and Sapru with that of Gandhi's letter to Homy Mody of 12/13 June, it becomes evident that in the four intervening months Gandhi's perception of the Indian political scene had undergone a significant change. Sapru and Mody represented similar Liberal political points of view, and functioned in the Mahatma's script in similar kite-flying roles. The change which had occurred is perhaps best illustrated by those passages wherein the Mahatma brings to his correspondents' attention his principal preoccupation. In June, this was identified as the censorship laws operated by the Raj; in October, the Pakistan issue. Gandhi was thus making the essential adjustment to the post - 1940 development of the triangular political situation, attendant on the arrival of the third force of Indian Muslim separatism as a major factor on the Indian political scene.

On 19 November, the Standing Committee of the Non-Party Leaders' Conference met under the chairmanship of Sapru. It resolved to set up a committee to study the communal problem and its effects on India's constitutional prospects, and to make an attempt at outlining a solution. This was a rather more modest endeavour than the project of bringing about a representative all-party conference as suggested by Gandhi. Essentially, Sapru was using the Non-Party Leaders' Conference - a political club for Liberals and other moderates - as a malleable instrument by which to bring into existence a committee of his own choice, with which to attempt the desired communal conciliation effort.

111 Sapru to Gandhi, 29 October 1944; ibid., p.231, n.1.
112 See n.18 above.
Wavell estimated that there was little likelihood of Sapru's efforts meeting with success. As he reported to Amery, the Allahabad-domiciled Kashmiri Brahman was too closely identified with one side of the political spectrum to act as an effective communal intermediary. He asserted that:

Sapru settled his plan in consultation with Gandhi without reference to Jinnah, and is generally known to detest both Jinnah and the Pakistan idea. It is easy to interpret the plan as another move by Gandhi to work up publicity against the Muslim League and to split the League ranks if possible.\textsuperscript{113}

But it occurred to Wavell that the mere existence of Sapru's conciliation committee might be grist to the mill for those elements of H.M.G. on the look out for excuses for delaying official action on the Indian constitutional front.

I realise that Sapru's move may seem to the Cabinet to make the consideration of my proposals . . . premature . . . . [But] if we stop consideration of the Indian problem every time the Indian leaders stir the muddy waters, there will be no end to the business.\textsuperscript{114}

In late November, Wavell received confirmation as to the likely futility of Sapru's communal conciliation efforts. Significantly, the Viceroy found it "difficult to believe that Jinnah . . . [was] sincere about the 'two nations' theory."\textsuperscript{115} Wavell had, however, sent Sir Francis Mudie, his Home Member, to make contact with Jinnah, seeking elaboration on this point, as well as obtaining the League leader's reaction to Sapru's endeavours. On 29 November, Wavell passed on to Amery the

\textsuperscript{113} Wavell to Amery, 23 November 1944; \textit{T.E.}, Vol. V, p.225.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p.226.
\textsuperscript{115} Wavell to Amery, 3 October 1944; ibid., p.75.
intelligence brought back by Mudie: that Jinnah wanted a conciliation effort to be made, but not by Indians.

[Jinnah] was not interested in the Sapru Committee. He showed no special hostility to a Representative Conference sponsored by Government, and said that he was . . . prepared to take part in a Coalition Government at the Centre . . . even if the Congress refused to do so.116

Wavell regarded Jinnah's response as sufficiently encouraging to invite the League leader to the Viceregal Lodge for an interview. Jinnah took the opportunity explicitly to assure the highest authority in the land of the League's willingness to participate in British-sponsored constitutional schemes, including the Viceroy's own preferred move as proposed to H.M.G. On 7 December, the day following the interview, Wavell cabled to Amery the gist of this significant conjunction of policy preference.

Jinnah said . . . [that if] His Majesty's Government offered provisional Government under [the] existing constitution he would certainly consider it . . . . He thought [an] offer of this kind was [the] best for India at [the] present time though he was convinced that Pakistan was eventually . . . necessary . . . . He said conferences were useless and the [the] only hope was to get [the] parties working together on practical problems . . . . I think he meant what he said.117

This revelation constituted something of a milestone in the unveiling of Jinnah's intentions: the specific form he wanted Indian Muslim separatist demands to assume in India's progress towards independence was now a good deal clearer. As expressed to the Viceroy, Jinnah's angle of approach was more typical of Western constitutional pragmatism than of Muslim state-building fervour.

116Wavell to Amery, 29 November 1944; ibid., p.252.
117Wavell to Amery, 7 December 1944; ibid., p.282.
This indication as to the Muslim League leader's frame of mind was reinforced for the Viceroy in mid-December, in an analysis of the implications for Bengal of the "Pakistan" demand sent to him by Richard Casey, the Governor of that province. Casey was a prominent Australian politician whose activities on behalf of the British Empire/Commonwealth's war effort had attracted Churchill's attention. Churchill had utilized the Australian's services by appointing him to positions of authority in places close to the theatres of war - first in the Middle East, then in Bengal. Casey reported that the conception of "Eastern Pakistan" held in Bengali Muslim League circles - as given expression by Khwaja Nazimuddin, his Chief Minister - differed significantly from "the standard idea of a Muslim State."\(^{118}\) For, as portrayed by Nazimuddin, in the projected "Eastern Pakistan" Hindus would exercise the rights of citizenship, even to the extent of sharing "the responsibility for the business of Government . . . in approximate proportion to their numbers."\(^{119}\) This evidence of the acceptance of the Western democratic concept of citizenship by the Bengali Muslim political elite was depicted as encouraging by Casey, because "it seems to show that they are groping after a state in which Hindus and Muslims would live together in amity, rather than upon any belief that the interests of the two communities are irreconcilable."\(^{120}\) Nazimuddin's Bengali provincial perspective differed of course from Jinnah's all-India point of view. A Bengali parochial political objective - ensuring the minimum of control of Bengal by a "Hindu-ridden Centre"\(^{121}\) - did not necessarily accord with

\(^{118}\) Casey to Wavell, 17 December 1944; ibid., p.309.  
\(^{119}\) Ibid.  
\(^{120}\) Ibid., p.310.  
\(^{121}\) Ibid.
Jinnah's plans. But it was the implications of where the demand for "Pakistan" fitted in the Muslim League's political mode of operation that made Casey's analysis of import in understanding Jinnah's all-India activities. For in Casey's opinion, the Bengali Muslim League was using "Pakistan" primarily as a bargaining counter in its provincial political operations, a bargaining counter which, moreover, had proven strikingly effective in mobilizing mass support amongst the Bengali Muslim community.

All this has relevance to the question whether there is either advantage to be gained or prospect of success in a definite attempt to argue the Muslims out of their demand for Pakistan and to provide them, as an alternative, with 'safeguards' for what they really want.122

Wavell concurred with much of Casey's analysis of the Indian political situation. He warned Casey, however, of the dangers of overemphasizing the notion that the "Pakistan" demand was merely an instrument in the hands of the Muslim political elite.

Some of the abler Muslims may regard it . . . [as] a bargaining counter, but for the mass of the Muslim League it is a real possibility and has a very strong sentimental appeal.123

When functioning as a means of politically mobilizing the Indian Muslim masses, "Pakistan" might be not so much a defined conception as an induced sensation, induced by an appeal to the nostalgia nurtured in the Indian Muslim psyche by commitment to an historic Islamic agenda.

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122 Ibid.
123 Wavell to Casey, 1 January 1945; ibid., p.345.
While Wavell was engaged in promoting his proposal for a British political initiative in India, and debating with Amery and Casey on the significance of Sapru's activities and the role of the "Pakistan" demand in Muslim League political strategies, fresh stirrings occurred in the Gandhian camp. The Mahatma was to play a part in the advance of another lesser figure, from the wings to the centre of the Indian political stage. Unlike the Sapru case however, this time Gandhi's involvement was not formative. On this occasion, the lesser personality bidding for a place in the Indian political spotlight was self-motivated.

During early January 1945 Gandhi received a visitor from New Delhi. Bhulabhai Desai, the Congress leader in the Central Legislative Assembly, had come to Sevagram to get the Mahatma's blessing for a political move arising from confidential negotiations he had been conducting with Liaquat Ali Khan, his Muslim League counterpart in the Assembly. The objective of the two men's talks had been to work out a power-sharing formula, by which a Congress-League interim coalition Government could be formed at the Centre. Though Liaquat was later to deny it, they had reached the stage where they were ready to settle. Congress and the League were each to choose and control 40 percent of the Executive Council, leaving 20 percent for the Sikhs and Untouchables to share. The Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief were to remain British, and the existing constitution would remain in force.

Desai found the Mahatma in poor physical condition. Gandhi's four weeks of inactivity (4 to 31 December) had been followed by a relapse in his general health which weakened him during all of January. When Desai consulted with Gandhi over whether to proceed
with a Congress-League agreement in the Assembly, the Mahatma, observing silence, communicated his advice in writing.

You may . . . go ahead without fear . . . . But you should obtain authorization . . . from the Working Committee. Without that I think it will be risky to come to a final agreement.124

Gandhi's cautious avoidance of too emphatic an endorsement of Desai's initiative was well justified. Desai made the formula public by disclosing it to the Viceroy's Private Secretary on 13 January. Once in British hands, the formula's merits were argued extensively by everyone from Mudie, the Home Member, who hailed it as being "exactly what we have been working for,"125 to Churchill, who directed that the "India Committee of the Cabinet . . . should make a report on this new, sudden departure."126 But in Indian hands Desai's formula received a less favourable reception. The combination of British official interest and Indian media focus on Desai aroused deep suspicion within the ranks of the imprisoned Congress High Command. Jawaharlal Nehru noted in his diary on 22 January how Desai's move had been received.

We have all been rather upset . . . by Bhulabhai's repeated visits to the Viceroy. Apparently he is hatching some scheme - some proposal for a settlement. Anything coming from Bhulabhai - anything of this type - is suspect.127

Nor was Desai's initiative given support by the Muslim League. The lack of a British involvement in the Assembly leaders' joint effort would have alone been sufficient cause for Jinnah to reject the scheme. Despite the flurry of discussion the formula generated in the British corridors of power, this deficiency was

126Churchill to Bridges, 16 January 1945; ibid., p.404.
to remain: the policy of awaiting the end of the war before resuming the Indian constitutional debate was not to be abandoned.

Nevertheless, Wavell attempted to use Desai's formula as a line of approach for implementing his desire to form an Interim Government. By late February he had made some progress towards achieving this objective. The Viceroy invited Jinnah for an interview, scheduled for 7 March, intending to sound out the Muslim League President as to whether he stood by Liaquat's agreement with Desai. A breakdown in Jinnah's health intervened at this point, requiring cancellation of the interview. Wavell had to find out where Jinnah stood in the matter in the same way as did the public at large. This was through statements to the press issued from Jinnah's home in Bombay.

The Associated Press . . . reports that Mr Jinnah . . . in the course of a statement . . . says: 'There is absolutely no foundation for connecting my name with talks which may have taken place between Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and Mr Bhulabhai Desai'.

Wavell's effort to use Desai's formula, as a means of bringing to pass the formation of an Interim Government, was thus frustrated. Only the direct avenue of an approach to H.M.G. remained for him.

A no doubt chastened Liaquat withdrew from the limelight, back into Jinnah's autocratic shadow. But the politician who lost the most, as a result of Jinnah's veto of the Desai-Liaquat scheme, was Bhulabhai Desai. Having shot his bolt, he had eventually to conduct a retreat from the position he had assumed at the centre of the political stage. In the Congress milieu, a retracting

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129 Report by Amery to War Cabinet India Committee on Congress - Muslim League Talks, 26 January 1945: ibid., p.473.
political entity was likely to attract the attention of those anxious to assist in the political demise of one whose venture on to higher ground had not found favour with the gods. Desai was not to get another chance.  

By March 1945, Desai's proposal had joined Sapru's conciliation effort as a subsidiary development of Indian politics, which H.M.G. could employ as a point of reference in justifying – principally to Wavell – procrastination in its part in resuming the British-Indian constitutional debate. It would not have occurred to Gandhi, however, to relegate the respective activities of Sapru and Desai to the same political category. If to him an involvement with the former was innocuous in its political significance, too close an association with the latter was fraught with peril. Gandhi, it will be remembered, had helped get Sapru's effort under way during October 1944, and when the resulting Conciliation Committee ventured to bring the Mahatma within the scope of its activities, it was by a suitably politically sanitized approach. This took the form of a questionnaire sent to Sevagram in late February which, in sum, asked for clarification regarding the verbal and written exchanges which had passed between Gandhi and Jinnah in September 1944 at Bombay. This material had, of course, been public property for nearly five months. Nevertheless, on 26 February, the Mahatma dutifully went through the ritual of filling out the answers.

130 For an account of the fate of Desai after the release of the Congress Working Committee (on 15 June 1945), see Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.126.
131 For Wavell's reaction to H.M.G. making such use of Desai's initiative, see Wavell to Amery, 12 March 1945; T.P., Vol. V, p.671.
132 See n. 110 above.
Gandhi's willingness to be slotted into the place assigned to him by Sapru was not repeated, however, as regards Desai's activities. In the wake of Desai's formula being made public on 13 January, the Mahatma's initial qualified endorsement of it was progressively withdrawn. The nature of Gandhi's anxiety, to which Desai's initiative gave rise, was expressed on 24 January.

Newspaper reports startle me . . . . [It] is reported that bypassing the Working Committee I want a coalition government to be formed. What do these reports mean? I have complete trust in you. Please see that nothing is done without the approval of the Working Committee.

Gandhi's subsequent communications with Desai provided ample evidence of the Mahatma's increasing desire to distance himself from the activities of the Congress Assemblyman. Gandhi had good cause for ensuring that such evidence was available. For the continuing imprisonment of most of the Working Committee members was exercising Desai's mind. But unlike Gandhi, who had openly and consistently associated release of the Congress High Command with progress towards a political settlement, Desai had confidentially indicated to the British that his formula could best be put into operation if the Working Committee remained incarcerated.

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134 See n. 124 above
136 See Gandhi to Desai, 31 January, 20 February and 8 April 1945; ibid., pp.80, 141 and 354.
137 See Wavell to Amery, 29 January 1945; Note by Attlee of Draft Telegram to Wavell, 30 January 1945; and Amery to Wavell, 2 March 1945; T.P., Vol. V, pp.479-81, 487-8, and 642.
While Gandhi was thus negotiating a safe path though the tortuous workings of the Indian political world, Wavell was pressing H.M.G. for a decision on his proposal for a British initiative in India. He had decided that his own presence in London was called for to expedite the matter. On 21 March, Wavell flew out of Karachi bound for Britain.

However, Wavell was to discover that H.M.G. could still make haste as slowly as it wished, irrespective of whether the Viceroy was in London or New Delhi. Wavell began his direct deliberations with the India Committee on 26 March. But it was not until 27 April that the Committee finally came up with a Report drawn up for the Cabinet's consideration. The Report advised on the form a British initiative in India should take. As to whether any such initiative was in itself advisable, the Report had nothing to offer.

We are unable to reach a united view as to whether a fresh step should now be taken. We feel that the decision on this must be for the War Cabinet. ¹³⁸

Though submitted on 27 April, another month passed before the Report was considered by Cabinet. During this period the military power of the German Reich was finally shattered, with the European war between the Allied and Axis Powers effectively terminated on 9 May. On 23 May, the British wartime Coalition Government resigned, and three days later a caretaker Conservative Government was formed under Churchill's leadership. A General Election was scheduled for 15 June.

¹³⁸War Cabinet India Committee Report on India: The Constitutional Position, 27 April 1945; ibid., p.985.
There was now the prospect of party differences over India emerging as a factor in British politics. On 23 May, Amery hastened to bring this to the Prime Minister's attention, while suggesting a way by which this danger could be averted.

The statement agreed by the India Committee as the best possible if anything is to be done at all would at once put an end to any attempt by the Socialist Party to make capital against us over India - Attlee and Cripps would have to bless it in the House.\textsuperscript{139}

The wheels of state now started turning with a view to resolving the issue Wavell had raised (in September 1944). The India Committee Report of 27 April was considered by Cabinet on 30 May. The following day, Wavell was invited to attend Cabinet, and was thus able to put forward his own views on the matter - there being a considerable difference between the Viceroy's original proposals and the processed recommendations of the India Committee Report. Churchill preferred Wavell's line of approach, so the India Committee was invited to meet with a view to amending their proposed statement of procedure so as to conform "with the further explanations which the Viceroy had given to the Cabinet."\textsuperscript{140} This was quickly done, and late in the evening of 31 May the final seal of approval was given by H.M.G. to Wavell's proposals for a British political initiative in India. On 1 June 1945, Wavell set out from Britain on his return to India.

\textsuperscript{139}Amery to Churchill, 23 may 1945; ibid., p.1057.
\textsuperscript{140}Cabinet Meeting Minute 1, 31 May 1945; ibid., p.1077.
CHAPTER TWO

June 1945 - March 1946

Delete the foreign power and the communal arguments and demands fall to the ground .... We are told of Islamic culture and Hindu culture, of religion and old custom, of ancient glories and the like. But behind all this lies political and social reaction .... An association with any form of communalism ... means a blind ignoring of world forces and events.¹

Jawaharlal Nehru, 1934.

[T]he real parties to the present struggle in India are not England and India, but the majority community and the minorities of India which can ill afford to accept the principle of Western democracy until it is properly modified to suit the actual conditions of life in India.²

Sir Muhammad Iqbal, mid-1930s.

I think that it is fair to say that we (the British) will have to find a way to enable them (the Indians) to get rid of us (the British) - if post-war Anglo-Indian relations are to remain reasonably good ....³

R.G. Casey, 1944.

I bear no enmity towards the English but I do towards their civilization.⁴


Wavell's Initiative: The Simla Conference

On 5 June 1945, Wavell arrived back in New Delhi. That evening, he disclosed to his Executive Council his proposals for a

¹Nehru's Statement to the Press, 5 January 1934; S.W.J.N., Vol. 6, pp.182-3.
political initiative in India, for which H.M.G. had given permission to proceed.

The Members gave the proposals a "very cold reception," and for the next week subjected the Viceroy's programme to various forms of protest. These included counter-proposals, hints of resignation, and leaks to the press. This negative reaction was partly due to the stress to which the Members had been subjected during Wavell's long absence in Britain. The root cause of their discomfort was the general appreciation that a political move was afoot, and that the days of the present Executive — whose Indian Members were execrated by many nationalists as collaborators of Empire — were numbered.

It never occurred to Wavell to allow the Executive Council's near-unanimous disapproval of the proposed initiative deter him from proceeding with its execution. The main act in Wavell's script proceeded pretty much on schedule. On 14 June, the White Paper with the British Government's constitutional proposals for India was published, and the Viceroy delivered a broadcast to the Indian public.

In his broadcast, Wavell made public his proposal to invite "Indian leaders ... to take counsel with me with a view to the formation of a new Executive Council more representative of organised political opinion ... [which] would include equal proportions of Caste Hindus and Moslems." The Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would be the only Britons serving on the new

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5 W.J., 6 June 1945, p.138.
6 See Wavell to Amery, 7 June 1945, and Ambedkar to Wavell, 7 June 1945; T.P., Vol. V, pp. 1089-91, 1093-4, and 1094-7. Also see W.L., 6-8 June, pp.139-40.
Council which "would work ... under the existing Constitution."\(^8\) Gandhi and Jinnah, "the recognised leaders of the two main political parties,"\(^9\) were prominent amongst the Indian leaders the Viceroy announced he intended to invite to the Conference he would hold at Simla, beginning on 25 June. Wavell also announced that "orders have been given for the immediate release of the members of the Working Committee of Congress who are still in detention."\(^10\)

Indian public reaction to the Viceroy's broadcast was "not unfavourable."\(^11\) There was apparent relief that something had been done to end the frustrating impasse which had blocked Indian political aspirations for so long. Nor had it passed unnoticed that the initiative had occurred in the wake of Wavell's visit to Britain. This gave rise to a widespread appreciation that Wavell had been promoting the Indian point of view in the British corridors of power. As V.P. Menon, the Viceroy's Reforms Commissioner (1942-47), was later to recall, "there was general acknowledgment of Lord Wavell's sincerity and of his earnest desire to end the political deadlock."\(^12\)

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The interval between the Viceroy's broadcast of 14 June and his convening of the Simla Conference on 25 June provided the occasion for his involvement in "a certain amount of preliminary

\(^8\)Ibid.
\(^9\)Ibid., p.1123.
\(^10\)Ibid., p.1124.
\(^11\)Wavell to Amery, 15 June 1945; ibid., p.1125.
telegraphic skirmishing with Gandhi and Jinnah."\(^{13}\) This "skirmishing" was initiated by Gandhi, in telegrams to the Viceroy's Private Secretary (14 June)\(^ {14}\) and to the Viceroy (15 June).\(^ {15}\) In these communications Gandhi pointed out that he held no official position within Congress — indeed, in 1934 he had "resigned" from the party — and queried Wavell's avoidance of the word "independence" in the course of his broadcast. These ritual gestures aside, he expressed — in a more serious vein — his opposition to Wavell's use of the term "caste Hindus".

[The phrase] rings untrue and offensive. Who will represent them at your table? Not Congress which seeks to represent without distinction all Indians who desire and work for independence.\(^ {16}\)

The tone of this response was suggestive of a pinched Gandhian nerve. "Untrue" was, in fact, the strongest adjective expressing reprobation in the Mahatma's vocabulary. That he should have employed it on this issue — and in addressing the Viceroy — was indicative of his belief that a great deal was at stake. Probably a great deal was. The categories of representation employed by the Raj would largely determine the nature of the issues to be addressed in the course of the negotiating process attendant on the transfer of power. So acceptance by the British of political categories reflecting the inveterate prejudices of Indian society — rather than the category of an Indian nationality conceptualized as the antipode of the British identity — constituted a grave threat to the prospects of an eventual realization of Gandhian political hopes.

\(^ {13}\)Wavell to King George VI, 19 July 1945; \textit{T.L.P.}, Vol. V, p.1276.
\(^ {14}\)see Gandhi to Jenkins, 14 June 1945; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 80, p.328.
\(^ {15}\)see Gandhi to Wavell, 15 June 1945; \textit{ibid.}, p.329.
\(^ {16}\)ibid.
Jinnah's response to Wavell's broadcast was devoid of any objections to its terminology. In telegrams of 15 and 16 June\textsuperscript{17} - the texts of which were made available to the press before the originals had been seen by Wavell\textsuperscript{18} - Jinnah requested clarification of the Viceroy's proposals, and postponement by two weeks of the convening of the Conference: this to permit consultation with his Working Committee on the League's response to the British initiative.

Wavell endeavoured to reply as "patiently and courteously\textsuperscript{19}" as he could to the points raised by the two elderly politicians. At the same time, he wished to avoid detailed discussion with both leaders to the "exclusion of other members of [the proposed] Conference."\textsuperscript{20} The Viceroy rejected Jinnah's request for a postponement. But Gandhi's more indirect line of approach did not lend itself to a similar blunt refusal. In a letter of 16 June,\textsuperscript{21} the Mahatma had indicated his preferred function at the approaching Conference and, indeed, on the wider canvas of British-Indian relations: that of an unofficial link-man, providing a behind-the-scenes communication service (and, no doubt, interpretation service) across cultural and party lines. He had cited the career of the Reverend Charles Andrews (1871 - 1940) as an analogy of what he had in mind. This idea entirely failed to recommend itself to Wavell. Upon receipt of Gandhi's letter, Wavell indicated to Amery the nature of the danger he

\textsuperscript{17}See Jinnah to Wavell, 15 and 16 June 1945; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. V, pp.1131 and 1132.
\textsuperscript{18}For Wavell's comment on Jinnah's actions, see \textit{W.A.}, 16 June 1945, p.142.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20}Wavell to Amery, 16 June 1945; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. V, p.1134.
\textsuperscript{21}See Gandhi to Wavell, 16 June 1945; ibid., pp.1132-3.
perceived as likely to arise, should the Mahatma act out his preferred role: "I want to avoid having him in Simla as [an] irresponsible adviser outside the Conference."22

With Gandhi thus proving difficult to write into the script, Wavell needed to adjust his line of approach in securing a Congress commitment to attend the approaching Conference. Gandhi's diffidence in assuming the open leadership role assigned him by Wavell may have been given edge by the shift in the Congress locus of power, brought about by the release of the Working Committee (effective on 15 June). Wavell had timed this goodwill gesture so as to assist in the favourable reception of his broadcast in nationalist circles. But by so doing, he had rendered his scheme dependent on the Working Committee's approval of a Congress participation in it. The party discipline which made the Working Committee's attitude of import had been characteristic of the internal workings of Congress ever since Gandhi's overhaul of its organizational structure in 1920. Appropriately, it was Gandhi who guided the Viceroy as to the best procedure to adopt towards Congress. On 16 June, in lieu of his own direct involvement, he advised Wavell to "secure the presence at your table of the President of the Congress or whomsoever he and his Committee may appoint for the purpose."23

Wavell followed this advice. Acting through the Governor of Bengal, he issued an invitation to Azad at his home in Calcutta. Azad telegraphed his acknowledgement on 18 June,24 informing the Viceroy that the invitation to attend the Conference would be

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22Wavell to Amery, 17 June 1945; ibid., p.1135.
considered by the Working Committee in session at Bombay on 21 June.

While this meeting of the Working Committee was pending, Gandhi made a move which added to his reputation for doing the unexpected. He apparently judged that the moment was ripe to make public the text of his "naked fakir" letter to Churchill of 17 July 1944. It was published in the Bombay Chronicle on 19 June.

On 21 June, the Working Committee authorized Azad to accept Wavell's invitation to attend the Simla Conference. Azad communicated this intelligence to Wavell, who placed an aircraft at the Maulana's disposal to speed his journey. Gandhi left Bombay on 22 June, bound for Simla on the Frontier Mail. It was an occasion calling for symbolic emphasis. The Mahatma insisted on travelling the 1,100 miles third class.

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On 22 June, Wavell travelled up to Simla. The next day, he had an interview with Malik Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana, the Unionist Premier of the Punjab. Khizar was broadly representative of those Indian political elements - usually drawn from the traditional agrarian social establishment - which had supported the Raj during the war. Wavell found Khizar "very upset" at the prospect of an

25 See Chapter One, n.53 above.
30 W.J., 23 June 1945, p.144.
executive Council made up solely of nominees of Congress and the League.

He said I was handing over power to the enemy, that my [viceregal power of] veto was 'dead as mutton', and prophesied chaos and disaster all round.\(^{31}\)

Khizar (doubtless looking back to precedents set by Fazli Husain in the 1930's\(^ {32}\)) was hoping Wavell would include a Punjabi Unionist Muslim in the new Executive Council. This ambition placed Khizar amongst those elements - which included Congress - denying the Muslim League's claim to be the sole representative of Indian Muslims at the all-India level. Securing an Executive posting for one of his party associates was essential to the Punjabi Premier's political prospects. It would provide evidence of his party's prestige and influence with central government, which in turn would legitimize the Unionists in Punjabi provincial perceptions. But responding to the needs of its loyal wartime supporters was not necessarily a high priority consideration with the Raj. As Wavell pontificated in reporting the incident to Amery:

I will certainly do what I can to help [Khizar] ... but I am not sure that the Punjab or [the] Unionist Party can produce [a sufficiently] impressive candidate for inclusion in [the Executive] Council.\(^ {33}\)

\(^{31}\)Ibid.

\(^{32}\)Fazli Husain had organised the Unionist Party as a coalition of Muslim and Hindu Jat agrarian interests. The Unionists dominated the Punjab political scene from 1921 to 1945, and kept the province firmly under constitutional government during the periods of British-Congress confrontation. The British rewarded the Unionists for their co-operative attitude - and provided the Party with a fillip to its prestige - by selecting a Unionist for the Executive Council. For an account of the eventual collapse of the Unionist political position, see Stephen Oren, "The Sikhs, Congress, and the Unionists in British Punjab, 1937-1945," Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 8, Part 3, July 1974, pp.397-418.

During the early afternoon of 24 June, Wavell met with Gandhi. Though he had occupied the viceregal position for over twenty months, this was Wavell's first meeting with the politician who had held, for a quarter of a century, a position of frequently unchallenged prominence on the Indian scene. The interview lasted for nearly two hours and, in Wavell's account, was "mainly a discursive monologue by Mr Gandhi interspersed by numerous digressions."34 Of the issues raised by Gandhi, some dealt with Congress interests while others were of symbolic Gandhian significance. Belonging to the latter category was the Mahatma's expressed preference for the term "non-Scheduled Hindus" in place of the Viceroy's "caste Hindus" phase.35 On the issue of communal parity in the Executive Council between these "non-Scheduled Hindus" and Muslims, Gandhi echoed the position which had been adopted by Azad during an interview with the Viceroy earlier that day: "that Congress would accept equality of Caste Hindus and Muslims but would not compromise on the method of selection."36 Both the Maulana and the Mahatma had made clear the Congress bottom line on the communal issue, indicating to Wavell the policy position from which they would not retreat in the face of the rising communalist clamour.

Congress must have a voice in the selection of non-Hindus; and Muslims in particular must not be selected by an exclusively communal body.37

The interview ended with the Mahatma giving "a sort of general blessing on the proposals which he said he had recommended to the

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34 W.J., 24 June 1945, p.146.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
Working Committee."\(^{38}\) However, Gandhi had not addressed the matter of most immediate interest to the Viceroy: whether the Conference would be graced by the Mahatma's presence. As Wavell reported to Amery, the Viceroy needed to broach the subject himself.

I ... asked Gandhi if he proposed to attend the conference. He said he represented nobody but himself, but if I wished, would attend and sit in a corner. He thought his presence was undesirable. He said he would stay in Simla if I wanted him .... I left this matter open.\(^{39}\)

During the late afternoon of 24 June, the League President arrived at the Viceregal Lodge for a pre-Conference interview. Jinnah raised a number of objections which addressed the very substance of Wavell's initiative. He denied that parity would be attained on the new Executive Council, given that - in his view - the Sikh and Untouchable Members would invariably side with the caste Hindus. Jinnah suggested "that if the majority of the Muslims were opposed to any measure, it should not go by vote."\(^{40}\) Wavell opposed this proposition on the grounds that it would be undemocratic. The Viceroy also refused to promise his support for Jinnah's claim that "the Muslim League had the right to nominate all Muslim Members to the new Council."\(^{41}\) This led Jinnah to query whether the Viceroy intended to allow Congress to nominate Muslims. Wavell replied that he also had in mind the nomination by the Unionist Party of the Punjab of a Muslim. This led to a long diatribe [by Jinnah] to the effect that the Unionist Party were traitors to the interests of the Muslims.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{38}\)Ibid.
\(^{39}\)Ibid., p.1153.
\(^{40}\)V.P. Menon, op. cit., p.190.
\(^{42}\)W.J., 24 June 1945, p.146.
It was apparent that the Muslim League leader was deeply troubled by the direction in which Wavell's initiative was proposing Indian politics should move. The nature of Jinnah's objections - querying as they did the very basis of the British proposals - suggested he was preparing a party policy position from which to bring about the breakdown of the approaching Conference. From the vantage point provided by forty years' hindsight, Ayesha Jalal had claimed, with some justification, that this was indeed Jinnah's purpose, holding that he had "come to [the] Simla [Conference] precisely to ensure its failure."43

Jalal attributes Jinnah's line of approach to the difficulties he was experiencing in必须 the Muslim politicians from the Muslim majority provinces under the League's banner at the all-India level. This was particularly the case in Sind, where the League had split into two bitterly opposed factions, and in Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province. Both of these last-named provinces had recently seen the collapse of League ministries, Bengal passing under Governor's rule (under Section 93 of the 1935 Government of India Act) and the Frontier Province experiencing a return to Congress rule as the steady release from prison of Congress Assemblermen gave them the numbers in the Legislature to force a change of ministry. Even more perilous for Jinnah was the prospect of a Punjabi Unionist presence on the new Executive Council: such a presence would make nonsense of his claims that the League was the sole representative of Indian Muslims at the Centre. Unless and until a united Muslim League swept the Muslim

majority provinces in a dominant electoral showing, Jinnah had to rely basically on bluff at the all-India level. Wavell's initiative was threatening to bring about a reconstruction of the executive Council which would reflect the real political balance of power between the parties. A successful outcome to the Simla Conference would thus expose the hollowness of Jinnah's representative claims.

It was hardly surprising that Wavell thought Jinnah looked "depressed and not sure of his position."\textsuperscript{44} Nor was the League President's perceived condition at all improved by the Viceroy's answer to his final query. Jinnah wanted to know if Gandhi would be at the Conference. Wavell observed that Jinnah "seemed rather upset."\textsuperscript{45} upon learning of Gandhi's intention of staying away from the negotiating table. This intelligence may well have been unwelcome to Jinnah because of what it indicated as to the type of approach Congress would be adopting at the Conference. It was usually the Congress practice to summon Gandhi to the helm when confrontation with the Raj was in the offing. Gandhi's genius was in discovering a moral basis - recognised as such by both friend and foe alike - for any move by the Congress High Command towards confrontation. Jinnah's reaction may have been based on his realization that he alone would have to carry the burden of wrecking the Conference. Jinnah may well have considered the Mahatma's non-attendance as a sign that Congress would be adopting a flexible approach to Wavell's proposals, with a view to achieving a settlement.

\textsuperscript{44} Wavell to Amery, 25 June 1945; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. V, p.1154.
\textsuperscript{45} R.L.P., 24 June 1945, p.147.
Perhaps it was Jinnah's distress at learning of Gandhi's decision not to attend the Conference which prompted the Viceroy to endeavour to secure at least the Mahatma's continued presence in the Simla locale. That evening, Wavell sent a note to the residence of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Chairman of the All-India Women's Conference, with whom Gandhi was staying. From its contents, it was clear that the Viceroy had reconsidered the balance of benefits to the prospects of the Conference provided by the Mahatma's association with it, that an "irresponsible" Gandhian presence might be better than none at all. Wavell wrote to Gandhi: "I shall be grateful if you will remain in Simla during the conference." Gandhi's approach had thus drawn from Wavell an implied recognition that the Mahatma's presence was a source of legitimation for the political activities about to take place at Simla. The next day, Gandhi duly acknowledged the Viceroy's note and assented to his request.

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On the morning of 25 June the Simla Conference got under way, with Wavell delivering the opening address. The Viceroy's speech was favourably received in Indian public perceptions. Gandhi's secretary assessed that "on all accounts Lord Wavell began well, guiding the deliberations of the conference with great tact, delicacy and a quiet wisdom."

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46 See Chapter Two, n.22 above.
48 See Gandhi to Wavell, 25 June 1945; ibid., p.364.
The main gist of Wavell's message was of the need for the Conference's deliberations to "rise above the level of old prejudices and enmities and of party and sectional advantage." He also defined the nature of his relationship to the representatives of the Indian political establishment assembled before him. According to Pyarelal, the Viceroy said:

You must accept my leadership for the present .... I will endeavour to guide the discussion of this conference in what I believe to be the best interests of the country.51

This declaration of viceregal intent drew a favourable response from Gandhi. He commented from the wings that apparently Wavell's chosen role at the Conference was to act "as its leader and not as the agent of Whitehall."52

By the end of the morning session of 26 June the Conference had reached general agreement on parity for caste Hindus and Muslims on the proposed Executive Council. This still left to be decided what Wavell identified as "the real crux of the whole matter": 53 who was to decide on the selection of the Muslim members of the Council. At this point both Jinnah and Rajagopalachari held that private consultations between the two main parties were in order. With this in view, Wavell adjourned the Conference.

However, the private discussions which took place between Congress and the League over the next few days failed to arrive at any basis for settlement. It was clear from the outset the Jinnah

51Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.132.
52Ibid.
53Ibid., 26 June 1945, p.148.
intended to maintain an "extreme League attitude" in his dealings with non-League Muslims: he refused to recognise Azad as eligible to represent Congress. The Congress Working Committee did not respond entirely negatively to Jinnah's move; they appointed G.B. Pant, the former Premier of the United Provinces, to act as Congress spokesman in Azad's stead in negotiating with Jinnah.

When the Conference reconvened on 29 June it was reported that Jinnah and Pant had failed to reach agreement. So Wavell proposed that all the interest groups represented at the Conference draw up lists of persons whom they would like to see included in the Executive Council. Wavell reserved the right to put forward names of his own choice. From the combined pool of names, the Viceroy would form on paper an Executive Council and present this to the Conference. It would then be over to the Conference to decide whether such a Council was acceptable.

Wavell's proposal received a mixed reception. Khizar for the Punjabi Unionists, Tara Singh for the Akali Sikhs, and the leaders of the other lesser parties were supportive in their respective responses. Even Congress agreed to co-operate. Only two parties refused to commit themselves - the Scheduled Castes Federation and the Muslim League. Both dissenting parties cited the disharmony between the representative claims of Congress, and the inveterate divisions of Indian society, as explanatory of their refusal to co-operate.

Wavell adjourned the Conference until 14 July. He wanted to give each consenting party sufficient time for consideration of candidates, and himself time to draw up his selection. Wavell was

also hoping the dissenting parties might use the time to reconsider their attitude. And one dissenting delegate did change his position: the Untouchable representative decided to cooperate with the Viceroy's scheme. Wavell recorded the development in his diary.

Siva Raj came to see me ... [after the session of the Conference] and agreed to submit a list after consulting his Committee.55

Only Jinnah made no move to modify his dissenting stance.

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While events unfolded at the Conference's official venue at the Viceregal Lodge, Gandhi was holding court at Amrit Kaur's residence, offering to the public the standard Gandhian fare of prayer meetings and press interviews. During the periods when the Conference was not in session, the Mahatma attended the meetings held by the Congress negotiating team as well as having private interviews with some of the key members. It was in the course of these contacts with the Congress High Command that Gandhi made his contribution to the Simla Conference. The objective he consistently worked for was to ensure that the Conference would not be successful at the expense of the representative claims of Congress.

There were two issues which Gandhi raised in the course of these contacts, both of which were designed to build a protective fence around the principle of Congress Muslim candidacy while at the same time being aimed at removing the intermediary aspect of

55\textsuperscript{55}\textsuperscript{55} 29 June 1945, p.150.
the British role. The first of these was to urge the Congress leaders to do away with British-sponsored communal parity in the Executive Council, by voluntarily choosing sub-parity for the caste Hindus. In this, he was unsuccessful. In his account of Gandhi's efforts to achieve this goal, Pyarelal caught the spirit, as well as recording the outcome, of the Mahatma's pleadings.

Gandhiji argued with the Congress leaders that ... Congress should ... break the parity by nominating the best Indians drawn from all minority groups, including one representative each of Anglo-Indians, Englishmen, Parsis, Sikhs, Jews (if available), Indian Christians, Scheduled Castes, and women .... Unfortunately, the Congress Working Committee could not be persuaded to adopt Gandhiji's proposal.56

Having overreached himself in attempting to persuade the Congress leaders to reject parity, Gandhi made his second stand on an issue less radically at variance with the gist of the British proposals. When the Congress Working Committee met on 3 July, to draw up its list of names for the Viceroy's consideration as candidates for the new Executive Council, Gandhi advocated that their selection should give representation to as many minority communities as possible, while at the same time meeting the requirement that there be an equal number of caste Hindus and Muslims. This time, the Congress leaders followed the Mahatma's advice. On 6 July, the Congress list was ready for Azad to submit to the Viceroy. There were fifteen names in all: the required five caste Hindus and five Muslims, along with two Untouchables, a Parsi, a Sikh, and Amrit Kaur - Gandhi's Simla hostess - whose attributes included being both an Indian Christian and a woman.

Two of the Muslims were Congressmen. On 7 July, Azad sent the panel of names, along with a covering letter, to Wavell.  

* * *

While Gandhi had thus influenced proceedings at the Simla Conference - by insisting in private deliberations on a non-communal Congress policy position - Jinnah made his impact by a more direct avenue. On 27 June, in an appraisal of the problem areas which had so far emerged, Wavell had identified "the attitude of Jinnah ... [with] his claim to nominate all Muslim members" as the "main stumbling-block" threatening the further progress of the Conference. In reporting this to Amery, the Viceroy drew to his attention - though partly in a different context - the three conditions which made the round of negotiations being conducted in Simla such a perilous business for the League President. The first two of these were disunity of purpose within the League establishment and the non-League Muslim provincial challenge.

I am told ... [Jinnah] is under pressure from some of the League Premiers not to allow the Conference to break down on this claim. The most difficult problem will be to provide for the inclusion of a Punjab Muslim.

The third condition perilous to Jinnah was the product of Gandhi's failure to convince his Congress colleagues to reject the principle of communal parity, as sponsored by the British. As Wavell reported this development to Amery:

57 For Azad's covering letter and the Congress list of names, see Azad to Wavell, 7 July 1945; T.I.R., Vol. V, pp.1202-5.
58 Wavell to Amery, 27 June 1945; ibid., p.1166.
59 Ibid., pp.1166-7.
The attitude of Congress so far has been conciliatory and reasonable.60 The mutual support factor uniting Gandhi and Jinnah61 was apparently not functioning, at least as yet. And with Jinnah thus skating, so to speak, on very thin political ice, Wavell noticed that certain changes had occurred in his general demeanour. After an interview he gave the League leader on 27 June, the Viceroy reported these changes to Amery.

I thought Jinnah [was] worried and ill at ease. He was more polite and less businesslike than usual.62

With all the other parties in the process of submitting their lists of names, Jinnah finally made a move to bring the League into accord with the general consensus of the Conference. On 7 July, Jinnah wrote to Wavell requesting that the selection of Muslims for the Executive Council be by private consultation between the Viceroy and the League President.63 With the selection by Wavell of a non-League Muslim a likely prospect, Jinnah needed a veil to cover the selection process, so that he could later claim that the choice had been made only at his sufferance.

Jinnah was showing the Viceroy an avenue by which he was prepared to proceed in bringing to pass a Muslim League participation in a new Executive Council. But all this was too subtle for Wavell. He had clearly established the ground rules by which he expected the Indian parties to abide in participating in his selection scheme, and he was not going to let one of the

60Ibid., p.1167.
61See Chapter One, n.70 and n.71 above, along with the passage joining them.
63See Jinnah to Wavell, 7 July 1945; ibid., p.1206.
parties into the Executive Council by a private and privileged entrance. So when, on 8 July, he summoned Jinnah to the Viceregal Lodge for an interview, it was with a view to persuading the League President to modify his public demands, not to put into operation — or to even explore — Jinnah's hope for a veiled selection of the Muslim quota of the new Executive Council. In the context of this viceregal intent, it was hardly surprising that Wavell found his visitor in a "high state of nervous tension."64 The Viceroy privately recorded his opinion as to the cause of Jinnah's discomfort.

[Jinnah] is obviously in great difficulties .... He fears now to be made the scapegoat for the failure of the Conference; and yet will not give up anything of his claim to represent all Muslims.65

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On 9 July, Jinnah resolved his dilemma. In a letter to Wavell, he demonstrated his order of priorities by notifying the Viceroy of his final refusal to submit a list of names on behalf of the Muslim League.66

It was now the Viceroy who was faced with a dilemma: whether to proceed with the British initiative without the participation of the League, or to pronounce the failure of the Simla Conference. Anticipating such a development, Wavell had already canvassed his provincial Governors for advice.67

64 W.J., 9 July 1945, p.153.
65 Ibid.
67 See Wavell to Provincial Governors, 30 June 1945; ibid., p.1175. Four of the Governors — of Bombay, Madras, North-West Frontier Province, and Sind
Wavell made the decision not to proceed with the formation of a politically representative Executive Council without the League's participation. However, he gave Jinnah one more chance. The Viceroy proceeded to choose a provisional selection of names, with the intention of using it as a point of reference in one last effort to write the League into the Conference script. In Wavell's provisional selection, four Muslim Leaguers shared the Muslim quota with a Muslim Punjabi from Khizar's list.68

Jinnah was not interested. When Wavell met him on 11 July, the only change of approach shown by the League President was in the direction of a hardening of attitude. Wavell recorded the outcome that evening.

[Jinnah] refused even to discuss names unless he could be given the absolute right to select all Muslims and some guarantee that any decision which the Muslims opposed in Council could only be passed by a two-thirds majority .... I said that these conditions were entirely unacceptable.69

The Viceroy had arranged a meeting with Gandhi to follow the interview with Jinnah: it was essential to receive the two leaders in that order, as Jinnah's reaction to Wavell's provisional selection would determine whether the Conference would continue or be brought to a close. With the failure of the Conference now definite, Wavell decided that his "main object ...

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68The four Muslim Leaguers were: Liaquat Ali Khan, Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman, Essak Salt and Khwaja Nazimuddin; Khizar's Muslim Punjabi was Muhammad Nawaz Khan.

69W.L., 11 July 1945, p.154.
must be to close proceedings with [the] minimum of communal friction." It was towards enlisting the Mahatma's aid in achieving this end that Wavell directed the interview.

Gandhi expressed no surprise at learning of the failure of the Conference. However, in reply to Wavell's request for assistance in calming communal passions, the Mahatma made it clear that he was opposed to British endeavours to mediate between the Indian communal parties. In his report to Amery that evening, Wavell spelt out Gandhi's conception of the appropriate British role.

[Gandhi] thought His Majesty's Government would have to decide sooner or later to come down on the side of Congress or the League, or of Hindu or Moslem, since they could not resolve their differences by themselves. Gandhi's advice did not recommend itself to the Viceroy. As his Reforms Commissioner was later to recall, Wavell replied that "an imposed settlement could hardly result in peace or self-government in India."

This exchange between Gandhi and Wavell struck a strange note, rather out of accord with the usual perception of the Indian political order of things - at least, as interpreted by nationalists. Apparently there was something peculiar to Indian communal problems which made them difficult to fit into the Gandhian schema. The Mahatma was not able or willing to suggest a distinctly Gandhian line of approach offering a solution to the issue. Instead, Gandhi advised the intervention of the arm of the Imperial state, as given direction by the preferences of India's Imperial rulers.

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71 Ibid., p.1226.
72 V.P. Menon, op. cit., p.207.
Nevertheless, even more strangely, Gandhi's advice to Wavell informed the Congress Working Committee's consensus. On 14 July, when the delegates reconvened at the Viceregal Lodge, Wavell announced the failure of the Conference. The Congress team had ready a statement, prepared for the press, which spelt out where, in their perception, the fault for the disappointing outcome lay.

The British Government cannot absolve themselves of the responsibility for the communal problem .... [They] must take up a firm stand on a just and fair basis .... And once a decision is taken, we must move forward .... Without determination, nothing can be done .... [Once] we decide, hesitation is not a virtue but a sign of definite weakness.73

This constituted the response of the Congress High Command - with Gandhi leading the way - to the transformed conditions of Indian politics, attendant on the development of a communal threat to Indian unity: an appeal to the British to stand by their values ("just and fair") and govern their Indian Empire with a "firm" hand, while shepherding their Indian charges towards self-government. The body of men whose nationalist careers had, for some, culminated in 1942, in directing a movement the motif of which had been expressed by the call for the British to "quit" India, had seemingly come a long way in three years.

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In winding up the Simla Conference, Wavell acted on the priority he had outlined to Amery: that of minimizing communal friction. In his final address to the Conference on 14 July,

Wavell identified Jinnah's refusal to discuss the Viceroy's provisional selection as the moment when he felt "it would be useless to continue." But Wavell did not blame the League president for the disappointing result; instead, he held that "the responsibility for the failure is mine." In absolving Jinnah of the blame, Wavell was not only manoeuvring to avoid giving a communal hue to popular perceptions of the cause of the failure. The Viceroy was also prompted to do so by his belief that Jinnah, in his intransigent stand, had given expression to a genuine Indian Muslim political consensus. But in indicating this aspect of his motives, Wavell confined expressing himself to confidential communications to the Secretary of State.

The deeper cause [of the failure] was the real distrust of the Muslims, other than nationalist Muslims, for the Congress and the Hindus. Their fear that the Congress, by parading its national character and using Muslim dummies will permeate the entire administration of any united India is real, and cannot be dismissed as an obsession of Jinnah and his immediate entourage.

Thanks to Wavell's decision not to proceed with forming a new Executive Council without the League's participation, the perilous situation confronting Jinnah - the prospect of an interim arrangement which reflected the reality of the political balance of power - was now behind him. The League leader could move back on to the ground made safe from realistic assessments of party strength by the lack of an agreed upon basis of political exchange. Jinnah used the occasion of the last session of the Conference to direct attention back to the Pakistan issue. But

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75 Ibid.
76 Wavell to Amery, 15 July 1945; ibid., p.1263.
Jinnah's address did not take the form of a crude call for partition: with the representatives of the Raj present, a more complex - and more revealing - demand was lodged. In asserting the League's determination to achieve Pakistan, Jinnah indicated two measures which, should the British enact them, would satisfy Muslim demands: "a declaration by His Majesty's Government giving Muslims the right of self-determination; and equality for Muslims with all other communities in the interim arrangement." And apparently this second measure had the potential to be indefinitely extended in time, as Jinnah held that "an interim arrangement might well become permanent." So while Pakistan as an ideal condition was authoritatively described - that of Indian Muslim political equality, relative to non-Muslim Indians, in any all-India political arrangement - Jinnah indicated that the form it might take was to be contingent on future developments.

Most of the delegates at the Conference expressed surprise and disappointment that Wavell had seen fit to allow the Muslim League to veto the British initiative for advancing Indian national aspirations. This was certainly the line taken by the Congress team. But the Viceroy offered them no explanation as to the considerations determining his decision. It was diplomatic of him not to do so, because such explanations would have brought into focus delicate considerations: British suspicion of Congress, the reluctance of Churchill and many of his Ministers to promote progress towards Indian independence, and the increasingly decrepit state of the Raj.

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77 Hodson, op. cit., p.125.
78 V.P. Menon, op. cit., p.211.
Four main considerations determined Wavell's decision not to proceed with the formation of a new Executive Council without the Muslim League's participation. In the first place, the main objective in attempting to form a politically representative Executive Council had been to bring Congress and the League together in the task of governing India. It had been hoped that such collaboration would have defused the communal situation and facilitated a long-term constitutional settlement. If Wavell had proceeded without the League, this objective would have been foregone. Secondly, if a Congress-dominated Executive Council had taken office there was the prospect of the League turning to agitational activity aimed at destabilizing the administration. Such activity might well have exposed the run-down condition of the services, especially their British element. Thirdly, the British had cause to be wary of the prospect of Congress taking over government, in view of the record of Congress opposition to the prosecution of the war, as expressed in its most violent form during the rebellion of August-September 1942. This record of Congress disloyalty to the British Empire in its hour of peril gave edge to the fourth factor constraining the Viceroy. For Wavell was aware that Churchill's caretaker Government would probably veto any scheme which brought Congress into the Executive Council without a League presence to hold it in balance. It is important to note that Wavell was anticipating that the British General Election, taking place concurrently with the Simla Conference, would result in a "reasonable working majority for the
present [Conservative] Government." In any case, this suspicion of Congress was shared in large measure by the Viceroy himself.

Before leaving Simla, Gandhi sent a letter to Wavell, giving his post-mortem analysis of the outcome of the Conference. Confirming the high esteem enjoyed by the Viceroy in Indian public perceptions, the Mahatma absolved Wavell of responsibility for its failure.

It grieves me to think that the conference which began so happily and so hopefully should have ended in apparent failure - due exactly, as it would seem, to the same cause as before. This time you have taken the blame on your own shoulders. But the world will think otherwise. India certainly does.

The "same cause as before" undoubtedly referred to Jinnah and the Muslim League's communalist claims. But Gandhi was conscious that British suspicion of Congress had provided the context which had enabled Jinnah to pitch his claims to such an unprecedented height.

I must not hide from you the suspicion that the deeper cause is perhaps the reluctance of the official world to part with power, which the passing of ... virtual control into the hands of their erstwhile prisoners would have meant.

Both Wavell and Gandhi had located their respective "deeper cause" to account for the failure of the Simla Conference: general Muslim distrust for the political intentions of Congress and the Hindus, and British reluctance to transfer power to Congress. Both theories had a kernel of truth sufficient to

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80 For an indication of this suspicion, see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 August 1945; ibid., Vol. VI, pp.59-60.
82 Ibid.
83 Compare Chapter Two, n.76 and n.82 above.
provide a plausible explanation of the events which had occurred. However, the Viceroy's empirical and - on this subject - relatively disinterested inspection had focused on the burgeoning phenomenon of Indian Muslim political separatism. His analysis, therefore, would be vindicated over the next two years, as having identified the primal factor influencing political events in India. In contrast, it was perhaps significant that Gandhi's more ideologically-channelled mind, fashioned by a lifetime of commitment to issues located on the British-Indian political interface, had clung to factors which were fading from the Indian scene. In mid-1945 - but even more so by the time of the eventual denouement in 1947 - this response could well have been taken as symptomatic of the Mahatma's political obsolescence.

British-Indian political contention was in fact becoming marginal to Indian politics. The Simla Conference had illustrated this development. The principal act which had determined its outcome had been Jinnah's rejection of the British political initiative, with its prospect of an Indian political advance. The principal condition of Indian politics which had emerged as likely to be of formative significance for the future was the Muslim League's achievement of de facto British acknowledgement of its quasi-national status. This acknowledgement had been implied by the British refusal to proceed with an interim arrangement without the League's participation. And the principal contending party against which Jinnah had directed his action, and whose interests were most threatened by the League's enhanced political status, was Congress, with its non-communal all-India national representative claims.

At the Conference, Gandhi had assumed the role of the principal guardian of the non-communal representative claims of
Congress - though he had operated from outside the official venue. He had not been entirely happy with the tactic adopted by the Congress team at the negotiating table: that of accommodating Congress policy to meet the requirements of the British initiative. But there had been little action on the British-Congress front. With Jinnah making a lonely stand in opposition to the British proposals, there had been no logical reason for the Congress team to raise their own objections to the British scheme - such action on their part would only have eased Jinnah's position. Furthermore, with Wavell bringing the Conference to a close because of Jinnah's stand, the Congress team had not needed to decide on whether to accept Wavell's provisional choice - this being kept secret, except for the five Muslim names which Wavell had disclosed to Jinnah.

We can only speculate as to what Gandhi's reaction would have been to Wavell's provisional list: there were no Muslims included amongst the four Congressmen named.\footnote{The four Congressmen were Nehru, Patel and Prasad - all caste Hindus - along with Muniswami Pillai, an Untouchable. For Wavell's complete Provisional selection, see Wavell to Amery, 9 July 1945; T.R., Vol. V, pp.1215-7.} However, while the Viceroy had ruled against Congress in respect to Muslim candidacy, he had also ruled against the League's sole Muslim representative claims. Wavell's inclusion of one of Khizar's Punjabi Muslims may have sufficiently recommended his list to the Congress team - especially to Azad, the Congress leader most desirous of a settlement\footnote{At the conference, Azad found that he enjoyed common ground with Khizar: he found the Punjabi Premier "helpful and co-operative." See Azad, op. cit., p.110.} - to elicit their approval. But it is unlikely that Gandhi would have given up his insistence on upholding the
principle of Congress Muslim candidacy. However, whether Gandhi
would have been able to carry the Congress Working Committee with
him is another matter. This consideration brings into focus
Gandhi's real handicap at Simla: the willingness of the recently
released Congress leaders to go along with Wavell's initiative.
Gandhi's leadership function arose from his aptitude in rallying
the nationalist forces in their conflict with the British by
asserting principles in support of which nationalists could unite.
At Simla in mid-1945, the Congress establishment did not want such
leadership, and - not being presented with confrontational
proposals from Congress - Wavell had no pressing need for the
Mahatma's services as a supposedly conciliatory nationalist leader
who could act as a figure of mediation. Instead, Jinnah had posed
the obstacles to settlement; Jinnah had been the leader the
Viceroy had focused on as the key to the Conference's prospects of
success; and Jinnah's refusal to accede to Wavell's terms had
been the decisive factor bringing about the Conference's failure.

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A Muslim Nationalist Reaction: Azad's Aborted Initiative

Gandhi returned to his ashram at Sevagram on 18 July. As in
the aftermath of the failure of his talks with Jinnah in September
1944, likewise in the wake of the failure of the Simla Conference
the Mahatma preferred to temporarily withdraw from the all-India
scene.
Gandhi's journey to Wardha had been made in a special train, provided by the "kind courtesy of the authorities." A growing feature of Indian politics was the clashes between rival demonstrators - radical nationalists, Muslim separatists, Communists and others - which occurred at railway stations when political leaders were travelling through in scheduled trains. The unsettling experience of Gandhi's train having been subjected to "wild demonstrations", during his journey from Bombay to Simla on 22 and 23 June, had prompted the railway authorities to offer - and the Mahatma to accept - the unscheduled special. Having arrived at Sevagram without incident, but aware that a clash had occurred on the platform of Delhi station in front of Azad's compartment, Gandhi delivered a statement to the press deplored the ominous rise of violent politically - motivated public behaviour.

I had to travel from Kalka to Wardha like a thief .... Why should I have to escape the embarrassing affection of the public? .... What is most painful is the fact that this wildness is no prelude to swaraj, it is no sign of non-violence.

Gandhi settled in at Sevagram for a period of activity devoted to programmes of rural uplift. He proclaimed his present intentions to the public on 19 July by the indirect measure of an address to his ashram workers, the text of which soon found its way to the press. On 21 July, the Hindu of Madras cited his words.

There is no cause for frustration or

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87 Gandhi's Statement to the Press, 18 July 1945; C.W.M.G., Vol. 81, p.4.
88 See Gandhi's Interview with M.N. Tandon (a correspondent of the Communist weekly People's War), 17 July 1945; ibid., p.2.
89 Gandhi's Statement to the Press, 18 July 1945; ibid., p.4.
disappointment as a result of the failure of the Simla Conference. We should carry on more vigorously our constructive work and other national activities for strengthening our position and serving the masses.  

For the next month Gandhi remained at Sevagram. But he did not confine his activities to ashram and rural uplift concerns. He kept up a steady stream of appeals, addressed to Wavell or Jenkins, on behalf of Congress prisoners awaiting execution, or captured soldiers of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army which was assisting the Japanese against the Allies in the South-East Asia theatre of war. The result of the General election in Britain also attracted Gandhi's attention. On 4 August, he wrote to Amery's successor, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Labour Government's Secretary of State for India.

May I send you my congratulations on your appointment? If the India Office is to receive a decent burial and a nobler monument is to rise from its ashes, who can be a fitter person than you for the work?

While Gandhi was thus engaged at Sevagram, Jinnah basked in the all-India glow of the achievement by which he had determined the outcome of the Simla Conference. The self-esteem of the main body of the politically-aware members of the Indian Muslim community had been raised by the spectacle of the Muslim League leader assuming a position of primary importance on the all-India political stage. This heightened self-esteem had generated tendencies favouring the political consolidation of Indian Muslims. This in turn had aroused the expectation that in any future electoral contest the Muslim League might well validate its communal representative claims. Such expectations were of

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90 Gandhi's Address to Ashram Workers, 19 July 1945; ibid., p.8.
91 Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 4 August 1945; ibid., p.69.
particular significance in Muslim majority provinces where the
League was not in office. This was even the case in North-West
frontier Province, where the pro-Congress Khudai Khidmatgars
(Servants of God) - also identified by their uniform as the
"Redshirts" - were so strong, and where a Congress Ministry held
sway. The Governor, Sir George Cunningham, reported to the
viceroy how his province had been affected by such developments.

The Muslim League leaders are elated at Jinnah's
success, and consider that their own prestige has
been considerably increased. They express their
determination to oppose any attempt to form ... [a
politically representative] Executive Council ... unless either the League's claim to nominate all
the Muslim members is conceded, or general
elections are held and an interim Government is
formed in the light of the election results ....
[E]ducated Muslims, other than keen supporters of
the League, ... find a certain satisfaction in the
thought that Muslims have proved too strong for
the Hindus.92

The growing consolidation of Indian Muslim political
sentiment, as generated by and focused on the enhanced prestige of
the Muslim League, set the stage for a crisis of identity for
Indian Muslim nationalists. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, as Congress
President, was more exposed than most Muslim nationalists to the
pressures generated by this development. Early in August 1945 he
gave signs that he was reconsidering his position, that he was
pondering his own version of Indian Muslim self-determination,
which could be adopted by Congress so as to compete more
effectively with the League for Muslim separatist support. On 2
August, Azad sent a memorandum to Gandhi setting out his ideas,
while emphasizing that he was acting in his personal capacity and
not as Congress President. In a covering letter, Azad identified

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the Congress need to remove Indian Muslim suspicions, by adopting a positive policy on the Muslim separatist issue, as the problem area his proposals addressed.

Gandhi received Azad's communication on 15 August. The proposals therein were not welcomed by the Mahatma. He reacted by immediately sending a telegram to Azad.

"Your letter. I think it should not be published. Writing fully."  

Gandhi's telegram and subsequent letter were successful in securing Azad's compliance: the proposals were never aired in public. But while the Indian public were thus denied knowledge of the options exercising the minds of leading Congress politicians, this innocence could not be extended to include their British rulers. Azad's letter had been intercepted by the Raj authorities en route to Sevagram. By 25 August, a copy of its contents was in the possession of the Viceroy's Private Secretary.

Sir Evan Jenkins confided the gist of Azad's memorandum to George Abell, the Viceroy's Deputy Private Secretary. It was apparent to Jenkins that the underlying assumption which Azad's proposals were designed to address was that "Muslims are afraid and their fears can be removed only by devising a scheme under which they will feel secure."  

Evidently Azad believed that such a scheme would need to seek the middle ground between the extremes of centralized subcontinental government and subcontinental partition - both of which could be expected to fail. The latter extreme was in any case "defeatist" and "against the interests of

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93 Gandhi to Azad, 15 August 1945; C.W.M.G., Vol. 81, p.127.
the Muslims themselves."\(^{95}\) In Azad's opinion, such a scheme could be given expression in an all-India federal constitution which had as its contracting parties "fully autonomous units" able to exercise, if they so decided, the "right of secession."\(^{96}\) At the centre of this federal system, Azad held, there would need to be "parity of Hindus and Muslims" in both the Legislature and Executive "till such time as communal suspicion disappears."\(^{97}\) Even the office of the all-India head of state would be held alternatively by a Hindu and a Muslim.

In outlining his proposals to Gandhi, Azad ventured to anticipate the Mahatma's most likely objection: that, by doing away with a strong Centre, the unity of India would be compromised. Azad asserted that a strong centralized state was not essential for the preservation of Indian unity, and that the established Congress policy position which assumed that it was no longer tenable."\(^{98}\) The Maulana revealed the extent of his - and presumably Gandhi's - knowledge of the workings of one foreign system of government, by citing the "example of [the] Soviet Union"\(^{99}\) as providing evidence of national unity through state decentralization. In closing his memorandum, Azad appealed to his Hindu friends - amongst whom the Mahatma was undoubtedly included - to "leave entirely to Muslims the question of their status in the future constitution of India."\(^{100}\)

\(^{95}\)Ibid.
\(^{96}\)Ibid.
\(^{97}\)Ibid.
\(^{98}\)Ibid.
\(^{99}\)Ibid.
\(^{100}\) Azad to Gandhi, 2 August 1945; cited by Jenkins in his note to Abell; ibid., p.156.
As he had promised Azad in his telegram of 15 August, Gandhi sent a letter to the Maulana later that same day. It was apparent from its contents that Azad's memorandum had drawn out the party disciplinarian side of Gandhi's character. There was in this an interesting Gandhian behavioural parallel. Just as Gandhi had preferred to influence events from within the workings of the Congress team during the Simla Conference, so his response to Azad's memorandum was to call him to order on the basis of Congress group loyalty. In the aftermath of his direct confrontation with Jinnah at Bombay in September 1944, Gandhi had apparently decided to keep to the safety of the pack in addressing the Indian communal issue. This was in sharp contrast to his frequent preference for positioning himself on the fringe of the Congress group, from where he could offer policy options based on distinctively Gandhian interpretative resources. But the depersonalized party declaration was evidently Gandhi's preferred form for expressing judgement on the Indian communal issue. In conveying this message to Azad, the Mahatma adopted a cold reproachful tone.

I do not infer from your letter that you are writing about my 'Hindus' .... Whatever you want to say about the communal problem should not be said without consulting the Working Committee. I am also of the opinion that it would be better to be quiet. The party can give its opinion after consultation with you. They have a right to do so. Besides it is their duty. I differ from your opinion. I cannot say ... I attach importance to the words 'Hindu' and 'Mussalman'. Whatever the Congress does is a different thing.101

Azad's scheme for preserving Indian unity within a loose decentralized federal arrangement had not found favour with the

Mahatma. The pursuit of Gandhian Truth – and perhaps the desire that that Truth eventually would inform the progress of a strong independent Indian national state – generated its own imperatives and gave rise to its own priorities. As indicated by Gandhi's overhaul of the Congress command structure in 1920, the Gandhian way was to concentrate power at the centre – a very small and reified centre of power. The spirit of Azad's proposals would have gone against the Gandhian grain.

But that still leaves open the question as to whether Azad's scheme – if it had been adopted by Congress – would have preserved Indian unity. At the very least, it would have contributed towards that end – perhaps significantly so. Congress would have been better placed to have forged links with the Muslim leaders in the Muslim majority provinces, posing a serious threat to Jinnah. Of more immediate import, Jinnah was dependent on the Congress drive for a strong all-India Centre: it provided the essential counterpoint of his own all-India activity. If the significance of events occurring in the all-India political forum was to have suddenly declined, and instead interest was to have increasingly focused on events taking place in Azad's "fully autonomous [provincial] units", Jinnah would have been left high and dry. So Azad's scheme was probably a reasonable attempt to tackle the Muslim separatist threat to Indian unity, a scheme arising from a reasonably accurate analysis of the factors influencing Indian politics.

Gandhi's rejection of Azad's scheme needs to be seen in this light, particularly as the Mahatma had no distinctively Gandhian

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102 See Chapter Two, n. 96 above.
solution to the communal issue on offer as an alternative. His claim that the words "Hindu" and "Mussalman" were not of importance to him was perhaps an indication of how little he had to give in terms of political leadership on the communal issue. Perhaps the Mahatma's problem was that the interpretative resources provided by Gandhian Truth and the manifest reality of Indian politics had simply parted company over the importance of the Hindu and Muslim communal identities.

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While Gandhi was thus involved, attempting to cover the cracks which were appearing in the Congress policy facade, developments outside India were changing the context in which Indian political events were shaped.

One such development was brought to the Viceroy's attention on 11 August, in a communication from the new Secretary of State for India.

The Labour Party is ... committed to do its utmost to bring about a settlement of the Indian problem .... [T]he present Executive, or any modification of it, can only be an interim affair. I feel that we should now bend our minds to the steps which can be taken to promote a final settlement.¹⁰³

On 14 July, Sir Stafford Cripps had already recommended on what should be the first step taken in pursuit of a constitutional settlement in India. In an electioneering address in Britain, Cripps had held that "new elections should be held"¹⁰⁴ in British India. In India there was widespread agreement for such a

¹⁰⁴Cripps's Speech, 14 July 1945; ibid., p.21, n. 7.
measure. A conference of provincial Governors held in New Delhi on 1 and 2 August had advised the Viceroy to call early provincial and central elections. Only Sir Bertrand Glancy of the Punjab had dissented; he had an eye to the rising tide of communal polarization in his province and its likely adverse consequences for the prospects of Khizar's non-communal Unionist Ministry.\(^{105}\)

The Muslim League leaders were also looking forward to an electoral contest. Confirming the gist of Cunningham's report of 24 July,\(^{106}\) Sir John Colville, the Governor of Bombay, confided to Wavell on 20 August that "it is said that [Jinnah] ... will welcome elections as he believes that they will strengthen his position."\(^{107}\) Jinnah's belief was possibly shared by the Congress leaders. For Congress was the one major party which appeared tepid to the prospect of early elections. Colville commented on this in his report to Wavell, but held that their reluctance would not be voiced.

> I believe Congress are not too anxious to have elections but that they will not oppose. I am not clear what their reticence means unless it is that they feel that elections will strengthen the League's position.\(^{108}\)

On 15 August the Japanese Government announced its intention to surrender to the Allies. In the wake of this development, H. M. G. moved into action on the Indian political front. On 20 August, Pethick-Lawrence sent two telegrams to Wavell. One of these instructed the Viceroy to "announce forthwith that elections will be held both for [the] Central Assembly and for [the]  

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\(^{105}\) For the Viceroy's report on the outcome of the Governor's conference, see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 6 August 1945; ibid., p.35.  
\(^{106}\) See Chapter Two, n. 92 above.  
\(^{107}\) Colville to Wavell, 20 August 1945; T.P.L., Vol. VI, p. 94.  
\(^{108}\) Ibid.
provincial Assemblies."109 The other telegram informed Wavell that
"Cabinet have asked me to invite you to come home for consultation
at the earliest date reasonably possible."110 This brisk style of
operation impressed itself favourably on the Viceroy, who
privately noted that the "present Government certainly moves
quicker than its predecessor."111 And Sir David Monteath, the
Permanent Under - Secretary at the India Office, in confiding to
the Viceroy's Deputy Private Secretary on 20 August, confirmed
that H. M. G. was in a mood for action.

The Government here are apparently determined to
plunge into the Indian constitutional problem and
'settle it' without further ado.112

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Between Two Politicians: Gandhi's Political Relationship
with Patel and Nehru

On 21 August, it was officially announced in New Delhi that
elections would be held during the approaching winter months, and
four days later Wavell flew out of Karachi, bound for Britain.

However, it was not only the Raj that was gearing up for
action; signs of movement were also visible in the Gandhian camp.
And the Mahatma's activities were well chosen to fit in with
events occurring at both the official and party levels.

Since his return to Sevagram after the Simla Conference, Gandhi had been in correspondence with Vallabhbhai Patel,

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109 Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 20 August 1945; ibid., p. 99.
110 Ibid., p. 98.
111 W.L., 22 August 1945, p. 164.
ostensibly with a view to persuading the Sardar to submit to a course of nature cure treatment under the care of Dr. Dinshah Mehta at Poona. When Wavell had ordered the release of the Congress Working Committee, Patel had emerged in broken health. He was afflicted with spastic colon, an intestinal complaint. From the ongoing correspondence, it was evident that Gandhi intended to become personally involved in the Sardar's hoped-for recovery at Mehta's hands, that he was prepared to make the project his principal focus of activity for the months ahead. As Pyarelal recalled:

[In order better to persuade [Patel] ... [Gandhiji] offered to stay with him during the treatment. The Sardar agreed.]

It could be taken as evidence of Gandhi's unerring instinct as to the locus of power within Congress - as well as evidence of his desire to be in proximity to it - that, at this juncture, he should seek to be closeted away in Mehta's clinic with Patel. In the aftermath of the release of the Working Committee on 15 June, and the subsequent lifting of official constraints on Congress party activity, reorganizing the party and its affiliated organizations was the most pressing task confronting the Congress leadership. While on the public platform Nehru was the brightest star in the Congress firmament, when it came to organizational matters it was Patel whose hand guided the party. During the second half of 1945 his skills were at a premium, and his power within the party commensurately enhanced. Furthermore, this summons from the party to fulfil his organizational role coincided

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113 See Gandhi to Patel, 22, 25 and 29 July 1945, and 3, 9 and 12 August 1945; C.W.M.G., Vol. 81, pp. 16, 31, 47, 68-9, 100 and 109-10. Also see Gandhi to Mehta, 19 July 1945; ibid., p. 7.

114 Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 139.
in time with the British decision to hold general elections in India. The politician par excellence of the party machine - the Stalin, as it were, of the Congress Party - Patel, more than any other leader, had gathered to himself the power of party appointment. With elections looming, this aspect of Patel's influence would need to be exercised on a large scale. For, as part of his accumulation of power within the party machine, Patel held the post of Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board, the organ responsible for choosing Congress candidates.\textsuperscript{115} The official announcement on 21 August of elections to be held in the coming winter meant that Patel was going to be a very busy man, dispensing and withholding the prospects of numerous political careers. On the very day the announcement was made, Gandhi escorted Patel from Bombay, where he had arranged for them to rendezvous, to Poona. The attraction was obviously mutual. The two men took up residence in Dr. Mehta's Nature Cure Clinic. They remained based in the clinic's residential annex for the next three months.

The Congress Working Committee assembled at Poona on 12 September for several days of discussions; this being in preparation for the approaching meeting of the All - India Congress Committee, scheduled for 21 to 23 September at Bombay - the first gathering of that body since that of 8 August 1942,

\textsuperscript{115}While ensconced at Poona with Gandhi, Patel communicated by telegraph with the other (and scattered) members of the Congress Parliamentary Board. Nehru and Azad were the two most important of the other members. Patel usually put into effect Nehru's occasional recommendations concerning the party's choice of candidates. Azad's more numerous recommendations - particularly in regard to the choice of Congress candidates in the Punjab and other Muslim majority provinces - often met a different fate; repeatedly, Azad's telegrams arrived at Poona "too late" to affect the final selection of candidate. See the correspondence which passed between Patel, Nehru and Azad for the period September to November 1945 in Durga Das (editor), \textit{Sardar}
which had been held at the same venue. The Working Committee held their discussions in Dr. Mehta's clinic.

On 14 September, the Working Committee released for publication three resolutions which were intended to be placed before the forthcoming meeting of the All - India Congress Committee. Their content suggested that neither Gandhi nor Patel had played a part in drafting them or having them adopted: a third Congress leader was apparently dominant, at least at the party's ideological level. Patel had doubted the wisdom of the confrontational approach adopted by Congress (at Gandhi's insistence) in 1942, while, as we have seen, the Mahatma - subsequent to his release from detention - had distanced himself from the ramifications of the "Quit India" Congress stand. Yet glorification of the Congress role during the 1942 disturbances was now evidently the order of the day. It was apparent that Nehru's displeasure in the previous year at Gandhi's "toning down of everything ... [his] grovelling before the Viceroy" had at last found expression in texts of anti-Imperial interpretative catharsis presented for the party's approval. Thus the first resolution referred to the "more than three years of wanton suppression by the British Government." It recollected the


116 For an account of Patel's doubts regarding the wisdom of Congress sponsoring - or, for that matter, even inspiring - popular rebellions such as the August 1942 outbreaks, see Summit Sarkar, "Popular Movements, National Leadership and the Coming of Freedom with Partition, 1945-1947"; D. N. Panigrahi, op. cit., pp. 349-62.

117 See Chapter One, n. 68 above.

118 Congress Working Committee Resolutions, 14 September 1945; Statesman, 15 September 1945; cited in Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 18 September 1945; T.P., Vol. VI, p. 274.
"fierce and violent onslaught of the British" in 1942, leading to "brutal and ruthless suppression" by the "armed might of an alien Imperial Power", determined on "subjecting an unarmed India" to "death and agony and suffering and avoidable man - made famine".\(^{119}\)

The second resolution addressed the problems facing Congress as a result of another British political trait - the tendency to hold general elections: the recent announcement to that effect having been made "in a manner and in circumstances which arouse[d] suspicion."\(^{120}\) The many reasons making undesirable a Congress participation in the elections were listed, ending nevertheless in an abrupt decision to enter the electoral contest, so as to "demonstrate the will of the people".\(^{121}\) On this subject, the will of one person present at the Working Committee's meeting was already well-known; evidently, Nehru preferred to avoid a direct ideological trespass on to Patel's candidacy appointment turf.

The third resolution of 14 September reviewed the "Quit India" episode in the context of sixty years of Congress activity in Indian politics, concluding from it the continuing verity of the maxim of "negotiation and settlement when possible and non-co-operation and direct action when necessary."\(^{122}\) And the next day, Nehru's hand continued to steer the course of policy adoption, with a paean to the wartime efforts of the "officers and men and women of the Indian National Army."\(^{123}\) These followers of Subhas Chandra Bose - so it was asserted - had "laboured, however

\(^{119}\)Ibid., pp. 274-5.
\(^{120}\)Ibid., p. 276.
\(^{121}\)Ibid., p. 277.
\(^{122}\)Ibid., p.279.
\(^{123}\)Congress Working Committee Resolutions, 15 September 1945; Sunday Statesman, 16 September 1945; ibid., p. 279.
mistakenly, for the freedom of India", and could in the future be expected to perform "the greatest service... of building up a new and free India." The form their future service might take - or, for that matter, the due ramifications of their wartime service with the Japanese - was not elaborated.

The movement of policy direction, as expressed in further resolutions, continued to indicate that it was responding to Nehru's touch on virtually all issues - particularly British - Indian issues. It was only when the question of the future constitution of India - and how to deal with the League's demand for "Pakistan" - was addressed by the Working Committee that a hesitant note was sounded, indicating that even Nehruvian interpretative resources had their limitations. A resolution was passed, but the Working Committee decided that it would not be brought forward to be voted on by the All - India Congress Committee. This was not surprising; its text brought together stark contradictions. Thus on the one hand it held that

Congress cannot agree to any proposal to disintegrate India by giving liberty to any component state or territorial unit to secede from the Indian Union or Federation.125

Yet, the same resolution also affirmed that the Congress cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will.126

From the text of this last resolution adopted by the Working Committee on 15 September, it was clear that Nehru had nothing original to offer in answer to the Muslim separatist challenge to

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124 Ibid., pp. 279-80.
125 Ibid., p. 281.
126 Ibid.
Indian unity, that he could only play with the imponderables thrown up on the Indian communalist front. But while Nehru was not posing a challenge to any other Congress leader on the communal issue, the body of resolutions, dealing as they did with a wide range of extra-communalist issues, constituted a severe set-back to the overall Gandhian leadership position within Congress. None of the resolutions dealt with distinctively Gandhian concerns, and none of them picked up where the Mahatma had left off in his policy moves as executed during the Working Committee's detention. Instead, the gist of the resolutions constituted an effort to reach back to the confrontational condition of British-Indian relations as existing in August 1942, with a view to ensuring ideological continuity in the transformed conditions of late 1945. Gandhi's effort to placate the British had thus been positively rejected, and his attempts to use Rajagopalachari's formula to secure an alliance with the League had thus been ignored. The material which the Working Committee took with them down to Bombay, for consideration by the 283 member All-India Congress Committee, had had the usual dosage of Gandhian themes filtered out.

The Mahatma had striven, in the best Gandhian fashion, to avoid this set-back. Gandhi had been present at "most of the Working Committee meetings" held in Poona between 12 to 18 September, and subsequently in Bombay between 22 to 24 September. In the face of Nehru's ideological offensive, Gandhi had done his best to channel the Congress agenda for the

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next few months on to political ground where only a Mahatma could venture to offer navigational assistance. As Azad recalled:

Gandhiji... held that we must devote ourselves to exclusively constructive work.... [He] believed that there was not much hope on the political plane.\(^{128}\)

When this standard Gandhian diversionary tactic\(^{129}\) failed to elicit the desired response, the Mahatma had recourse to damage-control manoeuvres. Thus, when the moment arrived for him to attend the All-India Congress Committee meeting on 21 September to deliver a scheduled address, a "mild attack of influenza"\(^{130}\) occurred to prevent his participation in the Committee's adoption of the body of approved resolutions. This incident provided the peg on which the Mahatma's biographer was able to hang his account of this set-back to Gandhi's control of Congress. As Tendulkar diplomatically put it, the Mahatma was keeping indifferent health. The Congress leaders consulted him only on very important matters. The Congress affairs were in the hands of ... Azad ... Patel and ... Nehru.\(^{131}\)

However, Gandhi's own writings made clear that Congress had chosen a course which strayed from the Gandhian path. On 18th September in his written "Thought for the Day,"\(^{132}\) provided for the

\(^{128}\)Azad, op. cit., p. 120.

\(^{129}\)During the periods 1924-27 and 1934-39, Gandhi - in the face of failure to secure declared objectives on the political constitutional and agitational fronts - had employed the tactic of advising Congress to switch over to programmes of rural uplift. Moving the focus from the field of state-society relations to matters of purely socio-economic concern permitted Gandhi to extricate himself from political moves which had run into trouble or stalled, and as rural uplift schemes were inspired by Gandhian lore they provided a milieu in which the Mahatma exercised complete interpretative control. Gandhi could decide on their nature, location and duration. From the safe-house they provided, Gandhi, at any time, could move back - or allow himself to be summoned back - into all-India politics.

\(^{130}\)Explanatory Note by Publisher: C.W.M.G., Vol. 81, p. 274, n. 1.


\(^{132}\)On 20 November 1944, at the request of one of the members of his staff who had recently suffered a close bereavement, Gandhi had started the
meditative education of his immediate entourage, he reflected on the ideological set-back which had overtaken him.

It is a moot point as to how far a man should go with his comrades when he knows that they really no longer walk with him in spirit.\textsuperscript{133}

In the wake of Nehru's ideological initiative of September 1945, tangible Gandhian policies and programmes no longer noticeably contributed to the Congress platform. But ideology is only one aspect of politics: political movements give rise to party structure as well as generate ideas. Gandhi had been forced to retreat within the Congress leadership at the ideological level. But, at the Nature Cure Clinic in Poona, the Mahatma still had Patel - the machine politician - as his boon companion.

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In the aftermath of the All - India Congress Committee gathering at Bombay, Gandhi resumed his self - appointed role of attending on Patel during his course of nature cure treatment at Dr. Mehta's hands. Mehta had prescribed a three month period of treatment, holding that by that time the "greater part" of Patel's complaint would "disappear."\textsuperscript{134} This meant that the course would finish on 22 November; it was with this time commitment in mind that Gandhi arranged his own activity schedule. But by mid - October the Sardar's health was showing no sign of improvement.

\textsuperscript{133}Gandhi's Thought for the Day, 18 September 1945; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 81, p. 459.
\textsuperscript{134}Gandhi to H.L. Sharma, circa 19 October 1945; \textit{ibid.}, p.390.
Quite the opposite: Patel's condition had actually deteriorated. As Gandhi informed H. L. Sharma, one of his khadi scheme organizers, in a letter sent during late October, a "much enlarged" pelvic loop, "spasm in the intestines", and possible internal "adhesions" were responsible - either separately or in combination - for the Sardar having become constipated, sentencing the patient to periods of "one and a half to two hours in the toilet."^135

Patel nevertheless found the time, and retained the inclination, to direct almost single-handedly Congress preparations for the elections, scheduled to begin in November. Gandhi's proximity to the Congress font of appointment power did not pass unnoticed, and it occurred to not a few aspiring politicians that, in seeking a Congress posting, the best way to approach the redoubtable Sardar would be through his fellow patient. Gandhi - as he had no doubt anticipated - found himself in demand as an intermediary. This presented the Mahatma with many opportunities to display his virtuous disinterest in the unedifying spectacle of aspirants scrambling for personal advantage on the political stage. On 3 October, Gandhi reminded one petitioner that "[f]or years I have not been taking any part in elections" and, in informing him that he would entrust his petition to Patel, mentioned that "I seldom talk with ... [the Sardar] about this."^136

When requests for his assistance were received from some of his own rural uplift workers, Gandhi's refusal to play the intermediary role was more forcefully expressed. The khadi worker

^135Ibid.
^136Gandhi to Chimanlal Setalvad, 3 October 1945; ibid., p. 310.
whom the Mahatma had brought up to date on the state of Patel's health was also given a lecture on the proper place of political careers, as evaluated from the Gandhian perspective.

I am surprised at your wanting to stand for the Assembly on the Congress ticket. I am also pained a little. You cannot have my blessings in this matter. Only the person who ... is not fit for anything except legislative work can go to the Assembly .... A khadi worker is fit for khadi work.\textsuperscript{137}

It was not only aspiring politicians who sought Gandhi's blessing in their endeavours to secure places on the Congress ticket: even experienced politicians apparently laboured under the misapprehension that the Mahatma might be a source of assistance. Included in this second category was the politician who, for the last ten years, had led the Congress team in the Central Legislative Assembly. For, in the wake of his failure to bring into being an interim Congress - League coalition Government, the waters were now rising around the political career prospects of Bhulabhai Desai. Since the release of the Working Committee, there had been clear indications that Desai no longer enjoyed their favour. His name had not been included on the Congress ticket for the central elections. In his hour of need, Desai sought the Mahatma's advice: Gandhi, in effect, told him to depart the political arena without fuss. But Desai had accumulated considerable political capital during his years at the head of the Congress team in the Central Assembly, and those in his debt had been summoned to press for his inclusion on the Congress ticket. Patel was vulnerable to this pressure, as his personal regional power base overlapped with Desai's contacts amongst the big

\textsuperscript{137} Gandhi to H. L. Sharma, circa 19 October 1945; ibid., p. 390.
Congress backers in western India — especially Gujarati and Marwari financial interests. But, if being closeted with the Sardar during late 1945 served Gandhi's interests, having a Mahatma on hand during candidacy selection time was a source of strength for Patel. A letter from Gandhi to Desai on 21 October demonstrated how the Mahatma — Sardar combination could write finis to Desai's political career.

Sardar and I keep receiving telegrams suggesting that you should be put up as a candidate for the Central Legislative Assembly. I myself have no interest in the elections. A durbar daily assembles round the Sardar, but ... [o]rdinarily ... I attend to my work and he attends to his ....

If Sardar receives any suggestion regarding you, he puts it before me. Since you have accepted my advice, I assume that you yourself are not at all keen on getting into the Central Assembly, and that, therefore, those who send the telegrams do not do so at your instance. Some big people naturally desire your presence in the Assembly. If I were not there, perhaps Sardar would have yielded to the pressure. But I am firm .... 138

One reason at least for the apparent mutual attraction between Gandhi and Patel had thus been made evident during their confrontation with Desai's supporters. If his close association with the Sardar had enhanced Gandhi's importance in political perceptions, the presence and assistance of the Mahatma could provide Patel with a Gandhian shield in his encounters with disappointed aspirants of the candidacy selection process.

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While Gandhi had cause for satisfaction with the state of his relationship with Patel — which was functioning more or less as he intended — there remained the problem posed by Nehru's ideological

138 Gandhi to Desai, 21 October 1945; ibid., pp. 399-400.
challenge to the Mahatma's position within Congress. The body of resolutions which had emerged from the Working Committee's deliberations in September at Poona signalled Nehru's virtual seizure of the ideological leadership of Congress. As was usually the case, the All - India Congress Committee had confirmed what was clearly an expression of the Working Committee consensus, given the absence of any resolutions sounding an ideological counterpoint, Gandhian or otherwise. So, while Gandhi, in the wake of the release of the Congress High Command, had secured a satisfactory working relationship with Patel - in charge, so to speak, of the Congress engine room - the Mahatma had found himself deprived of a major policy - steering role by Nehru, who was now at the helm of the party.

This was not a situation in which Gandhi was prepared to acquiesce. The Mahatma decided to open a political offensive against Nehru; he decided to generate political controversy focused on the new policy direction adopted by Congress at Nehru's instance. And in choosing the subject on which to take issue with Nehru, Gandhi went to the materialist heart of the matter: he isolated the Pandit's economic views - derived, in the main, from the received wisdom of current Western left - of centre political beliefs - as the target of his offensive. Gandhi attempted to draw Nehru into a public debate on industrialization.

Gandhi's opening move in this endeavour was to send a letter on 5 October to Nehru. In it, Gandhi reminded the Pandit of the "sharp difference of opinion that has arisen between us."139 In a passage which might well have been received with perplexity by

139Gandhi to Nehru, 5 October 1945; ibid., p. 319.
Azad — in view of the Mahatma’s recent advice that, instead of Congress leaders airing their privately held views in public, "it would be better to be quiet"\textsuperscript{140} — Gandhi justified unveiling his differences with Nehru on the grounds that "the work of swaraj will suffer if ... [the Indian public] are kept in the dark."\textsuperscript{141}

The issue which the Mahatma had chosen to debate publicly with Nehru arose from Gandhi’s vision of an Indian society which had broken its links with the global economy — dominated as it was by the industrial countries — and been reorganized into a collectivity of autonomous self-sufficient villages. In 1909, Gandhi had first outlined his views on the desirability of this type of society in an article entitled "Indian Home Rule," published in serial form in the columns of his South African weekly \textit{Indian Opinion}. It had subsequently been released as a booklet under its Indian title, \textit{Hind Swaraj}. Upon his return to India in 1915, Gandhi’s rural uplift schemes had been put forward as attempts to promote progress towards this goal.

In challenging Nehru to explain the grounds of his rejection of the Gandhian social objective, the Mahatma set out an intimidatingly profound rationale supporting the Gandhian position. His basic assertion was that without the emergence of a social order based on truth and non-violence "mankind will be doomed."\textsuperscript{142} He maintained that these qualities could flourish "only in the simplicity of the villages."\textsuperscript{143} There, operating within a small-scale economy, the individual person would "have

\textsuperscript{140}See Chapter Two, n. 101 above.
\textsuperscript{141}Gandhi to Nehru, 5 October 1945; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 81, p. 319.
\textsuperscript{142}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143}Ibid.
control over the things that are necessary for the sustenance of life. If he cannot have such control the individual cannot survive. Ultimately, the world is made up only of individuals."144 However, this autonomous individual's quality of life would not reflect the existing standard of Indian rural existence: his lifestyle would measure up to the hopes of modern liberal utopian thought. The ideal Gandhian village would be free from squalor and disease, and also from social inequality. Apparently, there would be a price to pay for this achievement: the Mahatma indicated that a certain degree of regimentation would be necessary. For "[n]obody will be allowed to be idle or to wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to do body labour."145

Gandhi's letter to Nehru concluded on a note which made plain that the Mahatma had been motivated to attempt to draw Nehru into public debate on this issue in the context of an earlier failure to convince the Working Committee that it should discuss the matter. The concluding passage confirmed that Gandhian ideas had been pushed off the Committee's agenda during its September discussions, and that Gandhi was being squeezed into a marginal position within the party's decision-making framework.

The other day, at the final day's meeting of the Working Committee, we ... [made] a decision ... that the Working Committee would meet for two or three days to work out ... [the difference of opinion on social policy which had arisen]. I shall be happy if it meets. But even if it does not meet, I want that we two should understand each other fully.146

On 9 October Nehru wrote to Gandhi in reply. While standing by his belief that India needed "modern means of transport as well

144Ibid., p. 320.
145Ibid.
146Ibid.
as many other modern developments" which would require "a measure
of heavy industry", the Pandit queried the political relevance of
a debate in which the participants merely paraded their "varying
philosophies of life."\(^{147}\)

\[\text{[A] body like the Congress ... should not lose itself in arguments over such matters which can only produce greater confusion in people's minds resulting in inability to act in the present. This may also result in creating barriers between the Congress and others in the country.}^{148}\]

In the face of Nehru's negative response, the Mahatma let the matter rest for a while. Then, on 12 November, Nehru visited Gandhi and Patel in their Poona clinic. Gandhi and Nehru had a private discussion over the difference of outlook which had arisen. Both men held to their respective positions. However, the next day Gandhi wrote to Nehru maintaining that, with both of them claiming a progressive egalitarian ideal as their guiding principle, "there is not much difference in our outlooks or the way we understand things."\(^{149}\) Having thus baited the hook with the prospect of harmonizing their differences, Gandhi attempted once again to draw Nehru into public debate, even proposing that it should be conducted in English rather than in Hindi. The Mahatma wanted as wide as possible an audience for the anticipated debate.

But Nehru failed to make any further response in reply to Gandhi. The Pandit had evidently judged that Gandhi's effort to generate political controversy over this issue was unlikely to succeed, that the Mahatma's challenge to the policy direction adopted by Congress in September could be safely ignored.

\(^{147}\)Nehru to Gandhi, 9 October 1945; cited Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. 7, pp. 15-6.
\(^{148}\)Ibid., p. 16.
\(^{149}\)Gandhi to Nehru, 13 November 1945; C.W.N.G., Vol. 82, pp. 71-2.
Subsequent events were to vindicate the Pandit's judgement.

Gandhi's vision of a future India as outlined in *Hind Swaraj* had at first been well received by many Indian nationalists: by glorifying the traditional Indian lifestyle it reinforced, on the philosophical plane, the struggle for independence at the political level. But by late 1945, the nationalists' desire to undermine the Raj had been satisfied. To gain independence, all that was needed was a format for the transfer of power, a format acceptable to all parties, British and Indian. Prospective leaders of an emerging independent India now needed to convince the British, as well as the Indian public, as to their capacity for the responsible management of Indian affairs. For the future leaders of India, *Hind Swaraj* was hardly the text to turn to, still less to be identified with. As Wavell had repeatedly maintained in his efforts to bring to pass a British political initiative in India, placing the reins of government in Indian hands was likely to bring out the practical side of Indian politicians at the expense of their theoretical policy commitments. Gandhi's clash with Nehru during late 1945 had illustrated that the Imperial political context, which had given rise to the development of a Gandhian political counterpoint, was vanishing, with a nascent Indian governing establishment now trimming its sails to the prospect of an imminent transfer of power.

Gandhi's protest, at the adoption by Congress of a new policy direction under Nehru's leadership, had failed. The debate went no further. Tendulkar explained this disappointing outcome by reference to the intrusion of other events.
The discussion ... [between Gandhi and Nehru] could not be resumed [after mid-November 1945] owing to quick political changes and later due to [the] outbreak of communal riots.\textsuperscript{150}

But B. N. Pandey, in his biography of Nehru, was nearer the truth in his account of the same development.

Gandhi ... did not abandon his prophecy that one day industrial civilisation would collapse and the world would return to a village society. Nehru ignored Gandhi, wondering, perhaps for the first time, whether the Mahatma had outlived his usefulness.\textsuperscript{151}

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**Rising Tensions**

On 19 November Gandhi left Poona, bringing to a close three months of close proximity to Patel. The election campaign, for which the Sardar had been organizing, was in progress, raising the political temperature nationwide. Other events, many of which were attendant on the ending of the war, were also contributing to a rise in tensions, most notably the trials conducted in the Red Fort near Delhi of prominent members of the Indian National Army who had passed into British hands upon the Japanese surrender. The adoption by Congress of Nehru's anti-imperialist ideological line had paid off handsomely, permitting the party's spokesmen to articulate themes which accorded well with the popular mood. On 6 November, Wavell had informed the British Cabinet of the main themes adopted by the Congress politicians.

They ... [have been] taking the credit of the 1942 disturbances, asserting that the British could be turned out of India within a very short time;

\textsuperscript{150}Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. 7, p. 17.
denying the possibility of a compromise with the Muslim League; glorifying the I. N. A.; and threatening the officials who took part in the suppression of the 1942 disturbances with trial and punishment as 'war criminals'.

The danger that Nehru was toying with, however, was that the anti-British rhetoric might induce a significant deterioration in British-Indian relations which would manifest itself in a breakdown of public order. Such a prospect would have been sufficiently alarming to a significant portion of the Congress leadership, including the formidable Patel, to threaten the unity of the High Command, and Nehru's leadership of it. This possibility had created a conjunction of interest between Nehru, Patel and Gandhi. In early November, the Governor of Bombay received intelligence of this development and reported it to the Viceroy.

I am told ... that there is growing feeling between Gandhi and Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel on the subject of non-violence.

A meeting of the Congress Working Committee had been arranged for early December. Azad was experiencing indifferent health. Furthermore, Gandhi had arrived in Calcutta on 1 December to commence a long-intended visit to flood and famine - stricken Bengal. So the Working Committee session was held at Azad's Calcutta residence from 7 to 11 December.

The needs of the hour summoned Gandhi back to the Congress leadership rostrum. Even Nehru had apparently accepted that a strategy was needed which would assuage the growing anxieties of elements of the Congress establishment over the declining level of public order. A signal also needed to be displayed for the

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153 Colville to Wavell, 2 November 1945; ibid., pp. 429-30.
British - some of whom were starting to consider recourse to their military option for keeping the situation under control - to reassure them that Congress would remain within constitutional bounds. So Gandhi was allowed to make the running, and the Working Committee gave their accord to his views. The resolution approved on 11 December provided the Congress leaders with a Gandhian statement satisfying to both the party and the Raj.

[During] August of 1942 ... there were acts done which could not be included in non-violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the Working Committee to affirm ... that the policy of non-violence adopted in 1920 ... continues unabated, and that such non-violence does not include burning of public property, cutting of telegraph wires, derailing of trains and intimidation.154

Gandhi's political activity in Calcutta in early December was not confined to deliberations with his Congress colleagues. Since his release from prison the Mahatma had been anxious to visit Bengal: it was the scene of famine and flood, the base area for the war against the Japanese in Burma, and the focal point of the Hindu - Muslim communal issue. This key province had also experienced the rule of a Muslim League Ministry - up to March 1945, when the Ministry had fallen and the Governor had taken over the administration under Section 93 powers. Given the delicate political balance, the prospect of a visit by Gandhi had raised controversy. Gandhi had responded by promising to enter the province only by official invitation. The Muslim League Ministry of Khwaja Nazimuddin had never issued one, but Casey, the Governor, had done so in July 1945. Apparently Casey, unlike Nazimuddin, wanted the Mahatma at hand to at least explore the

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154 Congress Working Committee Resolution, 11 December 1945; C.W.M.G., Vol. 82, pp.200-1.
prospects of a communal settlement.

Upon the Mahatma's arrival in Calcutta on 1 December, a round of meetings and an exchange of letters had taken place between Gandhi and Casey. Since the "Quit India" episode in 1942, Gandhi had been starved of friendly contact with the British power structure - "the desert of long estrangement with British officialdom" as Pyarelal described it - so it was a welcome development for the Mahatma.

During their first meeting, Casey took the Mahatma to task over the "attitude of Nehru and other Congressmen in public speeches... which seemed designed to promote racial hatred and to create the worst possible atmosphere for... constitutional discussions." Gandhi replied to this charge by asserting that the British were to blame. As Casey reported to Wavell, the Mahatma "made it quite clear ... that all recent violent Congress speeches were [the] outcome of failure at [the] Simla [Conference]."

Gandhi's position on this issue puzzled Casey. In his analysis, the Mahatma had failed to account for the effect of Indian disunity on the course of events. The next day, when Gandhi arrived for his second interview with the Governor, Casey was ready with his rejoinder. As he reported to Wavell:

I said that I believed that what was standing in the way of self-government for India ... was the Moslem League, who were suffering from 'Hinduphobia' and who showed the most determined unwillingness to ... [subscribe to] an All-India

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156Casey to Wavell, 2 December 1945; T.P., Vol. VI, p. 589.
157Ibid.
government which would inevitably be Hindu-dominated.\textsuperscript{158}

It followed from Casey's analysis—and here he was in accord with the expressed views of Azad\textsuperscript{159}—that Congress should address the problems arising from Muslim distrust. Casey suggested this should take the form of a public announcement by Gandhi of a "substantial list of safeguards for Moslems that Congress would be glad to see in a future All-India constitution."\textsuperscript{160}

Gandhi was reluctant to adopt this line of approach. Unlike Azad, however, Casey could not be put off by reference to the supposed need for adherence to a rigid party line. The Governor needed to be given an explanation. To provide one, Gandhi portrayed what he held was Jinnah's political objective.

[Gandhi] believed that, as he had conceded safeguard after safeguard, Jinnah had constantly raised his price until he had reached [the] logical end point of any list of safeguards in [the] shape of Pakistan and he did not believe that anything less would satisfy him.\textsuperscript{161}

Furthermore, Gandhi indicated that, in his opinion, even the Pakistan demand was only an item on a hidden Muslim agenda. In a passage which might have owed much to Gandhi's experience during the Khilafat agitation following the end of the 1914-1918 hostilities, Gandhi communicated to Casey what, he claimed, was the nature of this Muslim agenda.

[Gandhi] said that he believed Jinnah to be a very ambitious man and that he had visions of linking up the Moslems of India with the Moslems in the Middle East and elsewhere and that he did not believe that he could be ridden off his dreams.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{158}Casey to Wavell, 3 December 1945; ibid., p. 590.
\textsuperscript{159}See Chapter Two, n. 94 above.
\textsuperscript{160}Casey to Wavell, 3 December 1945; \textit{T.E.}, Vol. VI, p. 590.
\textsuperscript{161}Ibid., p. 591.
\textsuperscript{162}Ibid.
The Mahatma's portrayal of this wider context of Hindu-Muslim relations had had the (no doubt unintended) effect of reducing in perspective the significance of British-Indian political differences. Casey seized the chance to clear the Raj of Gandhi's charge of having engineered the problems afflicting the Indian body politic. He reported to Wavell.

I then said that against [the] background that ... [Gandhi] had sketched I found it all the more difficult to believe that Congress were fair or right in blaming ... [the Raj] for the present situation and that I would ... be interested to know if there was anything that he had to suggest that we might do.163

It was apparent to Casey that the Mahatma had been caught "a bit on the hop"164 by the Governor's query. Gandhi promised to write to Casey, informing him of the measures the British could take in solving the Hindu-Muslim political impasse. But Gandhi failed to venture any further into the subject, even though a number of letters were exchanged between the two men during the first three weeks of December. It was not until 22 December, during another visit by Gandhi to the Governor's residence, that Casey broached the topic and pressed the Mahatma for an answer. Gandhi's reply was summarized by the Viceroy in his report to the King on New Year's Eve.

[Gandhi] said ... that His Majesty's Government must make up its mind between those who had always opposed us (Congress) but who now wanted the right thing, a united India, and those who had helped us, the Muslims, but wanted a wrong thing, a divided India.165

And as the Viceroy recollected:

163Ibid.
164Ibid.
165Wavell to King George VI, 31 December 1945; ibid., p. 714.
Gandhi had said very much the same to me at our last interview at Simla, six months ago.\textsuperscript{166}

The Mahatma had confirmed the line of approach taken by the Congress Working Committee in reaction to the failure of the Simla Conference:\textsuperscript{167} an appeal to values perceived to be held in common by both the British rulers of Empire and Indian nationalists, an appeal to do "the right thing" in deciding on the shape Indian independence would take. The decision as to the form an independent India would take presumably was to be made by India's Imperial rulers and handed down from above, not given shape according to the priorities of Indian society that were articulated below.

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It was not only Gandhi and the Congress High Command who were wanting the British to exercise their Imperial rule and - guided by their Western values - pronounce for a united independent India by Imperial command. The Sapru Committee, after more than a year in labour, finally gave issue to a Report, published on 27 December, which concluded on a similar note.

On the face of things, this was a disappointing result as, ostensibly, the Sapru Committee's purpose had been to bridge the gap between Congress and the League, by investigating the communal impasse and attempting to construct from their investigations a compromise formula. But the principal finding of the Committee had been that Pakistan was not a practical proposition. In support of this finding, the Report had been able to cite material

\textsuperscript{166}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167}See Chapter Two, n. 73 above.
drawn from an impressive array of Indian political groups opposing Pakistan in any form.

[The] scheme of Pakistan put forward by Mr. Jinnah is not acceptable either to the Hindus of the Punjab and Bengal or to the Sikhs or to the Congress or to the Hindu Mahasabha. The ... [Rajagopalachari] Formula has been totally rejected by Mr. Jinnah and has been opposed by the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab and Hindus of Bengal.168

In the face of such formidable opposition, the Report held that Pakistan could come to pass only as a result of "British enforcement ... or civil war".169 The report lodged an appeal to the British, explicitly calling for Indian independence to take a form which would perpetuate the British Imperial achievement.

[On the] grounds of Defence ... there is no justification for the British Government to support ... [Pakistan] if they have genuine faith in the unity of India which they themselves have built up and fostered.170

The Sapru Report failed to excite public controversy. Gandhi, on tour in rural Bengal, did not receive his copy of the Report which had been sent to Sevagram. Jayakar, who had served on Sapru's Committee, got a copy to Gandhi during the second week of January. The Mahatma would have hardly been likely to disapprove of a text so resonant - surprisingly resonant, perhaps - of his own expressed views. But the treatment meted out to the Report by the media apparently troubled him. On 12 January, Gandhi sent Jayakar an article on the Report he had cut out of the Statesman of 28 December. The article was entitled "Out of Date".

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168 Summary of the Sapru Committee Report, 27 December 1945; C.W.M.G., Vol. 82, Appendix 2, p. 455.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
Gandhi spent the first half of January 1946 touring Bengal and Assam. He was occasionally summoned to exercise his judgement on all-India political affairs by those closer to the centre of action, as when Patel wrote to the Mahatma asking his advice on the appropriate Congress response to the pending visit to India of a Parliamentary Delegation. Urged to do so by elements within the India Office, the British Labour Government had decided there was something to be gained in broadening the horizons of some of its own back-bench critics—Reginald Sorensen prominent amongst them—by giving them direct access to some of the principal actors on the Indian political stage. Krishna Menon, a Nehru contact, had been active in political circles in London, and a significant number of Members of Parliament had proven vulnerable to his interpretations of Indian political events. On 3 January, writing from the deck of a riverboat en route from Contai to Sodepur, Gandhi ventured to turn Patel aside from what he probably calculated would be the Sardar's natural inclination.

It would be unseemly to speak disparagingly of them. There would be no harm whatever if we use kind words .... I do not see much point in condemning them in advance.

The Congress establishment apparently allowed themselves to be persuaded by this and subsequent communications from Gandhi. Thus V. P. Menon was able to recall that the Parliamentary Delegation "met almost all the important political leaders and its

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171 See Turnbull to Pethick-Lawrence, 28 September 1945; T.P., Vol. VI, p. 300.
172 Gandhi to Patel, 3 January 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 82, p. 338.
173 See Gandhi to Patel, 8 January 1946; ibid. pp. 376-7.
members were received everywhere with cordiality and friendliness".\textsuperscript{174}

Patel was not alone in seeking the Mahatma's participation in all - India concerns; the Viceroy was active, with a similar objective in mind. The rains had failed over much of the subcontinent and, as Wavell informed Pethick-Lawrence on 29 January, India was "faced with the probability of a widespread famine."\textsuperscript{175} The prospect of the Raj having to implement relief measures - reducing the food rations, increasing food production, organizing food transportation from surplus to deficit regions - spurred Wavell into seeking assistance, or at least acquiescence, from India's political establishment. Wavell did not think the party politicians would be likely to respond favourably to a British appeal; as he reported to Pethick-Lawrence, they would be "more likely to make party capital and propaganda out of it."\textsuperscript{176} But the Viceroy thought a direct appeal to Gandhi and Jinnah for their co-operation on the food issue might elicit a helpful response. The Viceroy apparently believed there were common humanitarian grounds linking them, a view shared by Sudhir Ghosh - a young Bengali assistant of Gandhi's, with Tata business connections - who agreed to act as messenger in Wavell's efforts to approach the Mahatma.

On 9 February, Ghosh conveyed Wavell's invitation for Gandhi to come to New Delhi to discuss the food situation. Gandhi astonished his young emissary in vehemently refusing to consider Wavell's request. Ghosh had to report back to George Abell, the

\textsuperscript{174} V.F. Menon, op. cit., p. 227.
\textsuperscript{175} Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 29 January 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VI, p. 868.
\textsuperscript{176} Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 5 February 1946; \textit{ibid.}, p. 884.
Viceroy's Private Secretary (since 11 November 1945: Sir Evan Jenkins had been appointed Governor of the Punjab), that Gandhi supported the stand taken by Asaf Ali, a member of the Congress Working Committee, that "he would be glad to see thousands die as it would be one more nail in the coffin of the British Raj." The reasons for Gandhi's negative response were conveyed in a letter to Wavell, the Mahatma indicating them to be both "physical and moral." The latter of these was Gandhi's rejection of "the same old game of parity between Hindus and Muslims", given that the Viceroy's invitation had been jointly extended to Jinnah. It was the former reason, however, that impressed itself on Wavell, for he recorded in his diary that Gandhi had "professed to be too unwell to travel, so George [Abell] went off ... to see him at Wardha." Abell had better luck in securing the Mahatma's cooperation than had Ghosh, possibly because Rajendra Prasad was not present during his interview with Gandhi, as the prominent member of the Congress Working Committee had been when the young Bengali emissary had earlier arrived. Abell was given indications through gestures by Gandhi - the Mahatma was observing silence - that he would publicly announce his support for "sacrifices ... by ... rich and poor" and "thrift, especially by housewives," while denouncing "hoarding as a criminally wicked act." The Mahatma also agreed to give the lead to "electioneering speakers either to speak helpfully on Food or at least not to say anything that will tend to destroy confidence."

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177Abell to Wavell, 11 February 1946; ibid., p. 932.
178Gandhi to Wavell, 10 February 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol 83, p. 113.
180W., 11 February 1946, p. 209.
182Ibid.
On 18 February, naval ratings attached to the Signal School in Bombay went on hunger strike, protesting against their pay and food and the racial discrimination practised in the Royal Indian Navy. They were joined by ratings from other naval establishments in the Bombay area— including warships moored in the harbour— and a naval mutiny ensued. On 23 February, the mutineers surrendered to the authorities, with Vallabhbhai Patel playing a prominent role in persuading them to do so. By this time, more than 200 people had died in the disturbances, which had spread into central Bombay, a great deal of damage had been done to property, and there had been repercussions in other centres—notably in Karachi, Madras and Calcutta.

This naval mutiny provided the material for a debate within the Indian nationalist movement, a debate focused on the nature of the communal divisions afflicting the Indian body politic. For one of the characteristics of the mutiny had been its participants' evident (albeit brief) unity of purpose across communal lines. This quality had been (at least putatively) characteristic of the Indian National Army. The perceived ability of Indians to unite against the British on a violent basis of action, and the all-too-apparent inability of the legal Indian parties to come together constitutionally, posed a problem for the constitutional nationalists in general and for those of the non-violent Gandhian variant in particular.

Aruna Asaf Ali, a Muslim woman and wife of a member of the Congress Working Committee, had been prominent in inciting the
mutineers, stressing in her subsequent polemics directed at the Mahatma, the mutineers' non-communal comradeship. Gandhi had condemned the mutiny as a "thoughtless orgy of violence," lamenting the demonstration of supra-communal action. In a statement to the press on 23 February he held:

A combination between Hindus and Muslims and others for violent action is unholy and will lead to and probably is a preparation for mutual violence.  

The following day, Aruna Asaf Ali had retorted that she would "rather unite Hindus and Muslims at the barricade than on the constitutional front." Gandhi had replied that even fighters "do not always live at the barricade" and would eventually need to consider a constitutional settlement for India. On 3 March, he wrote an article for Harijan, which published it on 10 March, in which he rationalized that mutiny - if successful - would ultimately work against Indian unity.

Mutiny may conceivably succeed but the success can only avail the mutineers and their kin, not the whole of India. And the lesson would be a bad inheritance. Discipline will be at least as necessary under swaraj as it is now. India under successful mutineers would be cut up into warring factions exhausted by internecine strife.

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184Ibid.
185Aruna Asaf Ali's Statement to the Press, 24 February 1946; ibid., p. 183.
186Gandhi's Statement to the Press, 26 February 1946; ibid., p. 183.
187Gandhi's Article entitled "Conflict of Ideas", 3 March 1946; Harijan, 10 March 1946; ibid., p. 206.
While Gandhi was engaged in polemics with Aruna Asaf Ali over the best means of preserving a united India, H. M. G. was preparing to take its intended "plunge into the Indian constitutional problem,"\(^{188}\) timed to occur in the immediate aftermath of the Indian elections. The election results had demonstrated that a dramatic political polarization had occurred at the all-India level. Of a total of 102 elected Central Legislative Assembly seats, Congress won 57 (with 91.3 per cent of the non-Muslim vote) and the Muslim League took all 30 Muslim seats (with 86.6 per cent of the Muslim vote). Even so, the political significance of communal allegiances was less evident in the provincial returns. Congress secured absolute majorities in eight provinces, including two (North-West Frontier Province and Assam) claimed by Jinnah for "Pakistan". The League was able to form ministries in Sind and Bengal, but in both cases was dependent on European and/or Independent support in the respective assemblies. In the Punjab, the League secured 75 out of 86 Muslim seats, and was subsequently reinforced by 4 Unionist defectors; but a coalition of Congress, the Akali Sikhs and the Unionist remnants provided the basis for a ministry to be formed under Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana.

The British Government had had to decide on the form its Indian constitutional initiative would take. Wavell had recommended a British effort to obtain a Congress-League agreement on the "Pakistan" issue, failing which Jinnah was to be delivered an ultimatum that, if he held out, a truncated Pakistan was all he could hope to get. The Viceroy felt sure that the

\(^{188}\text{See Chapter Two, n. 112 above.}\)
"attractiveness of Pakistan to the Muslims would largely disappear" if the "husk" - as Jinnah had described Rajagopalachari's formula - was offered to them.

But H. M. G. was thinking along different lines. At a Cabinet meeting on 27 November, Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, had mooted whether the Viceroy needed "the help of new political advisers who could devote themselves wholly to the promotion of ... [Indian self - government], unhampered by the details of day-to-day administration." This idea had gradually recommended itself to H. M. G., with Stafford Cripps prominent amongst those promoting its acceptance. On 14 January, the India and Burma Committee resolved to recommend to the Cabinet "that a mission of three Cabinet Ministers should visit India, arriving about the end of March, to conduct the forthcoming negotiations."

On 22 January, Pethick-Lawrence informed the Viceroy of the Cabinet decision to put into effect the proposal of the India and Burma Committee. Wavell cabled back his approval - he had been finding it difficult to keep abreast of the everyday demands of office and the decision to send out a special team of constitutional negotiators was at this stage not unwelcome. But

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190 See Chapter One, n. 60 above.
192 See Summary of Major Short's Memorandum which Cripps sent to Pethick-Lawrence, 3 December 1945; ibid., p. 592. Major John McLaughlin Short, who had lately served in the Indian Army, proposed that a "Kindergarten" of the type which went to South Africa under Lord Milner should be sent to India. Also see the comments by Cripps supporting the sending of "a special mission to India," in Cabinet India and Burma Committee Meeting Minute, 19 December 1945; ibid., p. 664.
193 Cabinet India and Burma Committee Meeting Minute, 14 January 1946; ibid., pp. 786-7.
194 See Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 22 January 1946; ibid., p. 834.
195 See Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 26 January 1946; ibid., p. 844.
196 See W.J.L., 22 December 1945, p. 196.
Wavell wondered which ministers would be chosen to accompany Pethick-Lawrence to India. As he confided to his diary on 24 January, there was one minister he would rather see remain in Britain.

[It] relieves me of some of the immediate load of responsibility, I suppose; but may increase it in the end .... It depends a great deal whom they send. I am afraid that I would not wholly trust Cripps as a negotiator.\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., 24 January 1946, p. 206.
CHAPTER THREE

March 1946 - September 1946

We [Gandhians] say that neither the past nor the future is in our hands. We have only the present in our hands and we want to bring [the Hindu Golden Age] ... in the present.1

Vinoba Bhave, 1957.

Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.2


Jinnah knew about the apprehensions of the Indian Muslims because they were his own apprehensions.3

Indira Rothermund, 1965.

The Cabinet Mission: The Initial Stage

On 19 March 1946 the Cabinet Mission left London bound for India. Pethick-Lawrence had as his companions A.V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Sir Stafford Cripps. They arrived in New Delhi on 24 March. The next day, at a press conference, Pethick-Lawrence spelt out the Mission's purpose, stressing that in the course of the Mission's activities, the Viceroy would "join with us as our colleague."4

The discussions now to begin are preliminary to the setting up of machinery whereby the forms under which India can realise her full independent status can be determined by Indians. The objective is to set up acceptable machinery quickly, and to make the necessary interim arrangements.5

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1"Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Concluding Address" (to a meeting of Gandhian workers in Kerala in 1957); All-India Congress Committee Economic Review, 25 May 1957, p.31; cited in De Bary, op. cit. p.374.
2Gandhi's Article entitled "The Doctrine of the Sword"; Young India, 11 August 1920; C.W.M.G., Vol. 18, p.132.
5Tbid., p.3.
The Secretary of State's words had a decidedly authoritative ring to them. It was appropriate that they should, for the Cabinet Mission - as the young Woodrow Wyatt, accompanying Cripps as one of his Personal Assistants, recalled - was the highest level group Britain ever sent to India. They had plenipotentiary power to negotiate, merely submitting final details to London for Cabinet approval which was given without demur.6

The Mission approached the Indian constitutional issue on the basis of the hypothesis that Congress and the League could be brought to agree on a constitutional arrangement for an independent India. Yet it was common knowledge that the two parties were proclaiming diametrically opposed positions regarding the unity of India in their respective independence claims. So the assumption on which the Mission's hypothesis was based was that one of the parties might be persuaded to forgo its proclaimed position. It soon became evident that the Mission believed that the League was the party which should be pressed to make this policy adjustment.

That the Mission would be inclined to favour Congress in preference to the League was intrinsic in its membership. As Wyatt recalled, there was no doubt as to "the evident bias of Cripps and to a lesser degree that of Pethick-Lawrence ... towards Congress."7 A.V. Alexander did not share this bias, but he was the least influential of the members in determining the Mission's line of approach. Wavell acted as more of a counterbalance to the pro-Congress approach, but his inclusion in the Mission was ex-officio: he lacked the political stature of the Cabinet

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7Ibid., p.137.
Ministers. That still left the team of India Office staff who had accompanied Pethick-Lawrence to India. But their task was to advise the Secretary of State, and though Pethick-Lawrence was technically the leader of the Mission, in fact Cripps was the dominant personality who determined the British team's approach to the negotiations. Wyatt was in no doubt that this was the case.

Cripps towered over the others. He imposed his decisions on them. He was not first among equals but first among inferiors. The piercing eye, the unfolding logic ... the capacity to unravel the complicated in an instant, were invincible.  

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From 1 to 17 April the Cabinet Mission held court in New Delhi, interviewing in all 472 Indian political leaders in 182 sittings. Their progress was characterized not by a gathering together of the available Indian political material so as to form an overall picture of the Indian political scene, but rather by a rejecting or a bypassing of lesser parties' political points of view. In the end only the Hindu-Muslim communal impasse was left for them to attempt to solve, with Congress and the League as partners in the constitutional project. It was in the nature of things that Congress and the League should acquiesce in this development.

One of the Indian leaders gave early indications that he intended to assist the process by which the lesser parties were relegated to the sidelines of the constitutional decision-making process, especially in regard to the prospect of a distinctly

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8Ibid., p.140.
Untouchable contribution. Early in his career Gandhi had identified untouchability as an untruth, an aspect of current Hindu social practice which needed to be done away with. Its elimination, however, was seen by the Mahatma as a project of social reform. Any proposal aimed at securing a constitutionally guaranteed position in the Indian power structure for the political representatives of the victims of this untruth was therefore inappropriate. Of course, such a proposal would also threaten to reduce the Hindu political representative catchment area, where Congress mainly operated, by an estimated 15 per cent of the Indian population. Gandhi had fought to prevent such a development in 1932, when the Communal Award conceded to the Untouchables a separate electoral identity. He had resorted to a "fast unto death" to have the Award altered. With the Poona Pact of 24 September 1932, the Untouchables had been redefined electorally as, in the final analysis, a sub-group within the Hindu community.

There was an upsurge in Gandhi's interest in the plight of the Untouchables during the early months of 1946, a development which occurred in tandem with the gathering of momentum of the British political initiative. While the latter was finally given form by the arrival in India of the Cabinet Mission on 23 March, the former was given embodiment that same day by Gandhi's well-publicized decision to "stay where the Bhangis live" in future when travelling around India.

When Gandhi received his expected summons from the Cabinet Mission to attend the negotiating activities in New Delhi, the

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9Gandhi to G.D. Birla, 23 March 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 83, p.311. The Bhangis (Sweepers) were considered amongst the lowest of the Untouchables.
ideological context had been prepared for a symbolic move on his part, with a view to establishing that the Mahatma - and through him Congress - was the representative of Untouchable interests. Upon arrival in Delhi, Gandhi took up residence in the Untouchable quarter. This Gandhian gesture had required of the Mahatma's followers a prior exercise in instant slum clearance. According to Woodrow Wyatt:

As ... [the Untouchables] lived in swarming, unhygienic squalor, there was considerable alarm for Gandhi's safety and health .... Gandhi's multimillionaire friend, G.D. Birla, bought a chunk of the sweepers' quarters, turned the inhabitants out, and cleansed, disinfected and decorated the little buildings with lavish quantities of whitewash. In forty-eight hours Gandhi's Delhi camp looked ... spruce and agreeable.¹⁰

Before being interviewed by the Mission, Gandhi opened an informal line of communication to Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps. He had received encouragement to do so by the welcome extended to him upon his arrival in Delhi on 1 April: Cripps spent the evening - as Wavell recorded - "slumming with Gandhi"¹¹ in the Untouchable quarter. Blaming as he did the failure of his 1942 negotiations on the fact that Gandhi had refused to take a direct part, Cripps was determined to involve the Mahatma in the Cabinet Mission's negotiations from the start, and to keep him involved to the end. But there was more to Cripps' presence in Gandhi's Delhi camp that April evening: there was an element of reverence in the Cabinet Minister's attitude to the Mahatma. Wyatt commented on this side of their relationship when recalling their meetings during the early stage of the Mission's activities.

¹⁰Wyatt, op. cit., p.123.
¹¹W.J., 1 April 1946, p.233.
[Gandhi] had a weird moral ascendancy over Stafford, who could not see through the humbug and vanity mingled with Gandhi's real virtues.\textsuperscript{12}

Gandhi's informal line of communication to the Cabinet Mission included both private letters and messages sent through Sudhir Ghosh, his young Bengali acolyte. On 2 and 3 April, both these means were employed by the Mahatma to draw to the Mission's attention three measures he maintained the British needed to take in order to demonstrate they were serious about advancing India towards independence. Two of these demands were contained in a letter sent on 2 April to Pethick-Lawrence, advising "the immediate release of political prisoners irrespective of the charge of violence or non-violence"\textsuperscript{13} and the abolition of the salt tax. The third demand, along with the repetition of the first two, was communicated to the Mission by Sudhir Ghosh, who, in order to do so, roused Wyatt from his bed at 6.30 on the morning of 3 April. The third demand, as Wyatt recalled, was

not to have anything more to do with those whom Gandhi called 'bad men.' High on his list of 'bad men' ... [was] Dr Ambedkar, elected leader of the ... Untouchable [separatists] .... Sudhir was rather ashamed of the third condition.\textsuperscript{14}

Having thus, in the best Gandhian style, fired a shot across the Mission's bows, on 3 April Gandhi attended an interview with the three Cabinet Ministers and the Viceroy. It was Pethick-Lawrence who raised the communal issue, the Mahatma preferring to focus on the British-Indian issues his demands had addressed. Thus prompted, Gandhi maintained that "he would rather such a question should be put to the authorised representatives of the

\textsuperscript{12}Wyatt, op. cit., p.144.
\textsuperscript{13}Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 2 April 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VII, p.82.
\textsuperscript{14}Wyatt, op. cit., p.145.
Congress"15; nevertheless, he proceeded to venture on to the thorny terrain of Indian communal politics.

The Muslim population is a population of converts - only a microscopic minority are not. They are all descendants of Indian-born people. Jinnah is sincere but his logic is utterly at fault especially as a kind of mania possesses him .... But why should the Delegation worry; they must lie on the bed they had prepared and this situation is a legacy of British rule.16

If the British were responsible for the condition of communal stalemate afflicting the Indian body politic, the British were also responsible for finding a solution to break the deadlock. Thus the British would need to impose a settlement on the Indian parties. For Wavell, it was a familiar interpretation.

On 4 April it was Jinnah's turn to be interviewed. Unlike the Mahatma, he needed little prompting to address the communal issue. Jinnah maintained that the unification of the subcontinent was a British achievement without parallel since the (pre-Islamic) "days of Chandra Gupta."17 Now that the British were preparing to withdraw, a political dispensation which reflected Indian conditions, and was thus able to stand without British support, would need to be brought into being. The League leader further held that the essential unifying factor of British rule in India - the presence of British officers "in the key positions in the Civil Service, the Police and the Army"18 - would need to be replaced by an alternative factor. In this respect, the different communal loyalties of Hindus and Muslims would militate against

16Ibid., p.117.
17Record of Interview between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Jinnah, 4 April 1946; ibid., p.119.
18Ibid., p.120.
the success of any attempt to form a united Indian state. A state could be stable only if the society it administered had a regnant community from which it could recruit its official class. Borrowing a phrase often employed as descriptive of the Indian Civil Service's imperial role, Jinnah outlined his rationale for a political arrangement reflecting Indian social conditions.

[There] must be division so that in each of the two parts there will be a dominant community which can provide the 'steel frame.' Where you have three Muslims for one Hindu your 'steel frame' is there .... It need not necessarily be as high as three to one. If there were no 'steel frame', the Civil Service, the Police and the Army would not stand loyally to the Cabinet and the Legislature and the State could not survive. Fortunately, in India the Muslims have their homelands and so let us divide India.19

Wavell enquired of Jinnah as to where the boundaries of Pakistan should be drawn. In reply, Jinnah rejected any "mutilated" version - a clear reference to Rajagopalachari's formula - insisting instead on the "five Provinces" (of Sind, Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Bengal and Assam), though indicating his willingness to consider "mutual adjustments."20 He further elaborated that he was not insisting on including a large number of Hindus in Pakistan but if it were said to him that only the number of heads could be considered, he could not agree to that .... What he wanted was a nucleus Muslim territory surrounded by sufficient additional territory to make it economically viable.21

Jinnah was apparently unconcerned at the prospect of "a large number of Hindus" being included in Pakistan; indeed, he was perhaps a little eager to have them. This way of thinking would

19Ibid.
20Ibid., p.124.
21Ibid.
not have surprised Sir Francis Wylie, Governor of the United Provinces. His province was the scene of much of the communal tension generating the movement for Muslim political separatism. On 2 January he had reported to Wavell on the attitude to Pakistan as taken by a prominent Muslim League leader.

Chaudhri Khaliq-uz-zaman ... [does] not believe in Pakistan any more than I do. If there are to be separate Muslim States however they must according to him have plenty of Hindus in them to provide an insurance against the Muslims of Oudh being maltreated by the majority community here. He ... almost smacked his lips at the thought of the fun the Pakistan Government(s) would have in protecting - vicariously - the interests of their co-religionists in Hindustan!\(^{22}\)

To some Indian Muslim separatists at least, the Pakistan proposal was not a means of ending the perennial adversarial relationship of Indian Muslims to Hindu India, but rather of continuing the communal conflict in a new - presumably more effective - form.

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Towards One India?

After more than two weeks of conducting interviews with a wide range of Indian political leaders, the Cabinet Mission decided upon their approach for advancing Indian constitutional progress. Cripps had prepared a memorandum, which he submitted to his colleagues on 10 April, in which two possible solutions to the Indian constitutional issue were set out. The premiss on which Cripps had based his memorandum was that no attempt to form an interim Government could be made "until a broad agreement has been

\(^{22}\)Wylie to Wavell, 2 January 1946; ibid., Vol. VI, p.727.
reached upon the fundamental question of whether there shall be one India ... or two or more Indias."23 His colleagues concurred with the draft. The next day a telegram was sent to Attlee, bringing him up to date with developments.

There appear to us to be two possible bases of agreement, the first a unitary India with a loose federation at the Centre charged primarily with control of Defence and Foreign Affairs (Scheme A). The second based upon a divided India, the Pakistan element consisting only of the majority Muslim Districts .... The two divided parts would have ... nothing in the way of an actual executive centre (Scheme B).24

In outlining the two schemes to the Prime Minister, the Ministers indicated that their preference was for "something on [the] lines of Scheme A but [that] this may prove impossible of attainment."25

The British Cabinet duly authorized the canvassing of the schemes with the principal Indian party leaders.26 The Cabinet agreed with the Mission's preference for Scheme A, particularly on the grounds of international security; the Chiefs of Staff had claimed - amongst other considerations - that the western part of Pakistan, as proposed under Scheme B, would lack the resources considered necessary for the protection of India's north - western continental approaches, and lack also the military strategic option of defence-in-depth.27

The Mission decided that Jinnah should be the first party leader to whom the two schemes would be disclosed. With this

24Cabinet Delegation and Wavell to Attlee, 11 April 1946; ibid., p.221.
25Ibid.
26See Attlee to Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 13 April 1946; ibid., pp.260-1.
27The Chiefs of Staff discussed the relative merits of Scheme A and Scheme B at a meeting on 12 April 1946. The following day, Attlee conveyed their views in his telegram to the Cabinet Mission; see ibid.
purpose in mind, Jinnah was invited to an interview on 16 April. The League leader was informed that the full claim for Pakistan he had made on 4 April28 had no chance of being accepted.

If the full territories [of Pakistan] were insisted upon then some element of sovereignty must be relinquished .... If ... full sovereignty is desired, then the claims to the ... [non-Muslim] territories could not be conceded.29

The "full and complete demand for Pakistan"30 thus rejected, the Ministers brought out Scheme B for Jinnah's inspection. The contours of Scheme B Pakistan were familiar to the League leader, bearing as they did a close resemblance to the "mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan"31 of Rajagopalachari's formula. Under Scheme B Jinnah was offered

a separate State of Pakistan consisting of ... Sind, North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, the Muslim-majority districts of the Punjab, except perhaps Gurdaspur ... [the Muslim-majority districts of Bengal] and the Sylhet district of Assam. Whether there would be any chance of Calcutta being a free port seemed doubtful.32

Having set before Jinnah the offer of a truncated Pakistan, the Ministers proceeded to the unveiling of their preferred Scheme A. In the preferred scheme, Pakistan and Hindustan would take the form of two Federations, functioning as separate groups of provinces within an all-India Union empowered to deal with a minimum of compulsory subjects, with the Princely States forming a possible third Federation. Except in regard to its provisions for Assam, the territorial extent of Pakistan as determined by Scheme

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28See Chapter Three, n.20 above.
30Ibid.
31See Chapter One, n.60 above.
According with Jinnah's "full and complete demand" of 4 April.  
As the Ministers informed Jinnah:

If ... the League accepted the principle of a Union Centre for ... defence, foreign affairs and communications, it might then be possible to include in one Federation the whole of ... Sind, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab and Bengal, plus perhaps the Sylhet district of Assam. In such a Union the two parts might have equal representation .... There might be provision that any party to it could secede after ... 15 years. A set-up of this kind would secure a very strong Muslim Federation and ... it might be acceptable to the Congress.  

Having presented the outlines of both schemes, the Ministers invited Jinnah to indicate "which of the two alternative possible avenues of approach to an agreement would be best from his point of view." But at this stage Jinnah was not to be drawn into committing himself either way. In the opinion of Ayesha Jalal, in offering Jinnah Scheme A "the Mission had dealt ... [the Muslim League] a royal flush ... [giving it] equality [with Congress in] ... an all-India federal centre." Jalal holds that Jinnah's Pakistan demand was intended by the League leader to be used as a bargaining counter, with a view to reaching a compromise with Congress in the form of just such a power-sharing formula at the Centre as proposed under Scheme A. But Jinnah could not leave the high ground of the demand for a sovereign Pakistan until Congress indicated a willingness to modify its claim to an all-encompassing Indian nationalist representative role. Jinnah's approach to accepting Scheme A would need to leave open the option of a return to the demand for a sovereign Pakistan should Congress reject the

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33 See Chapter Three, n.20 above.
Mission's proposal.

Of course, if the British were to insist on Scheme A as determining the form which an independent India should take, Jinnah's problem of how to go about accepting the Scheme would have been solved. For the moment, Jinnah refused to commit himself to Scheme A. But now that he knew that the British negotiators were thinking along the lines of a power-sharing settlement at the Centre, Jinnah hinted to the Ministers that he would be prepared to co-operate in a British effort to enforce their preferred scheme. As he summed up the position:

Ultimately, if Congress and the Muslims could not agree the Delegation would have to do what they thought right .... The British Government was asking the Indian people to take self-government and the Indians were unable to do so .... [T]he only way in which there could be a peaceful transference of power was that defence should remain in the interim period under British control. It did not mean that Britain must retain it for ever but for a period of years.37

Jinnah's advice to the Ministers in April 1946 "to do what they thought right" was virtually an echo of Gandhi's appeal to Casey in December 1945 that the British should do "the right thing" in deciding on the shape Indian independence should take.38 Of course, Jinnah and Gandhi were approaching the issue from quite different perspectives: the League leader wanted the British to enforce the "right" power-sharing settlement between the Indian parties, whereas the Mahatma wanted the British to opt for the "right" party to the inter-Indian conflict to the exclusion of the other party.

38 Compare Chapter Two, n.165 and Chapter Three, n.37 above.
In any event, it was clear to Wavell what Jinnah wanted. The Viceroy noted in his diary that evening:

> Obviously J[innah]'s intention is to drive us into an award and to hope we shall remain in India to enforce it.\(^{39}\)

This judgement was confirmed two days later by Cripps, who had continued discussions with Jinnah at the informal level. In reporting to his colleagues that he had "got nothing much" out of the League leader, Cripps offered his opinion that "Mr Jinnah realised that he could not get all that he wanted but would prefer that to happen by an award given by us than by negotiation with the Congress."\(^{40}\)

Gandhi was one of the first to learn of Jinnah's reaction to the Cabinet Mission's proposals. Early on the morning of 18 April, Cripps had visited the Mahatma and "had told him the position."\(^{41}\) Gandhi had never had it so good in terms of favoured access to the British power structure. This was a most timely development from Gandhi's point of view, coming as it did in the aftermath of Nehru's recently achieved pre-eminence at the ideological helm of Congress. With one of the Mahatma's sources of power - his leadership position within the Congress establishment - now in decline, the other source of power - his access to the Imperial authorities - had reached the zenith of its ease of connection.

Gandhi advised Cripps that if Jinnah could be brought "to entertain an all-India Union",\(^{42}\) Nehru, rather than himself,

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\(^{39}\)W.J., 16 April 1946, p.246.


\(^{41}\)Ibid., p.311.

\(^{42}\)Ibid.
should be approached by the Ministers with a view to his entering into discussions with the League leader. Undoubtedly, the Mahatma anticipated that such discussions would be fruitless. Gandhi was already focusing on the measures the Cabinet Mission would sooner or later have to take in order to break the deadlock between the Indian parties. And like Jinnah, Gandhi was apparently willing to trust British judgement in deciding on what measures should be adopted. In what must have seemed to Cripps to have been a curious echo of Jinnah's comment to the Mission two days before, Gandhi held to his established line that "the Mission must make up their minds on what would be just and equitable and then see it through."  

Rather half-heartedly, the Ministers had set about trying to arrange a meeting between Jinnah and Nehru, with Pethick-Lawrence in the chair: half-heartedly, because they were not expecting anything to come of it. This was apparent from a telegram they sent to Attlee on 18 April.

Our estimate of the situation is ... that there is now no prospect of settlement of [the] Pakistan issue on [a] basis of agreement and ... we shall have to propound the basis of settlement ourselves. We are working on the lines of this.

It was soon made evident that Nehru did not think any useful purpose would be served by his conferring with Jinnah with a view to working out a Congress-League agreement. Approached by Cripps on 19 April with an invitation to meet with Jinnah, the Pandit resolutely declined.

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43 See Chapter Three, n.37 above.
44 Hodson, op. cit., p.141.
The Ministers withdrew for a few days' rest in the cool of Kashmir to plan their next move. One aspect, at least, of the Indian constitutional problem had been brought into sharp relief: both of the main Indian parties were expecting the British to decide on the constitutional shape of things to come; they were even looking for British enforcement of whatever was decided upon.

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On 24 April the Cabinet Mission returned to New Delhi. Although - unlike the Viceroy - they were not convinced of the need for a British-imposed settlement, the Ministers had accepted that the situation called for a positive British role in steering the Indian parties towards agreement. They had not decided, however, on the form this role should assume.

A number of possibilities presented themselves. During the Mission's sojourn in Kashmir, Cripps' active mind, sifting the options being put forward in his private negotiations with a wide range of Indian political contacts, had fastened on the idea that the formation of an interim Government should precede any attempt to achieve a constitutional agreement. On 22 April, a memorandum was telegraphed to Wavell informing him of this latest development. And once back in New Delhi, Cripps put the new proposal privately to Jinnah.

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46Wavell had come to believe that the British would need to make an award to bring about a settlement between the Indian parties. See W.L., 18 April 1946, p.249.

This was an unwelcome development for Jinnah: he had been hoping the Mission would have returned from Kashmir resolved on Scheme A at the point of the British sword. Not surprisingly, Cripps found the League leader "in an unreceptive mood at the outset." Jinnah advised Cripps to put the new proposal to Congress; if they accepted, he would approach the League's Working Committee. Accordingly, Cripps put the proposal to Nehru on 25 April. The Pandit rejected the idea outright.

The proposal hatched in Kashmir had proved unacceptable and was dropped. But this evidence that the Mission was moving away from Scheme A - indeed from the whole constitutional tangle - apparently had an effect on Jinnah. When Cripps visited the League leader during the evening of 25 April he found his host willing to indicate his preference between Scheme A and Scheme B. Cripps learnt that if it was a choice between Pakistan's territorial extent and its degree of autonomy, it was the former consideration which carried the day. Better a Pakistan that was "maimed" to one that was "moth-eaten." As Cripps reported to his colleagues the next morning:

Mr. Jinnah had said that Plan B was definitely unacceptable. He was prepared, however, to consider Plan A if the Congress were prepared to consider it.

The Ministers proceeded with a view to securing a similar affirmation from Congress. On the face of it this was a difficult exercise. On 18 April the Working Committee had considered Scheme A, with both Azad and Nehru in favour of it serving as the basis

48Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 25 April 1946; ibid., p.330.
49See W.J., 25 April 1946, p.252.
for negotiation with the League. But the Committee had rejected the proposal by a "unanimous decision." But Pethick-Lawrence believed that a potent ally might be available to persuade Congress to modify its stand. He pointed out to his colleagues that

Mr. Gandhi's main objection to Pakistan was to its having sovereignty and it now appeared that Mr. Jinnah was for the first time prepared to consider something less than a sovereign Pakistan. He thought ... that there was a better chance of dealing with Congress through Mr. Gandhi than through Azad.

In his memoirs, Woodrow Wyatt recalls that during the Cabinet Mission the elderly Pethick-Lawrence became "disenchanted ... with Gandhi who bewildered him." In all fairness to the Mahatma, it must be said that Pethick-Lawrence was probably not too difficult to bewilder. In any event, acting on the Secretary of State's advice, the Ministers decided that "Cripps should put ... [Scheme A] to Mr. Gandhi ... that evening but he should not mention the matter when he saw Azad that morning."

It soon emerged that Pethick-Lawrence's assessment of the relative tractability of Gandhi, as against Azad, was radically amiss. When Cripps met with Azad he found the Congress President already pressing against the policy constraints imposed on him by his Working Committee colleagues. As Cripps reported to his

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53 Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 26 April 1946; ibid., p.342.
54 Wyatt, op. cit., p.140.
fellow Ministers, Azad had claimed that Congress would be willing to enter into negotiations with the League on a Scheme A basis. Azad had raised the question with Cripps and made the commitment of a Congress involvement as part of his own personal initiative to generate momentum on the constitutional front. In doing so, he had felt the need to caution Cripps that "he did not want anything said to Mahatma Gandhi or Pandit Nehru about this because that would make his task more difficult in putting the matter across to his Working Committee."\(^{56}\)

Without having had to approach Gandhi on the matter, the Ministers were able to inform Attlee that they had decided to proceed on the understanding that both Congress and the League were ready "to engage in close negotiations" aimed at achieving a Scheme A type of constitutional agreement.\(^{57}\) On 27 April Pethick-Lawrence issued invitations to Azad and Jinnah\(^{58}\) for each to send four representatives to meet with the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission - probably at Simla, Azad having advised Cripps to hold the negotiations in a place cooler than Delhi.

Both Azad and Jinnah duly accepted the invitation extended to them. In Jinnah's case this was done in an uncomplicated manner, the League leader indicating the Liaquat Ali Khan, Muhammad Ismail Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar would join him in forming the Muslim League negotiating team.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{56}\) Hodson, op. cit., p.142.


\(^{58}\) See Pethick-Lawrence to Azad, 27 April 1946; ibid., p.352. Jinnah received a virtually identical invitation.

\(^{59}\) See Jinnah to Pethick-Lawrence, 29 April 1946; ibid., p.372.
Azad's letters of acceptance were padded with polemical material.⁶⁰ This was undoubtedly the product of the need to paper over the divisions within the Working Committee over how to respond to the Mission's success in bringing the two main Indian parties so close to a round of direct negotiations. In resurrecting Scheme A with his Working Committee, Azad had probably received support from Nehru - it being "quite likely", in R.J. Moore's opinion, "that Nehru was linked with Azad over the Simla initiative."⁶¹ Moore holds that - at this stage, anyway - Nehru was willing to go along with Azad's acceptance of the principle of voluntary provincial grouping. But Gandhi did not support Azad's move. When, on the morning of 28 April, the President produced Pethick-Lawrence's letter of invitation for the Working Committee's enlightenment, the Mahatma was critical of the constitutional principles there set forth on the grounds that they contained "the seeds of Pakistan."⁶²

This raised the prospect that Gandhi would dissociate himself from Congress participation in the Cabinet Mission's efforts. In view of his experience during the Cripps Mission of 1942, Cripps was determined to prevent such a development. When Sudhir Ghosh brought the news of Gandhi's negative stand in the Working Committee's deliberations, Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence sent the young Bengali back to Gandhi with an urgent request to meet with them. The two Ministers brought their colleague up to date with developments, informing A.V. Alexander that "Gandhi was upset

⁶⁰ See Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 27 and 28 April 1946; ibid., pp.353 and 357-8.
⁶¹ Moore, op. cit., p.98.
because he apparently felt that he had been by-passed." Gandhi had been by-passed: Azad, backed by Nehru, had pressed for the policy move to which Congress had committed itself. But by meeting with Gandhi that evening in the Viceroy's Mughal Gardens, Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence were able to assuage the Mahatma's misgivings - at least at the psychological level. Congress might be moving in the direction of co-operation with British constitutional plans, but the British leaders themselves - Cripps in particular, as Wyatt observed - would "panic" if Gandhi should show signs of coming out in opposition to the Working Committee consensus.

Yet Gandhi had cause for alarm: Azad had committed Congress to a new round of negotiations without prior reference to himself. Azad's initiative made Gandhi feel that his control of Congress - such as it was - was slipping, and that this might accelerate during the crucial period when the prospect of high office put great strain on the loyalty and integrity of top level Congressmen. As Pyarelal recalled, the incident gave Gandhi the felling "all was not well within the Congress ranks." But the Mahatma responded positively to the Cabinet Ministers' request that he should accompany the Congress negotiating team - Azad, Nehru, Patel and Abdul Ghaffar Khan - to Simla. Gandhi communicated this to Cripps in a letter on 29 April.

You do not understand how uneasy I feel. Something is wrong. But I shall come to Simla.

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63Moore, op. cit., p.97.
64Wyatt, op. cit., p.145.
65Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.204.
66Gandhi to Cripps, 29 April 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p.83.
The Second Simla Conference: A Congress/Gandhian Offensive

On 2 May Gandhi arrived at Simla. He took up residence at "Chadwick", the large bungalow allotted to his party, which had served as the wartime quarters of the Governor of Burma. The Mahatma was immediately the focus of speculation in the press, because the next day he persuaded his personal staff of 15 devotees to return to Delhi, leaving him free to provide his "unalloyed" guidance to the Congress negotiating team and the Cabinet Mission. He ensured close contact with both these parties to the Conference by inviting Patel and Abdul Ghaffar Khan to move in with him - which probably illustrated the split in the Congress High Command, Nehru and Azad residing elsewhere. Gandhi also had with him his three intermediaries, Sudhir Ghosh, Agatha Harrison and Horace Alexander - the last two of whom were British Quaker devotees of the Mahatma. Gandhi eased the disappointment of the "act of faith" of his personal staff's return passage, by quoting to Pyarelal from Psalm 127: "Unless the Lord build the house, they build in vain who build it." And Pyarelal found Patel, close at hand, in agreement.

Gandhi and Patel probably sensed that the pending negotiations at Simla could constitute the formative event of Indian constitutional progress. There were two basic reasons why they

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68Horace Alexander had first met Gandhi in March 1928 at Sabarmati, the ashram near Ahmedabad. He became a close friend of Gandhi. Agatha Harrison was a friend of C.F. Andrews, and through him had met Gandhi in 1931 during the Mahatma's visit to London to attend the Round Table Conference. She was Secretary of a group of Quakers known as the Indian Conciliation Group.
70Tbid.
71See Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.205.
should consider this to be so. On the one hand there was the evident anxiety and urgency of the Cabinet Mission to achieve a political settlement: this being given constant expression by Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps, and being confirmed by intelligence received from Krishna Menon and other contacts in London as to British Labour Party intentions. The other reason was the unprecedented action of Jinnah in accepting a Scheme A basis of negotiation. It looked as if the Muslim League President was moving towards an accommodation with the Cabinet Mission. In so doing he was necessarily showing what was (at least according to Ayesha Jalal) his real political objective: an all-India Union arrangement, in the workings of which the Muslim League would exercise permanent veto power. Such an independence outcome would have been repugnant to the Mahatma, who had his own ideals as to the nature of an independent India, none of which involved sharing power with Muslims, Untouchables, Sikhs or any other group which wanted a structurally distinct role in an all-India Union. Likewise, Patel - like Gandhi, very much a Hindu nationalist - wanted a centralized democratic India, the modern political system best suited to effect the rule of India's majority community. Faced with the very real prospect that Jinnah might induce the Cabinet Mission to pronounce a power-sharing settlement for an independent all-India Union, Gandhi and Patel had cause to instinctively work together so as to maximize their ability to influence the course of the approaching negotiations. With a view to clearing the decks for the anticipated action, both men apparently preferred the removal to Delhi of the Gandhian followers.
The Second Simla Conference opened on 5 May and continued on and off for one week. In essence, the Cabinet Mission proposed a Scheme A type of constitutional structure consisting of three tiers or levels of authority: the existing provinces, two proposed Groups or Federations of provinces, and an all-India Union.\textsuperscript{72}

By the second day of the discussions the basic pattern had emerged: Jinnah wanted to maximize the power held by the Groups, Congress wanted to maximize the authority of the Union. This conflict took different forms. Congress wanted the Union to be "self-sufficient ... in regard to finance"; the League insisted instead that "the Federations must have a voice" in approving the Union's budget.\textsuperscript{73} The constitutional location of the Legislature to which the Union Executive would be responsible was another issue, Jinnah holding that "the forum ... should be the two Group Legislatures," Pethick-Lawrence providing early evidence of his bias towards Congress\textsuperscript{74} by countering that such an arrangement would be difficult to co-ordinate, leading to "an unending source of disagreement."\textsuperscript{75}

Aside from the party conflict over the power of the proposed Groups and the power of the proposed Union, one significant fact had emerged: the negotiations had focused on the nature of the all-India polity to be set up, without any argument arising as to

\textsuperscript{72}In his invitation to Azad and Jinnah to meet with the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission, Pethick-Lawrence had provided an outline of the Mission's proposed scheme as put forward at the Second Simla Conference. See Chapter Three, n.58 above.

\textsuperscript{73}Record of First Meeting of Second Simla Conference, 5 May 1946; \textit{T.P.L.}, Vol. VII, p.426.

\textsuperscript{74}For Wyatt's comment on the Secretary of State's bias, see Chapter Three, n.7 above.

\textsuperscript{75}Record of First Meeting of Second Simla Conference, 5 May 1946; \textit{T.P.L.}, Vol. VII, P.427.
whether there should be an all-India polity. The "fundamental question" Cripps had set out to answer in drafting the memorandum he had submitted to his colleagues on 10 April, had apparently been resolved.76

Jinnah's public commitment to an objective which, by its very nature, removed the option of partitioning the subcontinent, induced an aggressive response from Congress. The spectre of partition had, increasingly from 1940, directed the Indian political debate along lines which emphasized conflicting analyses of the nature of Indian society. The debate had been an uncomfortable experience for the Congress leaders, given the fragmented character of Indian society and the all-embracing Indian nationalist claims of Congress, the latter being essentially a political claim of natural succession to the imperial domain of the Raj. It was uncomfortable for Indian nationalists to be reminded, by the very terms of the debate, that they were a British Imperial political product, in contrast to the Muslim separatists whose political claims were more resonant of Indian - as opposed to British-Indian - historical experience. Jinnah - himself a nationalist, though one who had been pushed on to the sidelines during the centralization of the nationalist power structure at Gandhi's hands in 1920 - had chanced upon a source of power inchoately welling up from an Indian society politically bestirred by the advance of self-government. Given the undoubtedly Indian nature of the context in which Indian Muslim separatist demands were set, the lawyer-politician who had so skilfully articulated these demands after 1940 had presented an

76See Chapter Three, n.23 above.
awkward target for Indian nationalists. But with Jinnah having moved back on to an all-India political battleground, he was again within the nationalist ambit, presenting a clear target. The Congress High Command responded by going on to the offensive. This development witnessed the return of Gandhi to the front rank of the Congress leadership.

The start of the Congress offensive was signalled by a letter from Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, sent on 6 May. The letter had been drafted by Nehru and revised by Gandhi.\textsuperscript{77} It conveyed the Working Committee's disapproval of the method by which the Conference had so far been conducted, and made clear that the Congress team were "entirely opposed to any executive or legislative machinery for a group of Provinces or units of the Federation."\textsuperscript{78} Nor did they accept the "proposal for parity as between groups in regard to the executive or legislature."\textsuperscript{79} In demanding a prompt withdrawal of the British from India, they indicated that this should be done by passing sovereignty to a constituent assembly which would "represent the will of the free Indian nation and give effect to it."\textsuperscript{80} Such a sovereign constituent assembly would "not ... be bound by any previous arrangements."\textsuperscript{81} The British withdrawal would, furthermore, need to be "preceded by [the formation of] a Provisional Government which must function ... as a government of free India, and which should undertake to make all arrangements for the transitional period."\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{77}See Draft Letter to Pethick-Lawrence, 6 May 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p.107, n.2.
\textsuperscript{78}Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 6 May 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VII, p.434.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., p.433.
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., pp.433-4.
It had long been Congress policy – certainly since the party's strong showing in the 1936-37 elections – to recommend the passing of sovereignty to a constituent assembly holding a mandate to decide the constitutional provisions for an independent India. The all-India strength of Congress would be reflected in the composition of such an assembly, and – given the Indian political temperament – a strong showing could be expected to attract significant numbers of non-Congress politicians eager to be associated with the dominant power. This could be expected to subject the brittle political construct of Indian Muslim unity under the League's auspices to intolerable strain.\(^3\)

The Congress policy statement addressed to the Cabinet Mission on 6 May signalled the failure of the Second Simla Conference, though six more days of proposals and counter-proposals followed before the Cabinet Ministers reluctantly admitted to failure. It also provided evidence of a hardening Congress attitude, which was not lost on the Mission, and would have a formative influence in shaping their subsequent moves. This was because Congress had been identified by the Raj's security advisors as the party which could activate a mass movement on a scale which British resources could not be expected to contain.\(^4\) The League's capabilities in this respect were still regarded as almost negligible; it was thought of as a ramshackle grouping of largely autonomous provincial and local organizations.

With the prospects of a settlement having suddenly dimmed, the Cabinet Ministers decided to try to enlist Gandhi's assistance in

\(^3\)For elaboration on the likely fate of the Muslim League in a Congress-dominated constituent assembly, see Jalal, op. cit., p.193.
bringing Congress back into line. For Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, looking to the Mahatma for help when things were going wrong was something of a reflex action - at least at this stage of proceedings. This arose from an apparent feeling of affinity with the Mahatma shared by the two Ministers. Gandhi's career did provide considerable material which could have been expected to generate such an affinity: he had often taken up a position of radical opposition to the same British Imperial establishment with which Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, in their own ways, had often done battle. But such an affinity was not an adequate basis for anticipating Gandhi's favourable response to their request: the Mahatma was a rather more complex character, as the two Ministers were about to find out.

When the Cabinet Mission conferred with Gandhi on the evening of 6 May, hoping to enlist his aid in toning down the Congress policy statement delivered that morning, the Mahatma left no doubt as to where he stood on the communal issue. Wavell had on a number of occasions privately deplored the deference shown by Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence to the Indian politician they perceived as a kindred spirit,\textsuperscript{85} and it was perhaps with some satisfaction that he recorded in his diary the outcome of their meeting.

\textit{[Gandhi] said the proposed [three-tier] solution was 'worse than Pakistan,' and he could not recommend it to Congress; we must either adopt entirely the Congress point of view, if we thought it just, or Jinnah's point of view if we thought it juster; but there was no half-way house .... [Gandhi] seemed quite unmoved at the prospect of civil war .... Though Cripps and ... [Pethick-}

\textsuperscript{85}For example, see \textit{W.L.}, 3 April 1946, pp.235-6.
Lawrence] kept at ... [Gandhi] for an hour ... they quite failed to move him.\textsuperscript{86}

However, Gandhi was by no means the most uncompromising of the Congress leaders in insisting that a power-sharing agreement between the main Indian communities was out of the question. Patel was prepared to maintain openly that Hindu-Muslim differences would, and perhaps even should, be settled in open conflict. This at least was the position adopted by the Sardar during an interview with the Viceroy on 8 May. As Wavell noted:

Patel ... was ... uncompromisingly hostile to any settlement except on the basis of complete Hindu supremacy; and said that they were bound to have it out with the Muslims sooner or later, and that it was better to have a conflict now and get it over.\textsuperscript{87}

By 12 May the negotiations had reached deadlock. Unable to avoid the fact of the failure of the Second Simla Conference, the Cabinet Ministers drafted a communique issued that evening informing the Indian public of the disappointing outcome. However, they stressed that this development did not spell the end of their mission, promising that in a few days they would issue "a statement ... as to the next steps to be taken."\textsuperscript{88}

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The Cabinet Mission Rules: A Gandhian Response

Having failed to persuade the Indian parties to come to a negotiated agreement, the Cabinet Mission brought forward their contingency plan: to work out a detailed constitutional programme

\textsuperscript{86}Ibid., 6 May 1946, p.260.
\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., 8 May 1946, p.261.
\textsuperscript{88}For the text of the communique, see Cabinet Delegation to Henderson, 12 May 1946; \textit{TE}, Vol. VII, P.527.
for the transfer of power and submit it to Congress and the League for their approval. As such, it fell short of being a British-imposed award.

The Cabinet Mission's Plan was announced on 16 May. The Mission proposed a three-tier constitutional structure which was a compromise between the respective minimum demands of Congress and the League as they had emerged during the negotiations at Simla, and as Jinnah and Azad had been requested to present them in the form of "precise written statement[s]." It was evident from the provisions of the Mission's Statement that the Ministers had ruled closer to Azad's position than to Jinnah's.

The Statement held that the Union should control defence, foreign affairs and communications, and be empowered to raise its own revenues. There would be a Union Executive and a Union Legislature, with representatives drawn from both British and Princely India. The principle of parity in the Union between Hindu and Muslim provinces had been dropped, reflecting Gandhi's opinion as delivered to Cripps in a letter on 8 May.

[T]he difficulty about parity ... is insurmountable ... [as the] Muslim majority Provinces represent over nine crores [9,00,00,000] of the population as against over 19 crores [19,00,00,000] of the Hindu majority Provinces. This is really worse than Pakistan.\(^9\)

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\(^9\)Pethick-Lawrence had first issued this challenge to Jinnah; see Pethick-Lawrence to Jinnah, 11 May 1946; ibid., p.511. With a view to maintaining the appearance of impartiality and balance, the request had duly been extended to Azad. Wavell believed it was a mistake to require the parties to commit themselves in writing, as it would make it more difficult for them to subsequently change their position. For the two parties respective replies stating their minimum demands, see Jinnah to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 May 1946 and Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 May 1946; ibid., pp.516-7 and 518-21.

\(^9\)Gandhi to Cripps, 8 May 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p.122.
At the intermediate Group level there were two Muslim Groups instead of the "Pakistan Federation" of Jinnah's submission\(^{91}\): the Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan forming one (Group B) in the North-West, and Bengal and Assam forming the other (Group C) in the North-East. The provinces would be required to meet in their respective Groups to decide whether to draft Group constitutions. Another indication of the Mission's apparent desire to strengthen the proposed all-India Centre was that reference to the "sovereign rights" of provinces\(^{92}\) had been avoided, the Statement instead mentioning only their "residuary powers."\(^{93}\)

If the Statement's provisions demonstrated that the Cabinet Mission was moving towards accommodating the Congress desire for a stronger Union at the expense of the Groups and the provinces, the Statement's preamble - described by Wyatt as "a distorted and unnecessary diatribe against Pakistan"\(^{94}\) - confirmed that appeasement of Congress had become an established aspect of the Mission's approach. Taking advantage of Jinnah's move towards a Scheme A type of constitutional settlement, the Mission had endeavoured to block his line of retreat by explicitly rejecting partition of the subcontinent as a viable option in any independence scheme. Jinnah's "full and complete" Pakistan\(^{95}\) was

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\(^{91}\)There was a wide difference between Jinnah's demands and the scheme put forward in the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May 1946, the Statement being "potentially a disaster for Jinnah" - at least, in Ayesha Jalal's opinion. For elaboration, see Jalal, op. cit., pp.195-9.

\(^{92}\)Pethick-Lawrence had used this phrase in his official invitation to the party leaders to meet with the Cabinet Mission. See Chapter Three, n.58 above.


\(^{94}\)Wyatt, op. cit., p.153.

\(^{95}\)See Chapter Three, n.20 above.
dismissed on the grounds that it failed to solve the communal minority problem, the preamble holding that every "argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan ... can equally ... be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan." The truncated Pakistan of the Mission's own Scheme B was also held to be fatally flawed: it would involve "a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal ... contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these Provinces." So the Mission's Statement concluded with a passage which rejected pointedly the demand for Pakistan.

We are ... unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign States.

The initial Indian public reaction to the Mission's Statement of 16 May was generally favourable, including a response from Gandhi on 17 May that "the Mission had brought forth something of which they had every reason to be proud." On 19 May, Pethick-Lawrence cabled the news of this development to Attlee.

Reception in Hindu Press here has been remarkably good. Dawn is non-committal .... [The Mission] have had highly congratulatory telegrams from many distinguished moderates such as Rajagopalachari ... and Sapru.

But any euphoria this initial reaction may have generated was destined to be short-lived. The essential element of the political balance of power, since Jinnah's commitment to a Scheme

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97See Chapter Three, n.32 above.
99Ibid.
100Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 17 May 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p.162.
A basis of negotiation on 5 May at Simla, was that Congress was on the political offensive - effective from 6 May. With the Mission's subsequent line of approach visibly moving into conjunction with the Congress point of view, there was all the more incentive for the High Command to pitch their demands ever higher. This they proceeded to do. By 21 May, Wavell was reporting on this development to Arthur Henderson, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India and Burma. For Henderson's benefit, the Viceroy also identified the faction within the Congress power structure promoting the forward approach.

Congress have shown signs of wanting to 'improve' the scheme, and ... to start propaganda against all those parts ... designed to satisfy the Muslims .... [T]here is a strong section in Congress which ... has no interest in the framing of a final Constitution; all it wants is power .... The leader of this section ... is ... Patel.102

Some of the "signs" which had set the Viceroy off on this line of thought had been emanating from Gandhi. To Wavell's mounting ire, Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence had continued meeting informally with the Mahatma. It was the Viceroy's belief that while his two colleagues "always think - or Cripps does - that they swing the old man, ... I believe it is the other way about."103 Certainly, the Mahatma made full use of the direct contact with the two Ministers to promote the same Congress forward approach as advocated by Patel. The two Ministers cultivation of Gandhi greatly enhanced the Mahatma's standing in the Working Committee, allowing him at this juncture, as Wyatt put it, to assert himself

102 Wavell to Henderson, 21 May 1946; ibid., pp.653-4.
103 W.L., 18 May 1946, p.272.
"as the dictator of Congress ... openly ... [taking] over negotiations with the Mission, with streams of complaints and queries for clarification."\textsuperscript{104} Gandhi kept his two ministerial admirers busily coming and going for a total of seven hours of private talks spread over the three days following the announcement of the Mission's Statement. Then the Mahatma struck.

On 19 May, Pethick-Lawrence received a letter from Gandhi. In it, the Mahatma queried whether "the [North-West] Frontier and Assam province delegates would be free to abstain from joining the sections to which they are arbitrarily assigned?"\textsuperscript{105} This attack on grouping was followed the next morning by another letter in which Gandhi summarized a number of points which had arisen during his informal meetings with Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, but upon which the Mahatma had placed his own interpretation. Apparently, Gandhi's version of the areas of agreement which had emerged during his discussions with the two Ministers differed widely from their own recollection: upon reading Gandhi's letter, Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps - in the Viceroy's view - were "shaken to the core."\textsuperscript{106} The Gandhian interpretation, moreover, was likely to have profound ramifications: the Mahatma informed his two ministerial confidants that he had "conveyed to the Working Committee ... the purport ... of our talks."\textsuperscript{107}

This Gandhian initiative - by which, as Wyatt recalled, "Gandhi succeeded in trapping the Mission into dangerous controversy"\textsuperscript{108} - threatened to wreck the prospects of continuing

\textsuperscript{104}Wyatt, op. cit., p.154.
\textsuperscript{105}Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 19 May 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p.165.
\textsuperscript{106}W.L., 20 May 1946, p.274.
\textsuperscript{107}Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 20 May 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p.173.
\textsuperscript{108}Wyatt, op. cit., p.154.
Congress participation in the Mission's negotiations. For amongst the points of discussion which Gandhi had chosen to present as having been agreed upon by his two ministerial admirers, was that a transfer of power to an "Interim ... National Government responsible ... to the ... Central Legislative Assembly" should precede the constitution - making project.\textsuperscript{109} Gandhi also maintained that they had agreed on the need for the "immediate end of Paramountcy" so as to "vivify the people of the [Princely] States" who, he held, were "groaning under a double yoke" of British and Princely suppression.\textsuperscript{110} The Mahatma also indicated that he had reached agreement with the two Ministers on the desirability of the withdrawal of British troops, a withdrawal without which "independence would in fact be a farce", preventing any possibility of "natural behaviour in the Constituent Assembly."\textsuperscript{111}

It was soon confirmed that the Congress Working Committee had indeed been provided with the Mahatma's interpretation of the "purport" of his private talks with Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence. This was conveyed in the official Congress reply to the Mission's Statement of 16 May, a reply received by the Ministers on 20 May. Azad's letter opened with a reference to "Gandhiji" and the "interviews he has had" with the two Ministers.\textsuperscript{112} The Congress response to the Mission's Statement was mainly an elaboration of the themes already mooted by Gandhi, while emphasizing the recommendatory nature of the Statement and insisting on the optional principle in regard to provincial grouping. The Congress

\textsuperscript{109}Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 20 May 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p.174.
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., p.173.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., p.174.
President's letter also conveyed the Working Committee's desire for a Constituent Assembly enjoying the status of "a sovereign body which can decide as it chooses in regard to any matter before it and can give effect to its decision."\textsuperscript{113}

The Congress political offensive was checked on the constitutional front at this point because it met with British resistance. This was a result of a temporary shift in the locus of power within the Raj's top level negotiating quartet, a shift largely induced by Gandhi having overplayed his hand. In receipt of Gandhi's letters of 19 and 20 May, a "sadly disillusioned" Pethick-Lawrence\textsuperscript{114} took the initiative in deciding to withdraw from too close an association with the Mahatma, advising his colleagues that "no one should see Mr. Gandhi apart from the other members of the Mission and without a note being taken."\textsuperscript{115} Cripps had been suffering from dysentery since his sojourn at Simla, and on 21 May was admitted to New Delhi's Willingdon Hospital. A. V. Alexander attributed the sudden deterioration in his colleague's health partly to "severe shock from the line that Gandhi had taken in his letters,"\textsuperscript{116} and Wyatt later maintained that "[o]verwork and Gandhi's relentless corkscrew wriggling had worn ... [Cripps] down."\textsuperscript{117} On his way to hospital, Cripps himself reportedly instructed his staff, "Whatever happens, don't let the old man come and see me."\textsuperscript{118} Wavell had all along been urging the members of the Mission to adopt a "firm" approach in their dealings with the

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., p.640.
\textsuperscript{114}W.L., 20 May 1946, p.274.
\textsuperscript{116}Alexander's Diary, Churchill College, Cambridge, p.71 (Private Papers); cited in Moore, op. cit., p.113.
\textsuperscript{117}Wyatt, op. cit., p.113.
\textsuperscript{118}Ibid.
Indian political leaders, with A. V. Alexander often supportive of the Viceroy's attitude but reluctant to break ranks with his fellow Ministers.

It was Wavell who drafted the official reply to Congress. Pethick-Lawrence sent it on 22 May, and wrote Gandhi a note advising him to refer to its contents, in lieu of being given a direct and personal answer to the points raised in the Mahatma's letters. In receiving the official rejection of their interpretation of the Mission's Statement, along with the demands arising from Gandhi's version of what had been agreed upon in his informal discussions with Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, the Congress Working Committee would have had no difficulty in identifying the stern viceregal tone resonant in Pethick-Lawrence's reply.

The scheme ... stands as a whole and can only succeed if it is accepted and worked in a spirit of compromise and co-operation. You are aware of the reasons for the grouping of the Provinces, and this is an essential feature ... which can only be modified by agreement between the two parties.\(^{120}\)

Faced with this evidence of an aroused British resistance, the Congress High Command decided to stall for time. They brought forward the issue of the formation of an Interim Government, making that issue's resolution precedent to their decision on whether to accept the Mission's Statement. On 24 May, in inviting the Cabinet Mission to shift the focus of their attention away from the constitutional issue, Azad, acting on behalf of his colleagues, sent Pethick-Lawrence a copy of the Working Committee's resolution of the day.

\(^{120}\)Pethick-Lawrence to Azad, 22 May 1946; \textit{ibid.}, p.659.
The connected problems involved in the establishment of a Provisional Government and a Constituent Assembly should be viewed together .... In the absence of a full picture, the Committee are unable to give a final opinion at this stage.\textsuperscript{121}

Congress had thus postponed the decision on whether to accept the Mission's Statement. This implied that the Working Committee believed time to be on its side, that the Cabinet Mission would move ever closer towards accord with Congress policy if given more time and greater urgency to do so. Given the Mission's performance to date, this was not an unreasonable expectation. Nor were the implications of the Congress move lost on Jinnah.

The League leader had been waiting for the Congress response to the Statement before making his own move. For a week following the announcement of the Statement, Jinnah made no public pronouncement. When he finally did so on 22 May, it took the form of a long statement reviewing the background to the negotiations and containing only one item of news: the All-India Muslim League Council would have to decide on whether to accept the Mission's scheme.\textsuperscript{122} Jinnah had scheduled a meeting of the Council for mid-June, but at the Mission's insistence had brought this forward to 5 June.\textsuperscript{123}

Jinnah was obviously playing for time. Given the Cabinet Ministers' explicit rejection of Pakistan in their Statement, Jinnah could resurrect the theme of partition only in the context of a denunciation, on his part, of declared British policy preference. To accept the Mission's scheme, however, would require swallowing the onslaught on Pakistan contained in the

\textsuperscript{121}Congress Working Committee Resolution, 24 May 1946; ibid., p.682.
\textsuperscript{122}See Statement by Jinnah, 22 May 1946; ibid., pp.663-9.
\textsuperscript{123}For Wavell's account of this incident, see W.J., 19 May 1946, p.273.
Statement's preamble. Not surprisingly, when Woodrow Wyatt visited Jinnah on 24 May at his hotel in Simla (where the League leader had remained after the Conference had wound up) he found Jinnah "nervous and edgy, less in command of himself than I had seen him before."\(^{124}\) Wyatt suggested that the League accept the Statement, though portraying its acceptance as "a first step on the road to Pakistan."\(^{125}\) This suggested strategy appealed to Jinnah, though he still wanted an assurance that if the League accepted the scheme and Congress did not, the British would nevertheless proceed to implement it. Accordingly, on 4 June Wavell wrote to Jinnah that the Government of India would "go ahead with the plan laid down in the statement so far as circumstances permit if either party accepts."\(^{126}\)

On 6 June the League Council, with some spokesmen of the extreme religious element opposing,\(^{127}\) passed a resolution that

notwithstanding the affront offered to Muslim sentiments by the choice of injudicious words in the preamble ... the Muslim League ... is willing to co-operate ... in the scheme outlined by the Mission, in the hope that it would ultimately result in the establishment of [a] complete sovereign Pakistan.\(^{128}\)

The resolution was a triumph for Jinnah: even in the wake of the Mission's Statement of 16 May he was still able to bridge the widening gulf between Muslim separatist grass roots forces and all-India constitutional politics. Moreover, the Council also resolved to vest the League President with full authority to negotiate on its behalf "with regard to ... the proposed Interim

\(^{124}\)Wyatt, op. cit., p.155.
\(^{125}\)Ibid., p.156.
\(^{127}\)See Jalal, op. cit., p.202, n.84.
Government at the Centre,"\textsuperscript{129} such negotiations having been made urgent by the Congress stand. But some constraints on Jinnah's leadership role were emerging into open view: Jinnah had been able to win the support of the more extreme separatists within the Council only by agreeing to impose a ten-year trial period on the decision to accept the Cabinet Mission's Plan.

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With the League having accepted the Mission's Statement and with Congress having postponed a decision pending the formation of an Interim Government, the Ministers set about the task of reconstituting the Executive Council. In the negotiations on this subject, Congress wanted to raise the status and enhance the powers of the proposed Interim Government, while Jinnah was primarily concerned to ensure that the composition of the Executive should reflect the principle of parity between the two main parties.

Gandhi was to play a major role in bringing about the frustration of Jinnah's efforts. On the face of things, this promised to be an uphill task. By mid-1946, parity of Executive personnel was a principle Indians had become used to seeing incorporated into power-sharing schemes. The Desai-Liaquat Pact of early 1945 - to which the Mahatma had given his blessing\textsuperscript{130} - had been based on parity, the principle also having been incorporated by Sapru's Committee in their Report of late 1945. The Government of India had gone along with this development,

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid., p.838.
\textsuperscript{130}See Chapter One, n.124 above.
Wavell having based his efforts at Simla in mid-1945 to form a politically representative Executive on the premiss of communal parity. On that occasion, the Congress negotiating team had accepted Wavell's scheme, though Gandhi had objected to their acquiescence.\(^{131}\) A year later, the three Cabinet Ministers had also assumed that parity would inform their own schemes - at least they did so during the early stages of their mission. In early May, the Ministers had raised no queries when Wavell indicated he was thinking along the lines of an Executive consisting of five Congressmen (including an Untouchable), five Muslim Leaguers, a Sikh and an Anglo-Indian.\(^{132}\)

But an aspect of the Congress political offensive on 6 May, was to raise objections to parity. Gandhi had taken the initiative in this matter,\(^{133}\) and opposition to parity had subsequently been adopted by the Congress leaders as an aspect of their confrontational stance. As a result of their experience with Gandhi's style of operation, the Ministers had developed a certain wariness towards the Mahatma. But their analysis as to where British interests lay still made them desirous of accommodating the Congress point of view, and the Ministers — Cripps especially — remained convinced as to the Mahatma's ability to make or break a British-Congress agreement. And Gandhi had his intermediaries on hand to provide him with an informal means of communication with the Mission, in lieu of the private meetings with the Mahatma which the Ministers were now endeavouring to avoid.

\(^{131}\)See Chapter Two, n.56 above.
\(^{133}\)See Chapter Three, n.90 above.
As the negotiations between the Cabinet Mission and the Indian parties proceeded, objections to parity loomed ever larger as a feature of Congress submissions. This process culminated on 10 June with the demand made by Azad – with Nehru in support – during an interview with the Ministers. As Azad maintained: "Congress were entirely opposed to parity .... This was the first and most important matter."\textsuperscript{134}

On 11 June, Gandhi used his informal means of contact to increased the pressure on the Ministers over the parity issue. As Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence reported to Alexander and Wavell, "Miss Harrison and Mr. Sudhir Ghosh" had brought them the news that "Mr. Gandhi was likely to throw his whole weight against parity."\textsuperscript{135} This intelligence proved to be the catalyst for a sustained effort by the Ministers to find an alternative to parity, an effort initiated by Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence.\textsuperscript{136}

Over the next three days the Mission considered a number of formulas for the party composition of the Interim Government, formulas designed to circumvent the problem of parity. Jinnah was very alarmed at this development. In his dealings with the Mission he remained adamant for parity. As Jinnah explained to Woodrow Wyatt on 11 June, he had had to overcome great opposition within the League to secure acceptance of the Mission's Statement, "he did not think that opposition was fully appreciated," and - as he had had publicly to pledge to the League Council that he would secure parity for the party in the Executive - on that issue he

\textsuperscript{134}Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation, Wavell, Azad and Nehru, 10 June 1946; \textit{T.P.L.}, Vol. VII, p.854.

\textsuperscript{135}Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 11 June 1946; ibid., p.862.

\textsuperscript{136}See ibid., pp.862-3. For Wavell's private (and unfavourable) view of this development, see \textit{W.L.}, 11 June 1946, p.290.
"was not his own master." That was indeed the case: the Muslim League Council - in Jalal's words, "for the first time" - had qualified and defined Jinnah's mandate, accepting the Mission's Statement for a trial period only, and reserving the League's right to modify its stand at any time.

Gandhi was very active in endeavouring to shape the debate over parity. His efforts were aimed at persuading the Raj negotiators to abandon their attempts to bring about a Congress-League coalition in the Interim Government, in favour of an Executive entrusted to either one or other of the parties.

Pethick-Lawrence was singled out by the Mahatma to be the first recipient of the Gandhian message. On 12 June Gandhi addressed a letter to the Mission leader predicting that the Viceroy's efforts to bring the parties together would drag on "indefinitely" until he "throws up the sponge in despair." Gandhi gave his reason why he thought this would be the case.

Despair he must, if he expects to bring into being a coalition Government between two incompatibles. The safest, bravest and the straightest course is to invite that party to form a government which, in the Viceroy's estimation, inspires greater confidence .... If ... no party inspires confidence ... the Viceroy should run the Government in the best way he knows.

But this letter to Pethick-Lawrence was never sent. As Gandhi explained to the Mission leader in another letter the next day, his intermediaries - Sudhir Ghosh, Agatha Harrison and Horace Alexander - had jointly advised the Mahatma not to send it: they "thought that it was likely to produce an effect contrary to what

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138Jalal, op. cit., p.203.
139Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 June 1946; G.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p.324.
140Ibid.
I had expected."\(^{141}\) Instead, "the three friends" were given "liberty to describe to you the whole of the conversation between them and me."\(^{142}\)

Wavell and Cripps received the Mahatma's advice by a more direct route. On 13 June Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy emphasizing the stark alternatives available for him to choose between in forming an Interim Government, and decrying any attempt to steer a coalition course.

You are a great soldier - a daring soldier. Dare to do the right. You must make your choice of one horse or the other .... Choose the names submitted either by the Congress or the League. For God's sake do not make an incompatible mixture and in trying to do so produce a fearful explosion.\(^{143}\)

Gandhi repeated the message that some day in a letter to Cripps.

As I see it the Mission is playing with fire .... Every day you pass here coquetting now with the Congress, now with the League and again with the Congress .... Either you swear by what is right or by what the exigencies of British policy may dictate .... Only stick to the programme ... even thought the heavens may fall.\(^{144}\)

But Gandhi's line of approach was not adopted by the Congress Working Committee. Instead of rejecting the very idea of bringing to pass a coalition Interim Government, the Congress leaders preferred to confine their objections to the prospect that the principle of parity would determine the membership of such an Executive. This less radical objection to the Mission's endeavours was communicated to the Viceroy by the Congress President in a letter on 14 June. Azad held that the Working Committee considered parity

\(^{141}\)Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence, 13 June 1946; ibid., p.329.  
\(^{142}\)Ibid., pp.329-30.  
\(^{143}\)Gandhi to Wavell, 13 June 1946; ibid., pp.328-9.  
\(^{144}\)Gandhi to Cripps, 13 June 1946; ibid., p.330.
a dangerous innovation which... will be a source of continuous conflict and trouble. It may well poison our future as other separatist steps in the past have poisoned our public life.\textsuperscript{145}

On the basis of this remonstrance, coupled with objections to the prospect of European voters holding the balance of power between the Indian parties in the Bengal-Assam Group, Azad indicated to Wavell that the Working Committee "are reluctantly compelled to inform you that they will not be able to assist you in the difficult tasks ahead."\textsuperscript{146}

Congress did not want to negotiate an agreement with the League over the composition of the Interim Government. Once again, in lieu of agreement, the Mission had to bring forward a Statement recommending to the Indian parties a solution to the problem over which they were deadlocked. The Statement was published on 16 June. It named an Executive Council of fourteen: five Congress caste Hindus,\textsuperscript{147} five League Muslims,\textsuperscript{148} a Congress Untouchable, a Parsi, a Christian and a Sikh. The invitation to serve on the Executive Council was to be "on the basis that the constitution making will proceed in accordance with the Statement of May 16th."\textsuperscript{149} The Viceroy was authorized to invite others to fill places not filled by the original invitees, and to arrange the distribution of portfolios - this latter task to be conducted "in consultation with the leaders of the two major parties."\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{146}Ibid., p. 941.
\textsuperscript{147}These were Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari and Harekrishna Mahtab - the last named being the Chief Minister of Orissa.
\textsuperscript{148}These were Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Muhammad Ismail Khan, Nazimuddin and Abdur Rab Nishtar.
\textsuperscript{150}Ibid.
And, should one of the main parties decline to participate in the coalition scheme, the Statement assured its readers that

it is the intention ... to proceed with the formation of an interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the Statement of May 16th.\textsuperscript{151}

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Jinnah's reaction to the Mission's Statement of 16 June was not unfavourable. He took the opportunity of an interview with Pethick-Lawrence and A. V. Alexander on 17 June to complain of the Mission's willingness to yield to the "importunity of Congress",\textsuperscript{152} but otherwise confined his queries to aspects of the proposed Interim Government's composition and voting procedure. Wavell summarized the gist of Jinnah's queries in his diary the following day.

Jinnah was anxious about portfolios and wanted a guarantee that the Muslims should have Defence .... He also wanted a guarantee on the major communal issues, that they would not be decided against a Muslim majority vote.\textsuperscript{153}

It was apparent that with the tide of British policy adjustment flowing for Congress, Jinnah preferred to take what had been offered rather than risk a further erosion of his position in a period of protracted negotiations.\textsuperscript{154}

The reception accorded the Mission's Statement by the Congress High Command was less favourable. Objections were raised to three

\textsuperscript{151}Ibid., p. 955.
\textsuperscript{152}Note of Interview between Pethick-Lawrence, Alexander and Jinnah, 17 June 1946; ibid., p. 960.
\textsuperscript{153}W.L., 18 June 1946, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{154}Ayesha Jalal holds that by this stage "Jinnah was feeling the familiar cold draught of political failure and had little choice but to come into the interim government on British terms." See Jalal, op. cit., p. 205.
of Wavell's choices of Executive personnel: the League's Nishtar (because of his poor showing in the North-West Frontier Province election returns), the Parsi (because he had been Advocate-General to the Indian Army during the I. N. A. trials), and the Congressman Mahtab (in whose place the Working Committee preferred Sarat Bose, rejected by Wavell because of his pro-Japanese wartime proclivities). More ominous for the prospects of a settlement, the High Command also raised an objection on a matter of principle: the absence of a non-League Muslim.

In the Congress Working Committee's deliberations, it had been Gandhi who had raised this question of principle: indeed, he had expressed his intention to make a stand on the "Congress ... right to include a Congress Muslim"\(^{155}\) in its quota. It was a familiar Gandhian theme. On 17 June Gandhi sent Amrit Kaur - active as his principal link between his base in the Bhangi quarter in Delhi and Agatha Harrison at the Y.W.C.A.\(^{156}\) - to join Pethick-Lawrence on his early morning walk; she was to test the waters on this issue. In instructing her on how to broach this and other matters with the Secretary of State, Gandhi indicated that it was the political context - rather than the provisions - of the Mission's Statement which had aroused his opposition. For Gandhi asserted, the "Viceroy could not be allowed to act imperiously at the very threshold."\(^{157}\)

\(^{155}\)Gandhi to Wavell (draft), 17 June 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p. 341.
\(^{156}\)For an account of the "informal channels of communication" employed by the Cabinet Mission, see R. J. Moore, op. cit., pp. 78-9. Essentially, these unofficial links were inspired by Gandhi and Cripps, and reflected the two politicians similar styles of operation. The principal personnell involved as intermediaries were Woodrow Wyatt and Major John (Billy) Short - both brought to India by Cripps for the purpose - Agatha Harrison, Horace Alexander, Sudhir Ghosh, Amrit Kaur and (after 8 June) Lady Isobel Cripps (who travelled to India upon learning of Cripps having been admitted to hospital).
\(^{157}\)Gandhi to Amrit Kaur, 17 June 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p. 344.
However, first indications did not promise conflict over this issue. When Pethick-Lawrence, in deliberation with his colleagues, raised the prospect of a Congress demand for the inclusion of a non-League Muslim in the Executive, Wavell responded that "he did not think that Jinnah could object." In support of this assertion, the Viceroy cited Jinnah's silence during the Second Simla Conference when the Congress team had raised the issue. Nor was there a great deal of aggravation on display at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee on 17 June when Gandhi brought forward a draft letter to Wavell setting out this demand, along with some others relating to vacancy replacement and Executive responsibility. As Pyarelal recalled:

The Working Committee ... put Gandhiji's draft practically into cold storage. They were not enamoured of the Viceroy's proposal but they did not want to say 'No' to it.\(^{158}\)

Although, in conducting the Congress offensive, Gandhi had been leading the pack, a difference in priority between the Mahatma and the Congress High Command had emerged. Gandhi wanted to make a stand on principle against the Mission's proposals, whereas the Congress leaders were willing to accept that the conditions they had laid down on the question of parity had been largely met. Wavell had written to the Congress President on the eve of the Statement's release assuring him that this was so:\(^{160}\) the Executive would have six Congressmen and five Leaguers - disposing of the principle of party parity – and six Hindus and five Muslims – which avoided communal parity. Furthermore, the


Sikh, Parsi and Christian invitees, all of whom were more likely to support Congress policy than to join forces with the League, would ensure Congress dominance of the Executive Council. Also, the strain of weeks of meetings, interviews and negotiations conducted in the heat of the northern Indian summer was starting to tell - on the Indian and British leaders alike; at the first sign that matters were drawing to a close, Nehru and Asaf Ali had, on 19 June, left for Kashmir, ostensibly to assist Sheikh Abdullah, a popular Kashmiri politician, in his conflict with the Maharaja's Government. Events occurring on the wider canvas of the Indian scene were also exercising the minds of the Congress leaders, such as the impending food crisis and a threatened railway strike.

But Gandhi persisted in his efforts to persuade the High Command to insist on including a Muslim in the Congress quota for the proposed Executive Council, and to reject what he interpreted as imperious viceregal behaviour. When he addressed the diminished Working Committee on 19 June - Nehru, Asaf Ali and three other members having departed from Delhi - the Mahatma issued an ultimatum. Pyarelal recorded the incident in his diary.

Bapu gave a final notice to the Working Committee today that if they agreed to the non-inclusion of a nationalist Muslim and the inclusion of the name of [the Parsi] N. P. Engineer, which the Viceroy had foisted upon them, he would have nothing to do with the whole business and leave Delhi.161

This left the Committee in a quandary, as Nehru had left Prasad with the draft of a letter to Wavell accepting both the Statement of 16 May - subject to the Congress interpretation of it - and the

Statement of 16 June - subject to the substitution of Bose for Mahtab. Nehru had confidently dictated:

After much anxious thought ... we have felt that for this temporary arrangement we should not raise any further difficulty as we are anxious to get to the work of constitution making, and the establishment of Indian independence in law and fact.\(^{162}\)

Nehru's anticipation of the acceptability of this accommodation with British policy was not misplaced, nor was this position abandoned in the immediate aftermath of Gandhi's ultimatum. On the evening of 19 June, in informing Mahtab by telephone of Wavell's acceptance of his replacement by Bose, both Azad and Patel left the Chief Minister of Orissa with the impression that "the Interim Government would be accepted."\(^{163}\)

Word filtered through to the Cabinet Ministers, through Rajagopalachari and Wyatt, of Gandhi's stand. Rajagopalachari had become - as Wavell privately held - "the blue-eyed boy of the moment with ... [Pethick-Lawrence] and Cripps,"\(^{164}\) presumably in lieu of the two Ministers having a close relationship with the Mahatma. Perhaps anticipating that Rajagopalachari, with the assets of an impeccably loyalist record (even during 1942) and a reputation for promoting communal power-sharing compromises behind him, might upstage him with the Cabinet Mission, Gandhi had requested him to remain in Madras during the period of the Ministers' presence in India. Upon learning of this in late April, Azad had on his own responsibility invited Rajagopalachari

\(^{162}\)Nehru's Draft Letter to Wavell, 19 June 1946; cited by Moore, op. cit., p. 128.
\(^{163}\)Note of Telephone Conversations between Mahtab, Azad and Patel, 19 June 1946; ibid., p. 129.
\(^{164}\)W.J., 16 June 1946, p. 294.
to come to Delhi.\textsuperscript{165} And it was to Azad whom Cripps looked to deflect the Mahatma's offensive, appealing to the Congress President to hold firm to the accommodationist line, but reporting to his Mission colleagues that Azad was "doing his best ... but was tired."\textsuperscript{166} Cripps also tried to pacify Gandhi, but during their meeting he realised that it was "quite clear that ... [the Mahatma] could not be influenced from his point of view."\textsuperscript{167} Gandhi's point of view, of course, extended well beyond the issue at hand — the non-inclusion of a Congress Muslim — to rejection of the very notion of a coalition Government: that "the Cabinet Mission must choose between the one or the other party, not attempt an amalgam."\textsuperscript{168}

With the issue hanging in the balance, Gandhi received some unexpected — albeit inadvertent — viceregal assistance in persuading the Working Committee to adopt his confrontational line of approach and reject the Mission's Statement of 16 June. While Cripps had been engaged in shuttle diplomacy between the respective leading lights of the two Congress Working Committee factions, Wavell had been providing Jinnah with a written assurance as to the manner in which changes in the proposed Executive would be made, should the necessity for such changes arise. The Viceroy wrote to Jinnah on 20 June:

If any vacancy occurs among the seats at present allotted to representatives of minorities, I shall naturally consult both the main parties before filling it .... [Nor will the] proportion of members by communities ... be changed without the

\textsuperscript{165} For Azad's account of this incident, see Azad, op. cit., p. 146.
\textsuperscript{166} Alexander's Diary, Churchill College, Cambridge, p. 101 (private Papers); cited in R. J. Moore, op. cit., p. 130.
\textsuperscript{168}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 233.
agreement of the two major parties.\textsuperscript{169} These decidedly injudicious undertakings could be taken as evidence that the strain was now starting to tell on Wavell. Even V. P. Menon, always at pains to avoid any direct condemnation of his chief, would later recall that the Viceroy's assurance to Jinnah was made "without sufficient and timely consideration".\textsuperscript{170} The evenhandedness of the Viceroy's first commitment to Jinnah must have had the effect of reducing Congress connections to the Untouchable, Sikh, Parsi and Christian members: Congress was identified as on a par with the League in being unrepresentative of the smaller minorities. Wavell's second guarantee gave the League a veto over Congress appointments within Congress's own quota.

Parts of the Wavell - Jinnah correspondence where leaked to the press and, at Azad's request,\textsuperscript{171} copies of the full correspondence were given to the Congress Working Committee. Cripps wanted to backtrack on Wavell's undertakings to Jinnah, but it was felt that "this might lead to the withdrawal of Muslim League co-operation."\textsuperscript{172} Instead, the Cabinet Mission applied to the Congress the logic of Wavell's assurance to Jinnah, notifying Azad on 22 June that Congress would not be permitted "to include a Muslim ... among the representatives of the Congress in the Interim Government."\textsuperscript{173} Pyarelal recorded in his diary the effect of this message when received by the Working Committee.

It achieved what Bapu's persuasion had failed to do so far. On the question being put to the vote

\textsuperscript{170}V. P. Menon, op. cit., p. 277.
\textsuperscript{172}Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 22 June 1946; ibid., p. 1003.
\textsuperscript{173}Wavell to Azad, 22 June 1946; ibid., p. 1005.
... all except one were opposed to the acceptance of power on those terms.\textsuperscript{174}

It was Azad who registered the dissenting vote, recording for posterity the identity of the hard core of the Congress leadership faction desirous of securing Indian unity through reaching a power-sharing arrangement with the Muslim League.

* * *

With the Gandhian confrontational approach now in the ascendancy, Congress slid inexorably towards rejection of the Mission's Statement of 16 June. But the Mahatma's triumph over the accommodationist faction within the High Command had been largely contingent on the circumstances of the exposure of Wavell's injudicious commitments to Jinnah, and the absence from Delhi of Nehru, Asaf Ali and G. B. Pant. Yet Gandhi did not rest content with this achievement: he proceeded to attempt to extend the pending Congress rejection of the proposed Interim Government to include the Mission's constitution-making programme outlined in the Statement of 16 May. But, as in his dealings with Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, so in his endeavours to shape the policy of the Congress Working Committee, Gandhi overplayed his hand.

On 24 June Gandhi informed Cripps of his intention to persuade the Working Committee "not to accept the long-term [16 May] proposition without its being connected with the Interim Government."\textsuperscript{175} There were, however, pressing reasons - other than the desire to arrive at an accommodation with British plans - for Congress to accept the Mission's constitutional programme: it was

\textsuperscript{174}Pyarelal's Diary entry, 22 June 1946; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{175}Gandhi to Cripps, 24 June 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p. 367.
not in Congress's interests to leave the League as the only Indian party in working relations with the Raj negotiators. Not surprisingly, Gandhi's latest resolve met with considerable opposition from within the Congress leadership; the imperatives arising from Gandhian principles and the perceived interests of the party were no longer in accord. Chief amongst the Congress leaders who acted at this point to restrain Gandhi was the Mahatma's principal ally at the Second Simla Conference: Patel.

During the evening of 24 June Gandhi and Patel were interviewed together by the Cabinet Ministers and the Viceroy. Gandhi used the occasion to press his attack on the Mission's constitutional programme by raising objections to the procedure whereby candidates for the Constituent Assembly were required to sign documents committing them to the principle of provincial grouping. Wavell was struck by the Sardar's attitude during the discussion. He recorded that night in his diary that

Patel ... sat silent, regarding Gandhi with some contemptuous tolerance, it seemed to me.\footnote{\textsuperscript{177}}

It was a perceptive appraisal by the Viceroy of the developing state of affairs between Gandhi and Patel - who had during the earlier stages of the Mission's activities worked in such close collaboration. For earlier that day, as Pyarelal recalled, Patel had addressed the Working Committee and pressed upon them "with great vigour his view that the explanation given by the Cabinet Mission in regard to the ... [Constituent Assembly documents] was

\footnote{\textsuperscript{176}The Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May provided for the formation of a Constituent Assembly, the membership of which was to consist of representatives of the provincial Legislative Assemblies and of the Princely States.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{177}W.J., 24 June 1946, p. 303.
quite adequate." And after the interview with the Mission it became apparent that Gandhi and Patel remained firmly attached to their conflicting views. On their return from the Viceroyal Lodge, Gandhi asked Patel to advise the Working Committee of the Mahatma's suspicion that Congress participation in the Constituent Assembly would not be in the party's interest. Pyarelal recorded Patel's impatient retort:

Nothing of the sort. I am not going to say a word. You yourself tell them whatever you want.\textsuperscript{179}

The Congress Working Committee met the next day and passed a resolution spelling out their policy position in regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposed settlement. The Mission's Statement of 16 June, proposing the formation of an Interim Government, was rejected, but the Statement of 16 May, setting out a constitution-making scheme, was accepted. Gandhi had fought to the bitter end in the Committee's deliberations to have both Statements rejected, but without Patel to assist him the Mahatma had had to -- as he put it --"admit defeat".\textsuperscript{180} A disappointed Gandhi asked permission to leave the meeting. Azad enquired of the members whether there was "any need to detain Bapu any further?"\textsuperscript{181} Pyarelal later recalled the response:

Everybody was silent. Everybody understood. In that hour of decision they had no use for Bapu. They decided to drop the pilot. Bapu returned to his residence.\textsuperscript{182}

It was a traumatic moment. None of Gandhi's previous withdrawals from the Congress command centre had occurred in such an unplanned

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid., p. 238.
\textsuperscript{180}Gandhi's Speech at Congress Working Committee Meeting, 25 June 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p. 368.
\textsuperscript{181}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{182}Ibid.
and involuntary context. Pyarelal was moved to identify this event as the beginning of a parting of the ways between the Congress leadership consensus and Gandhi's guidance in policy matters. In his devotional innocence, Pyarelal outlined the salient features of Gandhi's policy guidance with a startling openness.

The final phase of negotiations with the Cabinet Mission marked the beginning of that cleavage between Gandhiji and some of his closest colleagues which in the final phase of the transfer of power left them facing different ways .... Gandhiji's attitude on the use of the British army for the maintenance of internal order; his insistence on being left alone to settle directly with the Muslim League after the British had quitted, even if it meant civil war rather than enter into a diplomatic deal with the British however favourable; his readiness to face chaos and anarchy in preference to peace imposed by British arms, not only remained unchanged, they stiffened as time went by. The members of the Working Committee with their purely political approach, felt out of their depth.¹⁸³

On 29 June, in an interview with Norman Cliff of the News Chronicle, Gandhi spelt out the philosophical basis from which the Gandhian political imperatives listed by Pyarelal had arisen. It was evident that the whole project of trying to bring together Congress and the Muslim League on a power-sharing basis was anathema to the Mahatma, conflicting as it did with a central Gandhian tenet of faith. The Mahatma, in communicating this to Cliff, would not have surprised Wyatt, in whose opinion "Gandhi was the fanatic who ... [w]ith all he learned ... from the British ... never imbibed the spirit of compromise."¹⁸⁴

The British, imagining that they can bring the League and Congress together, are attempting the impossible .... [M]en with diametrically opposite

¹⁸³Ibid., pp. 239-40.
¹⁸⁴Wyatt, op. cit., p. 154.
views cannot coalesce. I have called Pakistan a sin. Can I co-operate to make sin a success? God cannot belie Himself. Truth cannot work for untruth.\textsuperscript{185}

Fanatic or otherwise, Gandhi, at the very least, was approaching Indian constitutional problems from a decidedly oblique angle, subordinating Indian political problems to his own idiosyncratic verities, rather than trying to deal with them on their own terms. And in indulging his Gandhian ideological preferences over the issue of Congress's involvement in the Mission's constitutional scheme, the Mahatma had paid a high price. For Patel was one of the Mahatma's outstandingly "closest colleagues", as referred to by Pyarelal.\textsuperscript{186} But Patel undoubtedly preferred - again in Pyarelal's phrase - the "purely political approach."\textsuperscript{187} The rift between the two politicians was a serious blow to the prospects of Congress responding favourably to Gandhian imperatives when deciding on policy during the run-up to independence. On 1 July Gandhi wrote to Patel, regretfully listing the issues which had arisen between them and commenting on their divisive effect.

I did not like what you said to me .... You know I have not been able to understand certain things you have done - for instance, the expenditure on the election ... went too far .... This I.N.A. business also I did not relish and I do not like the way you lose your temper in the Working Committee. Then on top of it we had this affair of the Constituent Assembly .... I can see that we are heading in different directions.\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{185}Gandhi's Talk with Norman Cliff, 29 June 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p. 385.
\textsuperscript{186}See Chapter Three, n. 183 above.
\textsuperscript{187}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188}Gandhi to Patel, 1 July 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, p. 395.
While Gandhi was pondering on his deteriorating relationship with Patel, the Cabinet Ministers were putting the finishing touches on the outcome of their Mission. It was a less than satisfactory outcome. The Congress decision of 25 June had effectively aborted Wavell's proposed Interim Government, while leaving the way clear for the calling of a Constituent Assembly entrusted with the task of drawing up a constitutional settlement.

In the wake of the Congress decision of 25 June, Jinnah moved quickly to accept the Mission's Statement of 16 June. Though he had been informed, in an interview with the Ministers, that the Congress move meant that an Interim Government of a politically representative nature could not be formed for the time being, Jinnah proceeded to have the League's Working Committee pass a resolution of formal acceptance. This had the effect both of hoisting the Mission with its own petard, and of allowing Jinnah to pose as the injured party of British-Congress machinations. In the opinion of at least one observer, Jinnah was justified in striking such a pose. In Wyatt's view:

Stafford and Pethick-Lawrence were so anxious not to leave India without some show of an acceptance from Congress that they accepted a bogus one on 25 June ... [in which] the Congress insistence on their interpretation ... [was] designed to prevent the group constitutions ever coming into existence.

On 26 June, the Cabinet Ministers — who by now, in Jalal's perhaps rather harsh estimation, were "as used to making announcements as to going back upon them" — wound up their

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190 See All-India Muslim League Working Committee Resolution, 25 June 1946; Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 530-1.
191 Wyatt, op. cit., p. 158.
192 Jalal, op. cit., p. 207.
Mission with a final Statement. It expressed their satisfaction "that Constitution-making can now proceed" while at the same time announcing that an Interim Government remained out of reach, that in its stead India would be governed by "a temporary Caretaker Government of officials."  

Having manoeuvred himself into position, Jinnah was able to greet the Mission's Statement with a much longer one of his own expressing his outrage at Congress's behaviour and hinting darkly at British collusion.

On 29 June, in a "Note for Cabinet" Wavell presented to the departing Ministers, the Viceroy emphasized that "the negotiations have undoubtedly alienated the Muslim League and have aroused their deep suspicion." The increasingly brittle nature of British rule was causing the Viceroy deep concern. He believed a "crisis may arise with great suddenness," given the likely heightening of communal tension and the expected escalation of Congress efforts to undercut British authority in the Congress-governed provinces. With the prospects of such developments, Wavell's military mind had reduced British options to the stark alternatives of either the termination or the renewal of empire.

We cannot stand still if we are faced with a major crisis. We shall either have to move forward in policy - and backward in authority out of part at least of India - or backward in policy to a long period of British control and administration.

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195 Note for Cabinet by Wavell, 29 June 1946; ibid., p. 1085.
196 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
Towards a Congress Interim Government

The All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay on 6–7 July to consider the Working Committee's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May. Participation by Congress in the Mission's constitution - making programme was opposed by the Congress Socialists and other leftist groups: their preference tended to be for unity at the barricades rather than for unity at the negotiating table.\textsuperscript{198} Gandhi was on hand to assist in getting the Working Committee's recommendation accepted.\textsuperscript{199} While the High Command's willingness to accommodate the British constitutional scheme had been disappointing from the Gandhian viewpoint, it was clearly preferable to the Mahatma that Congress policy be disappointing rather than "unholy":\textsuperscript{200} revolution, like "Pakistan", was anathema to Gandhi. Aruna Asaf Ali was present to argue the opposition case before the assembled Congressmen, with the recently released Socialist leader Jai Prakash Narayan in support.\textsuperscript{201} But the barricades held little attraction for most Congressmen. The resolution was carried, confirming the Working Committee's policy of constitutional accommodation with the British, with 204 votes in favour and 51 against.

The Congress gathering at Bombay also confirmed a proposed change of leadership. Nehru was elected President, ending Azad's unprecedented seven year tenure - brought about by the disruption of the war years, and no doubt underpinned by calculations as to the advantage of having a prominent Muslim scholar in the chair.

\textsuperscript{198}See Chapter Two, n. 185 above.
\textsuperscript{199}See Gandhi's Speech to the All-India Congress Committee, 7 July 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 84, pp. 418–23.
\textsuperscript{200}See Chapter Two, n. 184 above.
\textsuperscript{201}For an account of the release of Jai Prakash Narayan, see Wyatt, op. cit., pp. 132 - 3 and 146.
during a period of burgeoning Muslim political separatist demands. With the Cabinet Mission having ushered a not unwilling Jinnah to his seat at the Indian Union negotiating table, this period appeared to have run its course.

On 9 July Nehru announced the names of his new Working Committee. From his choice of personnel, it was clear that Nehru shared the High Command's perception of a declining Muslim separatist threat: the Pandit's selection was not weighted towards inclusion of Muslim nationalists. Rather, it was a perception of a rising leftist tide which appeared to be exercising Nehru's mind - no doubt all the more readily brought into focus by its being amenable to the Pandit's own socialistic mind-set. The old leadership core of Patel, Prasad, Pant and Azad remained, as did the party's Frontier totem, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was joined by a counterpart from Assam. Both the North-West Frontier Province and Assam had Congress ministries, yet had been assigned to Muslim majority Groups in the Cabinet Mission's scheme; including a Congressman from each of these provinces in the Working Committee would provide the British with a salutary reminder of the representative strength of Congress in Group B and Group C. But Acharya J. B. Kripalani, Asaf Ali and Harekrishna Mahtab had been dropped, as had the rest of the old Working Committee. In their place Nehru had substituted a group of leftists,\(^{202}\) though none of them members of the Congress Socialist Party which had refused the Pandit's offer of three seats. The Socialists were probably justified in being wary of Nehru's offer: the introduction of so many leftist to the Committee was of

\(^{202}\)These included Sarat Chandra Bose, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Kamala Devi, R. S. Patwardhan and Mridula Sarabhai.
publicity value to the Pandit, but in retrospect it may be said that for the leftists their appointments turned out to be dead-ends. In the wake of the Cabinet Mission's activities, the Congress locus of power was about to shift (beginning in early September 1946) to the "kitchen Cabinet" of Congress Ministers - Asaf Ali included in their muster. In late 1946, Kripalani would become Congress President upon Nehru's resignation from that post. Running against Nehru's play for leftist support, the Pandit restored Rajagopalachari to his place in the High Command from which he had departed in 1942. This official reconciliation registered that "Quit India" was no longer of symbolic - let alone policy - import, while at the same time highlighting the "truncated Pakistan" option. This option now seemed less of a threat to Congress than a threat to Jinnah, committed as he was to negotiating a deal for Indian Muslims in the Mission's proposed Indian Union.

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On 10 July Nehru celebrated his promotion by resuming the Congress offensive against the Muslim League. At a press conference in Bombay, he denied that Congress had committed itself to any particular course of action other than to participate in the Constituent Assembly. He also predicted that all efforts to group the provinces would fail.²⁰³

Gandhi reacted to reports of Nehru's remarks by advising caution. This was something of a reversal of roles: Nehru at the head of Congress was shaping up as a more radical type of politician, leaving Gandhi an opening to play the role of statesman. Gandhi sent a letter to Nehru on 17 July - a copy of which he dispatched that same day for Patel's cognizance.\textsuperscript{204}

Your statement [of 10 July] as published in the papers does not sound good. If it is correctly reported, some explanation is needed. It must be admitted that we have to work within the limits of the State Paper [of 16 May].\textsuperscript{205}

The Viceroy was not of the opinion that Nehru had exceeded the limits of the Statement of 16 May, though he did show concern that the Muslim League and the rulers of the princely states were agitated by articles appearing in the nationalist press, articles which - as he reported to the Secretary of State - had "naturally gone further than Nehru".\textsuperscript{206} This being so, it is probable that Jinnah, likewise, found the substance of Nehru's statement of 10 July unexceptional. But the effect on his followers - especially the League's rank and file - was another matter. Their understanding of Nehru's remarks was likely to be shaped by communal ways of thought giving rise to communalist conclusions, which in turn might well require of the President of the Muslim League a communalist reaction. Jinnah also had to consider the reactions of Muslim provincial politicians and businessmen to Nehru's habitual exposition of his ideas about an enlarged role for central government. The basis of their support for the League was the belief that Jinnah would get them the greatest possible

\textsuperscript{204}See Gandhi to Patel, 17 July 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 85, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{205}Gandhi to Nehru, 17 July 1946; \textit{ibid.}, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{206}Wavell to Pethick - Lawrence, 16 July 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 67.
degree of autonomy and protection from the Centre in their provincial domains.\textsuperscript{207} Nehru's speeches, and their inflated treatment by the nationalist press, thus threatened to undermine Jinnah's credibility as the effective protector of Indian Muslim political and economic interests at the all-India level.

On 22 July Wavell reopened negotiations for the formation of a politically representative Interim Government. In letters sent to Nehru and Jinnah, the Viceroy enquired whether Congress and the League respectively would be willing to enter an Executive of fourteen members: six Congress nominees (including an Untouchable), five for the League, and three representatives of the minorities (including a Sikh) nominated by the Viceroy. In two key passages, the Viceroy communicated to the two party leaders the decision of H. M. G. to drop his assurance to Jinnah of 20 June.\textsuperscript{208}

It will not be open to either Congress or the Muslim League to object to the names submitted by the other Party, provided they are accepted by the Viceroy .... I would welcome a convention, if freely offered by the Congress, that major communal issues can only be decided by the assent of both the major Parties, but I have never thought that it was essential to make this a formal condition.\textsuperscript{209}

It was apparent that the tide of British policy modification was still flowing towards accommodation with Congress at the expense of the League. Yet, the Viceroy's enquiry elicited a reply from Congress which, in Wavell's estimation, "practically amounted to an ultimatum, almost a declaration of war".\textsuperscript{210}

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item<sup>207</sup> For an account of the provincialism that lay behind many Muslim Leaguers' support for Pakistan, see Jalal, op. cit., pp. 179-80.
  \item<sup>208</sup>See Chapter Three, n. 169 above.
  \item<sup>209</sup>Wavell to Nehru and Jinnah, 22 July 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, pp. 98-9.
  \item<sup>210</sup>\textit{M.L.}, 23 July 1946, p. 322.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Congress, scenting that victory was near on the constitutional front, had moved to increase the political stakes. Nehru justified this action in his official reply to the Viceroy by appealing to the need to deal "with the urgent problems of the day", a need which could be effectively addressed only by "a strong Government".\textsuperscript{211} This would require that "the Governor-General should function as a constitutional head only,"\textsuperscript{212} the corollary being that he should not expect to play a direct role in the formation of an Interim Government. But it was Nehru's concluding passage which had struck Wavell as coming close to being an ultimatum.

I am wholly unable to cooperate in the formation of a Government as suggested by you. So far as I know the mind of the Congress they would want the political independence issue settled before they can enter any Government.\textsuperscript{213}

Wavell reacted with indignation to the Congress move, sending a warning to Pethick-Lawrence that "Congress have decided to challenge H. M. G. and to become the only effective power in India."\textsuperscript{214} The Viceroy wanted H. M. G. to "accept the challenge", pointing to, amongst other things, British "obligations in honour not to hand over the Muslims and other minorities to the unchecked domination of Congress".\textsuperscript{215} But imperial "obligations in honour" were not especially high on the British Labour Government's list of priorities at this time. Pethick-Lawrence responded by endeavouring to mollify the Viceroy, maintaining that Nehru's letter was just "another attempt ... to squeeze some further

\textsuperscript{211}Nehru to Wavell, 23 July 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{212}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{213}Ibid., p. 113.
\textsuperscript{214}Wavell to Pethick - Lawrence, 24 July 1946; ibid., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{215}Ibid.
concessions out of H. M. G.'s, the implication being, possibly, that in its march towards an all-India raj, Congress would continue to find H. M. G. squeezable.

But one other main actor on the Indian political stage did not lack the incentive, the will, or, indeed, the animus to adopt an active anti-Congress line of action, aimed at preventing the displacement of British rule of India by a nascent Congress Raj. It remained to be demonstrated, however, whether the Muslim League could generate the political power to make its opposition effective. On its current performance this appeared doubtful: since the revelation that Jinnah was willing to enter into negotiations based on an all-India Union scheme, the League had been in retreat in the face of the Congress political offensive. By the last week of July, with the British Imperial referee increasingly demonstrating a partiality for the Congress's interpretation of the rules, the League's three months retreat was threatening to become a rout. Jinnah needed to free himself from the constraints of his now obviously inopportune enlistment into the constitutional scheme of the fast-fading Imperial Power; he needed to regain possession of the political resource he had been persuaded to put aside by the temptations of the Mission's Scheme A.

So Jinnah, reluctantly but understandably, moved back on to the high ground of the demand for partition. From that political fastness, the big battalions of Congress could make their approach only at an oblique angle: conflicting analyses of the nature of Indian society, rather than the trusted verities of British

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216 Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 26 July 1946; ibid., p. 124.
constitutionalism, would supply the criteria shaping the political debate. From there, the option lay at hand to direct an appeal to Indian Muslims to bring their preferences to bear in assisting on deciding the issue: it would not necessarily be the sole prerogative of British Ministers, anxious to wash their hands of Indian Imperial affairs, to decide the political fate of the subcontinent.

Jinnah summoned the Council of the Muslim League to meet at Bombay from 27 to 29 July. Addressing the 450 odd delegates, Jinnah accused the Cabinet Mission of having "played into the hands of the Congress", a party "full of spite towards the Muslims". In a passage which would have been received without demur by both Wavell and Wyatt, Jinnah held that Congress had "never really accepted the [Mission's] long-term [constitutional] plan."218

Such an analysis of Indian political relations required elaboration. Jinnah drew the attention of his audience to the activities of Gandhi in regard to the Untouchables, the affirmative response of the Cabinet Mission to the Mahatma's efforts to establish that Congress represented Untouchable interests, and the resulting plight of the politically dispossessed Untouchable separatists. He used this example to warn of the fate awaiting Indian Muslims if they accepted the political identity being foisted upon them by Congress.

Mr. Gandhi ... says that the Congress represents the whole of India and that the Congress is the trustee for the people of India .... We do not want the Congress to become our trustee .... The

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217All-India Muslim League Council Meeting, 27 to 29 July 1946; Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 544.
218Ibid., p. 545.
only trustee of the Muslims is the Muslim nation. Mr. Gandhi is the self-appointed trustee of the Harijans. Does he honestly believe that the Harijans have confidence in him? ... What has Mr. Gandhi done for them since he assumed charge ... of the Harijans? The Scheduled Castes are now offering satyagrah and going to jail .... The Mission has betrayed the Harijans in order to appease the goddess of the Congress.\textsuperscript{219}

Thus, Jinnah set the stage for a review of the League's policy towards the British-sponsored constitutional scheme. The delegates were restive at the League's retreat on the constitutional front: there was considerable pressure from the floor for the League to adopt a confrontational attitude towards the British who were blamed for this retreat. Apparently, Jinnah judged that the occasion called for a catharsis. He described the Council as "the parliament of the Muslim Nation" which could rightly expect their desires to be duly reflected in policy, as conducted by the "President and the Working Committee."\textsuperscript{220} This was not the usual approach of the autocratic Jinnah of old, but rather the approach - in Jalal's view, at least - of a politician "no longer confident of his power to persuade, to command or to see the way ahead".\textsuperscript{221} The first resolution withdrew the League's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May. The second resolution declared the League's intention "to resort to Direct Action to achieve Pakistan ... and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated future Caste-Hindu domination."\textsuperscript{222} This was to be launched "as and when necessary",\textsuperscript{223} as decided on by the League's Working Committee.

\textsuperscript{219}Ibid., p. 548.
\textsuperscript{220}Ibid., p. 553.
\textsuperscript{221}Jalal, op. cit., p. 211.
\textsuperscript{222}All - India Muslim League Council Resolution, 29 July 1946; Pizrada, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 558.
\textsuperscript{223}Ibid.
In bringing the Council meeting to a close, Jinnah acknowledged the need to resurrect the demand for partition so as to rescue the League from its weak position at the Indian Union negotiating table. But Jinnah explicitly stated that this development had occurred only in response to the failure to achieve a settlement between the parties in an all-India Union.

[W]e did, in all anxiety, try to come to a peaceful settlement.... We had the courage - it was not a mistake - to sacrifice ... [External Affairs, Defence and Communications] to the Centre. That has been treated with contempt and defiance by the Congress. Are we only to be guided by ... honesty, integrity and statesmanship, when, on the other hand, there is ... perfidious Albion and the Congress which wants to crush the Musalmans.224

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The Muslim League's resolutions of 29 July were accorded a mixed reception. During an interview on 30 July, Nehru gave Wavell the impression that he had been "rather shaken" by the Muslim League's change of policy.225 That same day, the Viceroy received a request from an alarmed Secretary of State for an urgent appreciation of the "novel and serious situation" which had arisen.226 But the situation did not strike the Viceroy as so very alarming, believing as he did that Jinnah's resurrection of the demand for partition "was in the nature of a weapon to secure better terms."227 Furthermore, the Viceroy's military mind,

224Record of All-India Muslim League Council Meeting, 27 to 29 July 1946; ibid., p. 560.
225W.J., 31 July 1946, p. 325.
227Note of Proceedings of the Special Meeting of the Executive Council, 4 August 1946; ibid., p. 184.
focusing on the ramshackle organizational fabric of the League, failed to register alarm at the prospect of Jinnah taking on the Raj. At the same time, the prospect of the Indian Muslim community taking on the Raj was for Wavell—historian, and former Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East—quite another matter. Wavell responded to Pethick-Lawrence's request by sending him a qualified reassurance.

Though [the] situation is undeniably serious it is possible to take too tragic a view of the League decision. Jinnah ... has few lieutenants who are willing or able to run a mass movement and no ready-made organisation .... On the other hand a Jihad would be a very serious matter.\textsuperscript{228}

The Viceroy did not allow the League's repudiation of the Mission's constitutional scheme to deflect him from the task of trying to form an Interim Government. On 31 July he outlined to Pethick-Lawrence the rationale shaping this decision.

The most urgent need is for a Central Government with popular support. If Congress will take responsibility they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary and they may put down the Communists and try to curb their own left wing.\textsuperscript{229}

The Viceroy's line of approach was in accord with the consensus within H. M. G., the Cabinet India and Burma Committee having already decided that Wavell should "proceed ... without the Muslim League."\textsuperscript{230} And the Viceroy's operating rationale, as communicated to H. M. G., now bore a remarkable resemblance to the calculations shaping the behaviour of the Congress establishment—especially the faction centred on the formidable Patel. Furthermore, with the League having removed itself from the

\textsuperscript{228}Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 31 July 1946; ibid., p. 155.
\textsuperscript{229}Ibid., p. 154.
\textsuperscript{230}Cabinet India and Burma Committee Minute, 31 July 1946; ibid., p. 150.
constitutional negotiating table, the timing was perfect for a Congress lunge towards the reins of power. Given this conjunction of interests, it was not surprising that Wavell's continuing efforts on the Interim Government front were suddenly, and handsomely, rewarded.

The Congress establishment had viewed with mounting consternation the wave of all-India strikes - as well as localized, often communal, disturbances - which had swelled up during 1946. It was a development which presented them with a two-pronged threat. On the one hand, their leftist opponents - both within and without Congress - benefited from this activity: strike action diverted political debate towards issues of social reform and strengthened the hand of those who wanted to fuse the independence struggle with radical social objectives, along with radical means of achieving them. Such a radicalization of the Indian political mode of operation, by focusing on divisions of an economic nature within Indian society, could be expected to crack the united nationalist facade conjured up by the Congress establishment when rationalizing and legitimizing their political claims. The second threat was that populist action might permanently impair the increasingly rickety structure of the Raj. This structure the Congress establishment intended to inherit. On 21 July, in a letter to Patel, Gandhi had mused on the theme of the political pluralism increasingly manifesting itself on the Indian political scene. The context of his observations was provided by the current all-Indian postal strike, the now-chronic communal riots in Ahmedabad, and the rising clamour of anti-Congress political separatist demands of Untouchables and Muslims.
In addressing the Iron Man of Congress on this subject, the Mahatma allowed a plaintive tone to colour his observations.

A great many things seem to be slipping out of the hands of the Congress. The postmen do not listen to it, nor does Ahmedabad, nor do Harijans, nor Muslims. This is a strange situation indeed.\textsuperscript{231}

If the Congress establishment intended to remain dominant in Indian politics, the time was rapidly approaching when they would need to buttress their position through the exercise of state power.

Intelligence was passed to Wavell informing him of the disquiet felt in Congress party ranks over the rising political hubbub emanating from Indian social elements unresponsive to Congress political control. The intelligence had come from an "unimpeachable source" and, Wavell believed, had been "probably intended to reach me".\textsuperscript{232} The intelligence purported to outline Patel's favourable attitude to the formation of an Interim Government. The Viceroy reported to the Secretary of State the gist of the Sardar's signal

\begin{quote}
[Patel] told [my] informant that if Congress were asked to form an Interim Government he would insist on their agreeing .... Patel ... was convinced that the Congress must enter the Government to prevent chaos spreading ... as the result of labour unrest. He would be prepared to guarantee that British troops would not be used to suppress Muslims .... Patel however added that if ... I insisted on places being left vacant for the Muslim League he would be entirely against acceptance.\textsuperscript{233}
\end{quote}

Wavell and Pethick-Lawrence had been intending that a new approach be made to Nehru, and Patel's undercover signal assisted them in deciding on its terms. The new offer was communicated to

\textsuperscript{231}Gandhi to Patel, 21 July 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 85, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{232}Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 5 August 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, pp. 190-1.
\textsuperscript{233}Ibid.
the Pandit on 6 August. The British tack this time was to invite Nehru "to submit ... proposals for the formation of an Interim Government," leaving it up to the Congress President "to consider whether ... [to] first discuss them with Mr. Jinnah."234

In effect, H.M.G. were offering to Congress the role of intermediary in the triangular negotiating relationship between the Raj, Congress and the League. This move had been reluctantly initiated by Wavell, and accepted by London, in view of the League's repudiation of the Mission's constitutional scheme. Sudhir Ghosh had travelled to Britain in July, sent by Gandhi to provide the Mahatma with an ongoing link to Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, the two Ministers having suggested to Gandhi the desirability of continuing their informal contacts. On 4 August Ghosh had written to Gandhi, jubilantly reporting that the League's resolutions of 29 July had "simplified matters",235 that the British now had only Congress left to receive the responsibility for governing India, a responsibility the British wanted to discard. In performing his task, the Viceroy privately recorded how he felt about it, his mood being very different from that of Ghosh. Wavell wrote: "I don't like it, but I think it is the only possible move."236 And in a letter to Jinnah on 8 August, the Viceroy expressed his sorrow "that things have gone the way they have".237

On 10 August the Congress Working Committee, meeting at Wardha, accepted the Viceroy's invitation to form an Interim

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234Draft of Letter to Nehru; enclosed in Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 4 August 1946; ibid., p. 188.
235Ghosh to Gandhi, 4 August 1946; Sudhir Ghosh, op. cit., p. 182.
236W.L., 6 August 1946, p. 329.
Government. Patel had indicated they would do so,\textsuperscript{238} and — Nehru's knowledge of the mind of Congress notwithstanding\textsuperscript{239} — Patel had been able, so to speak, to deliver the goods. Of course, Nehru had sent his advice to Wavell prior to the League's withdrawal from participation in the Cabinet Mission's scheme.

While Patel had played a central role in arranging for Congress to take up the reins of government, Gandhi had been active in the Sardar's support in deciding on the procedure by which Congress registered their positive response to the Viceroy's offer. The intelligence sent to Gandhi by Ghosh had been made available to the Working Committee. Thanks to the Mahatma's private channel of communication, the Committee members were privy to Pethick-Lawrence's desire that "a final effort should be made to bring the League into the Government",\textsuperscript{240} an effort conducted by the Congress leadership rather than by the Raj authorities. For appearances' sake, especially with potential criticism from H.M. Opposition in mind, the British Government preferred that the final failure to secure a settlement should be an Indian failure. Ghosh also had reasons why Congress should concern itself with appearances. He wrote to Gandhi:

\begin{quote}
Such a final effort will only show Congress reasonableness and magnanimity and will increase Congress prestige in the eyes of the world .... For the British Government has already decided to take the step that we all desire.\textsuperscript{241}
\end{quote}

The advice from Ghosh was allowed to shape the Congress's mode of acceptance. In communicating the Working Committee's acceptance of the Viceroy's offer, Nehru protested to Wavell that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{238}See Chapter Three, n. 233 above. \\
\textsuperscript{239}See Chapter Three, n. 213 above. \\
\textsuperscript{240}Ghosh to Gandhi, 4 August 1946; Sudhir Ghosh, op. cit., p. 182. \\
\textsuperscript{241}Ibid., pp. 183-4.
\end{flushright}
Congress "would have welcomed the formation of a Coalition Government with the Muslim League."²⁴² Earlier statements by Gandhi and Patel directly counter to this were conveniently forgotten.²⁴³ Nehru submitted his proposals for the formation of an Interim Government as the Viceroy had invited him to do.

[The best course is for you to make a public announcement to the effect that you have invited the President of the Congress to form the Provisional Government and that he has accepted your invitation. It will then be possible for us to approach the Muslim League and invite its cooperation. We shall welcome that cooperation but, if this is denied us, we shall be prepared to go ahead without it.²⁴⁴

On 15 August the Pandit went through the motions of meeting with Jinnah to see if the League's "cooperation" would be forthcoming. Nehru offered Jinnah terms²⁴⁵ for the League's entry into the Interim Government much along the lines already proposed by Wavell on 22 July,²⁴⁶ which Jinnah had already rejected.²⁴⁷ Jinnah refused once again, no doubt to Nehru's quiet relief.

On 16 August Patel illustrated the real state of mind typical of many in the Congress High Command as a result of the turn of events of the first half of August 1946. It was a mood of triumph over the party's Indian opponents, a triumph which had registered itself in terms of a change in the relationship between Congress and the League, a change, furthermore, brought to pass by the

²⁴³For Patel's assertion to the contrary, see Chapter Three, n. 87 above. For a few examples of Gandhi's many statements opposing British efforts to form coalition arrangements, see Chapter Three, n. 140, n. 143, n. 168 and n. 185.
²⁴⁵For Nehru's report of the terms he offered, see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 18 August 1946; ibid. pp. 248-9.
²⁴⁶See Chapter Three, n. 209 and the paragraph of which it is part.
action of the Imperial authorities. As the Sardar put it in a letter to C. R. Reddy:

The Congress President has been invited to form the Interim Government and for the first time the British Government have [shown] the Muslim League its proper place .... [The British] have thus given proof of their bona fides and it is now for us to make or mar the future of India.248

And there was little doubt — certainly in Patel's perspective, and probably in Gandhi's also — that the triumph of Congress over the League at the all-India party level translated in communal terms into the victory of the Hindus over the Muslims. In any event, Patel had expressed such a view on 2 June in a letter to Nihchaldas Vazirani, the Sardar's contact amongst the provincial Congress leaders in Sind. In the wake of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 15 May, the preamble of which had rejected Pakistan in any form, Patel had written triumphantly that

Jinnah and the League have secured nothing for the Muslims after a struggle of five years against the Congress .... His main demand of Pakistan is buried forever. His demand for parity is not accepted. The Muslims in the Hindu majority provinces have lost weightage in the Constituent Assembly. They will be in a hopeless minority.249

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But one obstacle was to reaffirm its presence, offering resistance to Patel and his party colleagues in their progress towards an all-India Congress Raj. Even as Patel was dispatching his triumphant report to Reddy, the Muslim League observed its "Direct Action Day". The League's Working Committee had nominated

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249Patel to Vazirani, 2 June 1946; ibid., p. 105.
16 August for this event, intending that its supporters would respond by attending mass meetings, taking part in public processions, and observing hartals.\textsuperscript{250} With a view to utilizing the Muslim community's network of mosques in bringing out the numbers, the League leaders had chosen a Friday during the month of Ramadan for the occasion. The necessity - or the supposed necessity - of adopting this approach for the purpose of mobilizing the League's "supporters", was perhaps in itself a telling commentary on the nature of the relationship between the League and the community whose political interests it claimed to represent.

For the most part, the League's "Direct Action Day" passed off peaceably\textsuperscript{251} - with one horrific exception. In Calcutta the League's organized activities developed into an orgy of communal violence. What had been intended as a gesture against the British Government for having "unjustly bypassed"\textsuperscript{252} all Indian political parties excepting Congress in the process of transferring power, developed into - or was perhaps overtaken by - a condition of murderous mob behaviour which racked many parts of the city for up to five days. Casualties were exceptionally high by the usual standard of Indian civil disturbances, with an estimated four to five thousand deaths and three times as many injured, and about one hundred thousand people made homeless through arson and


\textsuperscript{251}There were exceptions. In Sylhet, Assam, there was rioting of "a mild form" between Muslim Leaguers and members of the pro - Congress Muslim organization, Jamiat - ul - Ulema. For an account of this event, see Bourne to Nivell, 23 August 1946; ibid., p. 305.

\textsuperscript{252}"Programme for Direct Action Day," \textit{Star of India}, 13 August 1946; ibid., p. 304.
Throughout northern India - especially in Bengal and Bihar - reports of the Calcutta killings of mid-August brought in their wake a hardening of communal attitudes: Calcutta provided the spark for a communal conflagration which, within one year, was to spread throughout a large part of the Gangetic and Indus valleys. However, a comprehensive account of the nature of the mass animosity which was unleashed in Calcutta in August 1946, resulting in such gruesome carnage, cannot be offered here. The rubric of "communalism" is invariably appealed to, in reference to the occasion, as descriptive of the pattern of the killing, without offering much to go on as explanatory of the timing, inspiration and sustained nature of the mass hysteria witnessed in the "City of Dreadful Night". As Jalal noted nearly forty years after the event, "the killings still await their historian."\(^{254}\)

But when the historical record is eventually studied and a full account made available for critical scrutiny, one thing at least will be clear: the Calcutta violence was not of Jinnah's making. His political skills, his style of operation, and his personal inclination stamped him as a through and through constitutionalist, who only recently in his career, and only reluctantly, had found it necessary occasionally to venture into mass politics so as to confirm his credentials at the constitutional negotiating table. The League's decision to call for a "Direct Action Day" needs to be seen in this context. It

\(^{253}\)On 18 November 1946, in a Written Answer to a Parliamentary Question, R. A. Butler indicated there were 4,000 dead and 10,000 injured in Calcutta between 16 to 19 August 1946; see ibid., p. 303, n. 5. However, V. P. Menon mentions "nearly 5,000" dead and "over 15,000" injured for the same event; see V. P. Menon, op. cit., p. 294.\(^{254}\)Jalal, op. cit., p. 216.
was meant to be a device for reopening negotiations over the League's entry into an Interim Government on more favourable terms. For Jinnah, the Calcutta killings would have been both unexpected and unwanted. Calling out mass demonstrations was a tactic which had served Congress well since Gandhi's arrival at the helm in 1920. But, as with Gandhi, so with Jinnah: violence needed to be avoided lest it abort the constitutional process altogether, and substitute a revolutionary political currency in its stead.

In moving past the events which took place in Calcutta between 16 and 20 August, Jalal is content to refer abstractly to "the horrors which lie so close to the surface of India".\textsuperscript{255} In attempting to identify the nature of the devastation which had been visited upon his capital, the Governor of Bengal described it as "a pogrom between two rival armies of the Calcutta underworld".\textsuperscript{256} The nature of the killings aside, their effect on all-India politics is more easily ascertained. The events in Calcutta, and the steadily spreading civil strife which in many areas of northern Indian they heralded, were to eventually demonstrate that forces residing in the lower depths of Indian society could revive the prospects of parties competing with Congress on the constitutional stage.

But it was not inevitable that the conflict at the social base would be translated into action at the constitutional heights of the power structure. It was possible that the tumult below would be ignored by the Indian political elite - or at least by the dominant faction within the elite - leaving it to the state to

\textsuperscript{255} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{256} Burrows to Wavell, 22 August 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 302.
employ draconian measures to bring the disturbances under control, such measures perhaps being informed by considerations of communal favouritism. Wavell was aware of the communal attitudes of some members of the political elite which might have given rise to such a development. On 18 August the Viceroy interviewed Sarat Chandra Bose. Wavell found the prominent Bengali Congressmen more interested in the Calcutta communal casualty score, which Bose complained was running against the Hindus because of police favouritism towards the Muslims, than he was concerned at the effect of the violence in the abstract. If the constitutional balance of power between the Indian parties was to be affected by the communal disturbances in the lower reaches of Indian society, a conduit was needed along which concern at the violent communal upsurge could travel to the power apex, there to be acted upon.

Wavell provided the conduit. During 25 and 25 August he visited Calcutta, touring the devastated areas and interviewing Bengal's officials and political leaders. The Viceroy was appalled at reports of the communal bias shown by the Chief Minister, H. S. Suhrawardy, to whom he delivered "a homily ... on his duties as Premier of Bengal." The future of the Muslim League Ministry was on the line, as a result of the general forfeiture of confidence in its capacity to govern, the Governor thinking of the formation of a coalition Ministry in its stead. However, Wavell found Suhrawardy suitably "subdued", and - at

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257 See W.J., 18 August 1946, p. 335.
259 Congress supporters conducted a publicity campaign to undermine Suhrawardy's provincial Government. The efforts of pro-Congress elements to bring about the dismissal of the Muslim League Ministry in Bengal extended to direct appeals for such action addressed to Ministers of H.M.G. For example, see G.D. Birla to Cripps, 22 August 1946; T.P., Vol VIII, p. 278.
Suhrawardy's prompting - decided to settle for an enquiry under the Chief Justice, Sir Patrick Spens.261

From his discussion with Suhrawardy, it was clear that Wavell attributed the outbreak of violence in Calcutta to Muslim disappointment over the recent constitutional developments. This was a good enough explanation for the League's decision to declare a "Direct Action Day," though hardly adequate as explanatory for the killings. However, the Viceroy's view made him receptive to the suggestion of the former Bengal Premier, Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin, who held that if only the problem of the conflicting interpretations of the Cabinet Mission's constitutional clause on the compulsory grouping of provinces could be settled, a reconciliation between the estranged parties could be effected.

[Nazimuddin] said that if it was quite clear that a Province could not opt out of a Group till after the Group discussions he thought that it might have a considerable effect on League policy.262

Wavell returned to New Delhi convinced that there was a direct causal link between the disappointed constitutional hopes of the Muslim League and the primordial communal outbreaks which had

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261 Prior to his departure as Viceroy, Wavell was provided by Spens with an interim (and, unfortunately, verbal) report on the progress of the ongoing Commission of Enquiry into the Calcutta killings. Wavell recorded the gist of the interim report in his diary. The entry reads: "[Spens] says that the Calcutta Enquiry will show that there was Hindu incitement and a sudden and concerted attack without provocation on the Muslims in the north of Calcutta; that the [League] Ministry will come out of it all right." W.J., 15 March 1947, p. 429.

The Spens Commission did not issue a report of its findings. Its proceedings were wound up upon Independence in August 1947. See V. P. Menon, op. cit., p. 294. In explanation for this action by the Government of independent India, Menon implies that Partition was an important consideration. It should, perhaps, be emphasized that Calcutta was not partitioned. It is more likely that the Government of independent India applied in Calcutta its standard policy of suppressing reports of communal disturbances. Patel was the guiding hand behind this policy. From early 1947 to his death, Gandhi, in opposition to this policy, repeatedly argued for 'open government' in communal matters.

occurred in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{263} The Viceroy prepared a draft statement on Grouping which he felt would satisfy the League,\textsuperscript{264} and set about securing its public affirmation by the Congress leaders. Gandhi and Nehru were summoned to the Viceregal Lodge on the evening of 27 August with a view to testing their reaction. A few hours before his two guests arrived, Wavell sent Pethick-Lawrence a telegram keeping him abreast of developments. In an illustration of the degree to which he was out of step with H.M.G. over their whole approach to Indian affairs, the Viceroy indicated that he intended to attach a penalty to any Congress refusal to co-operate.

I propose to see Gandhi and Nehru ... to obtain from them [a] definite assurance that Congress mean to work [the] Constituent Assembly in [the] way laid down [in the Statement of 16 May]. I propose to inform them that I will not summon [the] Constituent Assembly until this assurance is given.\textsuperscript{265}

As the telegram would - to his consternation - bring home to Pethick-Lawrence, and as the Mahatma was about to experience in a more personal interaction, the Viceroy was still acting "imperiously."\textsuperscript{266}

The interview with Gandhi and Nehru did not go well. The Congress party generally had been swept up in a mood of euphoria\textsuperscript{267} with the official announcement just three days previously of the names of the Interim Government's Executive Council, agreed upon

\textsuperscript{263}For evidence of this conviction, see Wavell to Pethick - Lawrence, 27 August 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{264}For Wavell's Draft Statement, see Note of Interview between Wavell, Nehru and Gandhi, 27 August 1946; \textit{ibid.}, p. 312.
\textsuperscript{265}Wavell to Pethick - Lawrence, 27 August 1946; \textit{ibid.}, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{266}See Chapter Three, n. 157 above.
\textsuperscript{267}For an account of the contrasting receptions accorded the announcement by Congress and League supporters in Madras, see Nye to Wavell, 26 August 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 310.
in negotiations between Wavell and Nehru. Of the fourteen Members, eight were Congressmen - soon to be reinforced by Baldev Singh and John Matthaï (Sikh and Christian representatives) who lived up to Gandhi's expressed desire for some "natural behaviour" by hastening to join the dominant party. It had also been announced that the Interim Government would take office on 2 September. With the pathway to an all-India Congress-dominated Government thus apparently open, Gandhi and Nehru were brought into the Viceroy's Lodge to learn that the Calcutta killings had given a fresh lease of life to an obstacle to Congress raj which they had believed to be laid to rest: a viceregal determination to bring to pass Muslim League participation in the Interim Government. Wavell handed his guests a copy of the draft statement and informed them that the Constituent Assembly would not be summoned until the conflicting interpretations over Grouping had been settled. The Viceroy recorded his guests' reactions in his diary.

Gandhi went off into long legalistic arguments about ... the Mission's statement. I said that I was a plain man ... and that I knew perfectly well what the Mission meant, and that compulsory Grouping was the whole crux of the Plan. The argument went on for some time, and Nehru got very heated. Gandhi said that if a blood bath was necessary, it would come about in spite of non-violence. I said that I was very shocked to hear such words from him.

The Viceroy's rebuke, delivered as it was from the moral height of an apparent greater repugnance of violence, touched a raw spot with Gandhi. Unable to sleep that night, the Mahatma

\[268\] For the text of the announcement, see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 23 August 1946; ibid., p. 292. The announcement was made on 24 August 1946.

\[269\] See Chapter Three, n. 111 above.

asked Shanti Ghosh to cable her husband in London. Sudhir was asked to advise Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence to the effect that "the Viceroy was confused in his mind after the tragedy in Calcutta; that he needed the assistance of a legal mind abler than his own."\textsuperscript{271} And on 28 August Gandhi wrote to Wavell, accusing him of having used "minatory" language the previous evening and protesting that Congress could not be expected "to bend itself and adopt what it considers a wrong course because of the brutal exhibition recently witnessed in Bengal."\textsuperscript{272}

Gandhi's strong reaction to Wavell's request for Congress to make a public statement of assurance about Grouping convinced the Viceroy of "how well justified Jinnah was to doubt their previous assurances on the subject."\textsuperscript{273} On 28 August Wavell informed Pethick-Lawrence of his belief that the Raj was set on a course which threatened possible disaster.

Calcutta ... showed that a one party Government at the Centre was likely to cause fierce disorders everywhere .... If Congress intentions are as Gandhi's letter suggests the result of their being in power can only be a state of virtual civil war in many parts of India.\textsuperscript{274}

Once aware of the Viceroy's initiative in attempting to reopen the constitutional issue between the Indian parties, H.M.G. instructed Wavell to refrain from taking "any steps ... likely to result in a breach with the Congress."\textsuperscript{275} Such anxiety on the part of H.M. Ministers was probably uncalled for: the Congress High Command had no intention of upsetting the schedule which promised

\textsuperscript{271}Sudhir Ghosh, op. cit., p. 189. For Ghosh's account of his approach to Cripps at Gandhi's behest in this matter, see pp. 19-22.
\textsuperscript{272}Gandhi to Wavell, 28 August 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 85, pp. 215-6.
\textsuperscript{273}Wavell to Pethick - Lawrence, 28 August 1946; T.P., Vol. VIII, p. 323.
\textsuperscript{274}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{275}Pethick - Lawrence to Wavell, 28 August 1946; ibid., p. 332.
to bring to pass a Congress Government at the all-India Centre. Nehru's official response to Wavell's request for Congress to subscribe publicly to his draft statement on the Grouping issue provided sufficient evidence of Congress intentions for Wavell to record confidently that "Congress will come into the government all right, whatever I say about the Constituent Assembly."²⁷⁷

But the Viceroy remained convinced that, failing participation in the Interim Government by the Muslim League, India was set on a course which was likely to lead to widespread disorder on - as he now referred to it - "the Calcutta model."²⁷⁸ It followed from this conviction that the British in India should have a contingency plan by which to express - in lieu of a constitutional transfer of power - the measured tread of withdrawal from empire. Given his military background, it was not surprising that, when Wavell applied himself to drawing up such an alternative policy, it took the form of a British military withdrawal in stages from the subcontinent. On 8 September Wavell forwarded his "Breakdown Plan" to the Secretary of State.²⁷⁹ According to Wavell's schedule, the Plan would need to be set in motion not later than 31 March 1947, the administrative fabric of the Raj being too far gone to allow a later date.

On 2 September, between putting the finishing touches on his "Breakdown Plan", Wavell swore Nehru and six of his Congress colleagues into office. This inauguration of the Interim Government was a cause for celebration in Congress circles, though there was a widespread response by Indian Muslims to the League's

²⁷⁶See Nehru to Wavell, 28 August 1946; ibid., pp. 326-7.
²⁷⁷W.L., 29 August 1946, p. 343.
²⁷⁹See Wavell to Pethick - Lawrence, 8 September 1946; ibid., pp. 454-65.
call for them to mark the occasion by hoisting black flags of mourning over their mosques, shops and homes.

Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Jagjivan Ram visited Gandhi before attending the swearing-in ceremony at the Viceregal Lodge. It being Monday, his day of silence, the Mahatma communicated with his three guests in writing. He gave them five items of advice.

Abolish salt tax, remember [the] Dandi [Salt] March, bring together Hindus and Muslims, remove untouchability, adopt khadi.\textsuperscript{280}

That evening, proclaiming at a prayer meeting that "the way to purna swaraj has been opened," Gandhi held that all Indians should "whole-heartedly support this Government."\textsuperscript{281} But the Mahatma acknowledged the limits of the new Government's support base in Indian society, and warned Congress supporters' against too enthusiastic a display of public rejoicing.

This is a memorable day in the history of India. There is no occasion, however, for ... jubilation .... The followers of the League are observing this day as a day of mourning .... [The Hindus] should ask themselves for what failing of theirs the Muslims have come to regard them as enemies.\textsuperscript{282}

It was a good question, though pitched to elicit a response at the moral philosophical level. If Gandhi had posed it for Muslim Leaguers to answer, their response might well have involved their bringing into play a more mundane consideration: the familiar League theme of the supposed intention of certain Hindu political leaders to deny Indian Muslims a constitutionally guaranteed share of political power.

\textsuperscript{280}Gandhi to Patel, Prasad and Ram, 2 September 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 85, p. 240.
\textsuperscript{281}Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 2 September 1946; ibid., pp. 243-5.
\textsuperscript{282}Ibid., pp. 243-4.
CHAPTER FOUR

September 1946 – August 1947

Non-violence does not seize power. It does not even seek power; power accrues to it.¹

M. K. Gandhi.

Towards a Coalition Interim Government

The Congress-dominated Interim Government assumed office on 2 September 1946, taking over the reins of government of a subcontinent in which many inhabitants were increasingly fearful of the future. Communal clashes in Bombay and Ahmedabad and a serious assault on Shafat Ahmad Khan, the intended Member for Health, Education and Arts (chosen from the ranks of the Muslim nationalists) had provided much of the immediate context giving rise to widespread apprehension. The general expectation was that communal relations would further deteriorate. As the Nizam of Hyderabad wrote in a letter to the Viceroy on 9 September, the current "bloodshed, arson, looting and orgy" was a "sufficient indication of what more will follow as ... time passes by."² The Nizam's pessimism in this regard was shared by Gandhi. He gave expression to his view in an article drafted on the same day as that in which the Nizam was writing to the Viceroy, an article published in Harijan on 15 September.

We are not yet in the midst of civil war. But we are nearing it. At present we are playing at it. War is a respectable term for goondaism practised

²Hyderabad to Wavell, 9 September 1946; T.P., Vol. VIII, p. 472.
on a mass ... scale. If the British are wise, they will keep clear of it. ³

The Viceroy was showing no inclination to act on Gandhi's advice. Believing, as he did, that the Muslim League's failure on the constitutional front had acted as a catalyst in bringing to pass the upsurge of Hindu-Muslim communal violence, Wavell had set about the task of bringing the League into the Interim Government. Since he knew well of Gandhi's hostility towards any attempt at "an amalgam" ⁴ of the parties in a coalition arrangement, it did not occur to Wavell to summon the Mahatma to assist in the project. However, the Viceroy had discussions with Nehru, now Member for External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, on how to effect a party coalition in the Executive. ⁵ The Viceroy also discussed the problem with Rajagopalachari, the Member for Industries and Supplies. ⁶ But no progress towards a Congress-League settlement resulted from the Viceroy's meetings with the two Congress leaders. On 16 September Wavell opened discussions directly with Jinnah about how to bring the League into the Constituent Assembly and the Interim Government. ⁷

For Gandhi, readily available throughout September in Delhi's Bhangi Colony - within easy reach of the powers of the land - it was, nevertheless, a lean period of political activity. The Congress High Command had little need for his political skills. The Congress leaders were increasingly engrossed in the business

³Article by Gandhi entitled "What to Do?", 9 September 1946;  HARIJAN, 15 September 1946;  C.W.M.G., Vol. 85, p. 282.
⁴See Chapter Three, n. 168 above.
⁵See W.J., 11 September 1946, p. 349. Also, see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 September 1946;  T.E., Vol. VIII, pp. 491-2.
⁷See W.J., 16 September 1946, p. 351. Also, see Note by Wavell of Discussion with Jinnah, 16 September 1946;  T.E., Vol. VIII, pp. 524-7.
of directing the machinery of government, this being an aspect of politics of which Gandhi had never himself had any experience, nor indeed was it one with which he had shown any particular inclination to become familiar.\(^8\) The Gandhian message had always been rather vague on the policy and therewithal of government (authoritative though it often sounded in analysing the causes and consequences of the actions of existing government). The Congress leaders were engrossed in the everyday tasks of government; at the same time, the Viceroy was attempting to secure a Congress-League power-sharing arrangement. Neither area was one in which the Mahatma could be expected, on his past performance, to play a constructive role.

In counterpoint rather than in contradiction to this development, an imperial summons brought Gandhi back — albeit briefly — on to the all-India stage. On 26 September, having heard that the Mahatma intended leaving Delhi on the morrow, Wavell invited Gandhi to the Viceregal Lodge for a courtesy interview. Once back in direct exposure to the Mahatma's ways, the Viceroy soon regretted his gesture. For one thing, Wavell discovered that his information regarding Gandhi's intended departure from Delhi was at fault, that "the old man had no intention whatever of leaving Delhi so long as any political negotiations are in progress."\(^9\) For another, Gandhi's contribution to the interview convinced the Viceroy, if he needed to be convinced, that the Mahatma "quite obviously ... [did] not want


\(^9\) W.J., 26 September 1946, p. 352.
Jinnah and the League in [the Interim Government]," and that Gandhi "would shrink from no violence and blood-letting to achieve his ends, though he would naturally prefer to do so by chicanery and a false show of mildness and friendship."\textsuperscript{10} It was not the kind of meeting likely to bring about reconciliation between the two men, nor to restore a degree of mutual reassurance to their respective perceptions of one another's intentions. In Gandhi's view, it had to be presumed that Wavell remained "confused in his mind": this, it will be remembered, was how the Mahatma had one month earlier advised Ghosh to portray the Viceroy in the young Bengali's approaches to Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence.\textsuperscript{11} For his part, Wavell certainly retained his suspicion that Gandhi was playing a devious hand. After the interview, the Viceroy reported to the Secretary of State what he believed to be the Gandhian strategy.

This ... has been Gandhi's objective and the objective of the majority of the Congress, I think, from the first ... [namely,] to establish themselves at the Centre and to suppress, cajole or buy over the Muslims, and then impose a Constitution at their leisure.\textsuperscript{12}

Wavell intended to take the matter no further with Gandhi, working instead on the series of separate meetings he was conducting with Nehru, Jinnah and Rajagopalachari. But Gandhi did his best to prolong the incident of his meeting with Wavell, attempting to engineer an ongoing debate between himself and the Viceroy. On 27 September Gandhi addressed a letter to Wavell, recording his "impressions of our talk of yesterday."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., pp. 352-3.
\textsuperscript{11} See Chapter Three, n. 271 above.
\textsuperscript{12} Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 26 September 1946; T.P., Vol. VIII, p. 595.
\textsuperscript{13} Gandhi to Wavell, 27 September 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 85, p. 385.
"impressions" failed on a number of points to correspond with the Viceroy's recollection of what had passed between them. The Viceroy's response to Gandhi's letter was to dispatch that same day a short note registering his refusal to be drawn into a debate aimed at reaching agreement on the record of their private discussion, while taking the opportunity to deny categorically one of the Mahatma's recorded claims: that "you told me that your leanings were towards the League."\textsuperscript{14} As Wavell privately noted, it was an "entirely false statement which ... [Gandhi] had put into my mouth."\textsuperscript{15} Another letter from Gandhi to the Viceroy on 28 September\textsuperscript{16} failed to modify Wavell's resolve to avoid a public dialogue with the Mahatma.\textsuperscript{17}

With neither the Viceroy nor the Congress Ministers willing to give the Mahatma an active role, and opposed as he was to any British involvement in bringing to pass agreements between the Indian parties, Gandhi moved to forestall Wavell. Gandhi attempted - on behalf of Congress - to reach an agreement with Jinnah. Two former leading lights of all-India politics were involved in Gandhi's initiative: Azad, ex-President of Congress, conspicuously absent from the Interim Government Executive,\textsuperscript{18} and the Nawab of Bhopal, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, representing the interests of that now-threatened species of collaborators with the Raj.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Wavell, 27 September 1946, p. 353. For the text of Wavell's reply to Gandhi, see Wavell to Gandhi, 27 September 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 606.
\textsuperscript{17} See Wavell to Gandhi, 29 September 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 625.
\textsuperscript{18} For Azad's account of his absence from the Interim Government, see Azad, op. cit., p. 163.
At Gandhi's instigation, Bhopal - a Muslim - acted as the intermediary. On 1 October, the Viceroy got wind of this development during an interview with the Nawab. Wavell recorded in his diary:

Bhopal ... has apparently been trying to act as unofficial negotiator, and has seen Gandhi, Jinnah and Azad.\textsuperscript{19}

On 4 October Gandhi put his signature on an "Agreement between the Congress, the Muslim League and the Nawab of Bhopal" jointly drafted, it would seem, by Gandhi and Bhopal. According to the terms of the Agreement, Gandhi proposed that Congress would recognise the League as "the authoritative representative of an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of India."\textsuperscript{20} In return, Gandhi claimed for Congress the right to "choose such representatives as they think proper from amongst the members of the Congress"\textsuperscript{21} when filling its quota in the Interim Government. Bhopal persuaded Jinnah to accept this formula, the League leader authorizing one of his lieutenant's, Shoaib Qureshi, to sign the Agreement.

However, the Gandhi-Jinnah-Bhopal Agreement failed to recommend itself to Patel and Nehru. As the Pandit explained on 6 October in a letter to Jinnah, the Congress leaders felt that the formula was "not happily worded."\textsuperscript{22} This bode ill for the prospect of the Agreement leading to a settlement between the parties, especially as the formula Nehru had in mind was not quite the same one Jinnah had accepted. Gandhi - "at the instance of the Patel

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{W.L.}, 1 October 1946, p. 354.
\textsuperscript{20}"Agreement Between the Congress, the Muslim League and the Nawab of Bhopal," 4 October 1946; \textit{C.W.M.S.}, Vol. 85, p. 416.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22}Nehru to Jinnah, 6 October 1946; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. VIII, p. 672.
group,"\(^{23}\) the Viceroy believed - had added a new clause to the original draft so as to elicit the blessing of the Congress leaders' for the document as a whole.\(^{24}\) Gandhi's additional clause declared the intention of the Ministers of the proposed Congress-League coalition to "work as a team" in the Interim Government, never to "invoke the intervention of the Governor - General in any case."\(^{25}\) In his reply to Nehru, Jinnah denied that Gandhi's additional clause formed part of the Agreement.\(^{26}\) The League leader had no intention of giving up the safeguard of British management of any coalition arrangement. So the Gandhi-Jinnah-Bhopal Agreement foundered.

The incident engineered by Gandhi and Bhopal had demonstrated in whose hands the power of decision now lay within Congress, that, as Jalal points out, "Gandhi ... was no longer the dominant figure in Congress in office ... [having] beenshouldered aside by the machine politicians."\(^{27}\) And as Wavell noted on 12 October, Nehru, the spokesman for the Congress establishment, had been "not at all forthcoming" in view of the Gandhi-Jinnah-Bhopal Agreement, attempting instead "to modify Gandhi's formula on lines completely unacceptable to Jinnah."\(^{28}\)

But where Gandhi - even in concert with Jinnah - could only propose, the Viceroy was in a position to dispose. For, in his efforts to bring about a coalition in the Interim Government, Wavell enjoyed the support of H.M.G. On 27 September, in a

\(^{23}\) Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 11 October 1946; ibid., p. 694.
\(^{24}\) See Jalal, op. cit., pp. 224-5, n. 55.
\(^{25}\) "Agreement Between the Congress, the Muslim League and the Nawab of Bhopal", 4 October 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 85, p. 416.
\(^{26}\) See Jinnah to Nehru, 7 October 1946; T.P., Vol. VIII, pp. 673-4.
\(^{27}\) Jalal, op. cit., p. 225.
\(^{28}\) Note by Wavell, 12 October 1946; T.P., Vol. VIII, p. 705.
discussion with Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence had outlined his perspective as to the dangers threatening British interests in India.

The Secretary of State said ... [that if] we could not get an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League by negotiation then ... we were faced with alternatives both of which were disastrous. Either we should have to take one side and support it, or else we should have to evacuate India. On the first alternative ... [we would] find ourselves participating in a civil war. Alternatively, ... there would be civil war and chaos ... [and] there would be no effective defence of India against external dangers.²⁹

Three days later, Pethick-Lawrence reminded Cripps of how H.M.G. could best act on this rationale.

> It is essential we should stand behind the ... [Viceroy] in pressing Congress for an accommodation.³⁰

On 13 October Wavell's efforts to bring about a coalition finally bore fruit, Jinnah writing a letter to the Viceroy conveying the Muslim League's willingness to join the Interim Government.³¹ Wavell promptly informed Nehru that five Muslim Leaguers were to be brought into the Executive; he enquired of the Pandit as to the "changes you wish to recommend in the present Government" so as to make room for Jinnah's nominees.³²

On 26 October the reconstituted Interim Government took office. This achievement had required of Wavell almost two weeks of intensive negotiations with the Indian parties over the distribution of portfolios, persuading them to combine in the historic all-India coalition. Jinnah and Nehru had been persuaded

²⁹Note of Discussion between Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps, 27 September 1946; ibid., pp. 613-4.
³⁰Pethick-Lawrence to Cripps, 30 September 1946; ibid., p. 629.
³¹See Jinnah to Wavell, 13 October 1946; ibid., pp. 709-10.
³²Wavell to Nehru, 13 October 1946; ibid., p. 710.
by Wavell to reach a settlement during the final flurry of negotiations on 25 October.\footnote{For an account of how the settlement was brought about, see \textit{W.L.}, 25 October 1946, p. 364.} On the previous day, Wavell had recorded in his diary who he thought was responsible — at least in part — for the protracted negotiations.

I am sure that Gandhi in the background is doing his best to wreck any hope of agreement.\footnote{Ibid., 24 October 1946, p. 363.}

In fact, Gandhi had shown little interest in the allocation of portfolios for the coalition arrangement: instead, the Mahatma had attempted — unsuccessfully — to persuade the Congress leaders to avoid dealing with the League through the British. In the wake of the collapse of the Gandhi-Jinnah-Bhopal Agreement, Gandhi had advised the Congress Working Committee to make a stand against the Viceroy’s activities, insisting that a Congress-League agreement be precedent to the League's entry into the Interim Government. The Mahatma was fundamentally opposed to the League’s entry through an arrangement engineered by the British. As late as 20 October, with Nehru absent from Delhi, on tour in the North-West Frontier Province, Gandhi had drafted a letter to the Viceroy for Patel to put forward as the Congress/Gandhian viewpoint.

Is the Interim Government to be the arena of party politics and intrigues and for driving in the very partition wedge which the long-term arrangement has withdrawn once for all and replaced ... by grouping? ... Before the coalition comes into being and portfolios are re-distributed ... there should be a clear announcement by ... the League accepting the long-term arrangement.\footnote{Gandhi’s Draft Letter to Wavell, 20 October 1946; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 283.}

But the initiative lay with the Viceroy: Gandhi's objection in principle was lost in the scramble for portfolios Wavell had
already unleashed. Patel had his hands full protecting his own
grip on the Home portfolio. Gandhi demonstrated little interest
in the outcome.

Another matter of principle taken up by Gandhi arose from
Jinnah's choice of nominees to fill the League's quota in Wavell's
coalition arrangement. As a quid pro quo for the Congress
inclusion of a nationalist Muslim (Asaf Ali) in the Coalition
Executive, and perhaps with an eye to the prospect of Untouchable
representatives lining up with their League counterparts in the
communally closely-balanced Bengal-Assam Group, Jinnah had
included a Bengali Untouchable (Jogendranath Mandal) in the
League's quota. In the Congress Working Committee's
deliberations, Gandhi had fastened upon this development,
questioning "the right of the League to include anyone except ...
Muslims in its list of nominees, as its door was closed to all
non-Muslims." But, as Pyarelal recalled the event:

[T]he Congress leaders from their purely political
angle seemed to have regarded this as a matter of
mere detail .... [The] point was not pressed
sufficiently by the Congress leaders with the
result that Jinnah was able to obtain a written
guarantee from Lord Wavell that the League were at
liberty to nominate anyone they wished in their
quota of seats.

It had become apparent during October 1946 that India's
political leaders were failing to respond to Gandhian initiatives.
Through Wavell's efforts, the British had recovered the
intermediary role they had temporarily abandoned in early August

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36 Jogendranath Mandal had been a Member of the Muslim League Ministry in
Bengal. For an account of the implications of Jinnah's selection of Mandal
as a League nominee for the Executive Council, see Shila Sen, Muslim Politics
in Bengal: 1937 – 1947, New Delhi, I m p e x India, 1976, p. 222.
37 Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 287.
38 Ibid.
1946, when H.M.G. had decided to invite the Congress President to form an Interim Government, leaving it to Congress to decide on the terms by which the League might participate. The Congress establishment had gone along with this reassertion of the British intermediary role; the view of the Indian political arena from the Executive Council had induced them to reorder their priorities sufficiently to persuade them that, as Pyarelal put it, "retention of certain portfolios gave ... [Congress] a political advantage which they could ill afford to lose." In the process, Gandhian imperatives of principle had lost much appeal; the Congress juggernaut now responded instead to the dictates of power politics as experienced by the Congress holders of state office.

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A Change of Strategy: Gandhi Looks to Bengal

The growing divergence between Gandhian precepts and the Congress leaders' behaviour during October 1946 was paralleled by another development of which that divergence might have perhaps been causal: the Mahatma's increasing preoccupation with the communal conflict being generated at the base of Indian society. Since the Calcutta killings of 16 to 20 August, this conflict had assumed a similar murderous form of overt communalist war in other locales of the subcontinent, from the Bengal countryside across to Kathiawad and down to Bombay.

Beginning on 10 October, the Noakhali district of the Chittagong Division in East Bengal had increasingly provided the

39 See Chapter Three, n. 234 above.
40 Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 287.
focus of this communal strife. According to Shila Sen, many of the Muslims killed in Calcutta in the August riots were from Noakhali, and that it was in revenge for their deaths that Muslim communalist elements in the district attacked the Hindus in their midst.\textsuperscript{41} The Muslim community in Noakhali numbered about 1.8 million people as against 400,000 Hindus, both groups being spread over the district's 1,658 square miles of fertile countryside. Social relationships might well have reinforced communal divisions. Hindus constituted about 64 per cent of the landowning class in Noakhali; as well, they held the bulk of the district's business in their hands and predominated in the professions.\textsuperscript{42}

It took a few days for reports of the happenings in Noakhali to reach the outside world. On 14 October the Bengal Press Advisory Committee released a note, providing the Indian public with its first news of the communal outbreak.

Reports of organised hooliganism in the district of Noakhali have reached Calcutta. Riotous mobs with deadly weapons are raiding villages, and looting, murder and arson are continuing ... on a very large scale. Forcible mass conversion, abduction of women and desecration of places of worship are also reported ... Approaches to the affected areas are being guarded by armed hooligans .... [M]ilitary and armed police have been rushed to the affected areas.\textsuperscript{43}

That same day Nehru wrote to Wavell, drawing to the Viceroy's attention the gist of telegrams he had received "from East Bengal", "from Calcutta", and "details of stabbings and murder and looting round about Dacca and elsewhere."\textsuperscript{44} From the Pandit's

\textsuperscript{41}See Shila Sen, op. cit., pp. 214-5.
\textsuperscript{42}These statistics are provided by Gandhi's secretary; see Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 297.
\textsuperscript{43}Bengal Press Advisory Committee Note for Press Release, 14 October 1946; ibid., p. 293.
\textsuperscript{44}Nehru to Wavell, 14 October 1946; T.P., Vol. VIII, p. 724.
letter, it seemed that much of Bengal was alive with communal strife. But Noakhali did come in for a special mention, for in that district "a number of towns and villages ... are seriously affected ... [and] families of middle-class people have been murdered." Among the fatalities, to the Pandit's obvious distress, was "the President of the local Bar Association"; such a victim contrasted sharply with the masses of urban poor who were providing most of the casualties in Calcutta, Ahmedabad and Bombay.

Nehru's distress at the happenings in Noakhali was shared by Gandhi. On 15 October the Mahatma raised the subject in his address to a prayer meeting; "the Hindus, a very small minority there," he said, were "being attacked by the Muslims." Gandhi indicated that this development might require of him an active response.

Ever since he had heard the news of Noakhali, indeed ever since the blood bath of Calcutta, he had been wondering where his duty lay. God would show him the way.

As October advanced, and as Wavell progressed in his efforts to bring into being a coalition Interim Government, Gandhi dwelt on the theme of Noakhali at his prayer meetings. One aspect of the Noakhali communal outbreak apparently touched Gandhi more than reports of arson, murder and looting: "the cry of outraged womanhood." A report in the Hindustan Times on 19 October, which

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46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 See Gandhi's Speeches at Prayer Meetings, 17 October 1946 and on or before 18 October 1946; ibid., pp.480 and 482.
purported to record the gist of Gandhi's address to a prayer meeting of the previous day, gives an indication of the form in which the Mahatma's concern was broadcast to the Indian public—along with, perhaps, an indication of his general attitude towards women.

Gandhiji advised the women in East Bengal to commit suicide by poison ... to avoid dishonour .... Yesterday he [had] told the women to suffocate themselves or to bite their tongues to end their lives. But two doctors ... had informed him that such means of suicide were impossible .... [H]e ... would advise everyone running the risk of dishonour to take poison before submission to dishonour.\textsuperscript{51}

Gandhi's opening moves during October, by which he laid a claim to the right to personally intervene in the affairs of Noakhali, provides an illustration of the Gandhian political technique of concealing basic political purpose in incidental issues of moral concern. During October, it had become apparent to the Mahatma that British Imperial intent—reasserted by Wavell—and Congress establishment acquiescence were increasingly coming together at the all-India level to fashion a niche for the Muslim separatists in the political structure of a nascent independent (and united) India. In despair at the prospects of preventing such a development by his activities at the Centre, Gandhi had established a case for an attempt on his part to influence the drift of events by Gandhian action at the level of mass politics. The Mahatma had resolved to conduct a campaign in Bengal, with a view to subverting Muslim separatist representative claims. Bengal was the logical place for Gandhi to choose to conduct a campaign aimed at undermining the integrity of Jinnah's two-nation

\textsuperscript{51}Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 18 October 1946; \textit{Hindustan Times}, 19 October 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 85, p.491.
theory: with the subcontinent's largest concentration of Indian Muslims, Bengal provided the demographic core of the rationale for Pakistan.

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During the early morning of 28 October, two days after the coalition Interim Government had taken office, Gandhi left Delhi for Calcutta. On the eve of the Mahatma's departure, he had received a visit from Ian Scott, the Viceroy's Deputy Private Secretary. Scott had invited Gandhi to join with Wavell and Jinnah in issuing an appeal for an end to communal strife - this in lieu of a similar appeal from the party leaders in the coalition Executive, Nehru and Liaquat. Nehru had refused to be a party to such an appeal. The Pandit had not wanted to admit Liaquat to some sort of equality with himself, and similar considerations of party prestige - as focused on Jinnah - might have coloured Gandhi's view of Scott's request. There was, as well, the Mahatma's adhorrence of British - inspired efforts to engineer incidents of Indian unity. Gandhi declined to be involved, leaving the Viceroy to note in his diary that the proposal had "founndered on the rock of party jealousy and small-mindedness."52

Gandhi arrived at Calcutta on 29 October and took up residence at an ashram at Sodepur, ten miles from the city. Calcutta, as Pyarelal recalled, "was still burning",53 afflicted with an ongoing communal war of attrition, the legacy of the killings of 16 to 20

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August. As Wavell found a few days later when he visited Calcutta, the "[b]uses and taxis were on strike, most of the shops closed and barred and the streets half blocked with refuse .... [N]o transport will run without escort."  

At Sodepur Gandhi was questioned by a Muslim, his interrogator wondering why the Mahatma was en route to Noakhali instead of Bombay, Ahmedabad or Chhapra.

Was it because in these places it was the Muslims who had been the sufferers that he did not go there and would go to Noakhali because the sufferers there were Hindus?

Gandhi denied the charge, replying that he made no distinction between Hindu and Muslim.

He would certainly have gone to any of the places mentioned ... if anything approaching what had happened at Noakhali had happened there and if he had felt that he could do nothing without being on the spot. It was the cry of outraged womanhood that had peremptorily called him to Noakhali.

At the request of Shaheed Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister of Bengal, Gandhi agreed to put off his departure from Calcutta until after the Muslim festival of *Raghib-Id*. Suhrawardy had decided it was in his interests to broaden his Ministry's base of support by looking for allies in Bengal's Hindu community: the August killings in Calcutta had given him cause to reconsider the wisdom of the politics of communal confrontation - the Muslim League's usual political mode. Developing a close relationship with Gandhi was a means by which Suhrawardy could improve his - and the

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54 *W.J.*, 3 November 1946, p.369.
55 Gandhi's Talk with a Muslim Friend, before 1 November 1946; extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter", 1 November 1946; *C.W.M.G.*, Vol. 86, p.65.
56 Ibid.
57 For an account of the political factors giving rise to Suhrawardy's "second thoughts" in the wake of the August killings in Calcutta, see Shila Sen, op. cit., pp.218-22.
League Ministry's - image in Hindu perceptions. A peaceful
celebration of Bagh-ID could be a first step toward communal
reconciliation.

So Gandhi was still at Sodepur when, on 3 November, reports
came out of communal rioting in Bihar. Beginning with a hartal on
25 October, called in protest at the atrocities being visited upon
the Hindus of Noakhali and observed in several towns in Bihar,
mobs of Hindus had set upon the Muslims in their locales in many
districts throughout the province. Casualties were on a scale
surpassing even the loss of life in Noakhali. Though initial
reports of the slaughter proved to be exaggerated - the Morning
News of 3 November stated that the killings were in the order of
hundreds of thousands - the news from Bihar brought about a crisis
for Gandhi which he was not able to resolve for many months. For
Bihar had a Congress Ministry, a Hindu majority (85 per cent), and
had been associated with the Gandhian political phenomenon since
Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha of 1917.

As Gandhi put it in his address to a prayer meeting at Sodepur
on 3 November, he was "pained beyond measure to hear of the
reported happenings in Bihar."\textsuperscript{58} The Morning News has reported -
an item of news Gandhi had seen fit to repeat in a telegram to
Nehru - that the Chief Minister of Bihar was "countenancing" the
"butchery".\textsuperscript{59} The Chief Minister in question was Srikrishna Sinha,
described by Wavell in the privacy of his journal as "that
gangster ... Sinha."\textsuperscript{60} The suspicion that Congress elements in
Bihar had indeed countenanced the assault on the province's Muslim

\textsuperscript{58}Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 3 November 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p.71.
\textsuperscript{59}Gandhi to Nehru, 3 November 1946; \textit{ibid.}, p.70.
\textsuperscript{60}\textit{W.J.}, 9 November 1946, p.373.
community was something a votary of Truth apparently could not lightly dismiss. In any event, the happenings in Bihar in late 1946 - the first reports of which, Gandhi reported to Amrit Kaur, had "shaken me to bits"61 - were a milestone in the Mahatma's mounting disillusionment with Indian politics.

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On 5 November, the festival of Baqr-Id passed without major incident in Calcutta. Gandhi was free to leave Sodepur - but in which direction? To the east of Calcutta, Noakhali was still the scene of acts of communal outrage and murder, and was the source of a mass of Hindu refugees who had fled to centres where the Raj's internal security forces were in control. To the west, many districts of Bihar were witnessing the massacre of Muslims, and Ministers of the Interim Government (Nehru, Patel, Liaquat and Abdur Rab Nishtar) had visited Patna on 3 and 4 November. Nehru and Nishtar, who were joined by Rajendra Prasad, remained for a week to supervise the emergency measures being adopted both to regain control of the affected areas and to cope with the refugees.

Gandhi gave no signs of uncertainty as to his intended destination. On 6 November he boarded the special train put at his disposal by Suhrawardy and set off for Noakhali. He was accompanied by the Minister of Labour (Shamsuddin Ahmed) and two Parliamentary Secretaries (Nasrullah Khan and Abdur Rashid) of the Bengal Government, the prominent Muslim Leaguers having been sent

61Gandhi to Amrit Kaur, 4 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p.72.
by Suhrawardy to ensure the co-operation of local officials in Noakhali for whatever the Mahatma intended. For Gandhi, the presence of the Muslim leaders in his party brought to mind his experience of Hindu-Muslim unity during the Khilafat agitation. This was a theme he raised during his address to a crowd at the station at Kushtia, Shamsuddin Ahmed's home-town. Gandhi also explained to the throng why Noakhali, and not Bihar, was his destination.

Gandhi said ... he was not going to East Bengal as a Congressman ... [but] as a servant of God. If he could wipe away the tears of outraged women, he would be more than satisfied .... He had served Bihar much more and he had much greater influence on the people there than in Bengal. For the time being, instead of proceeding to Bihar, he was satisfied by addressing an open letter to the Biharis\(^{\text{62}}\) which they would all see.\(^{\text{63}}\)

The Mahatma was, perhaps, providing his audience with more than an explanation for his choice of destination: a Gandhian withdrawal from association with Congress - perhaps a tainted Congress - might also have been implied.

The Mahatma, in fact, was in the throes of a Gandhian moral crisis. The day before his departure from Calcutta, Gandhi had addressed a letter to Nehru - a copy of which he also dispatched to Patel - proposing that, if the communal situation did not improve, he intended to effect a withdrawal from life itself. Informing Nehru that he had become "tired of the body," and that "Bihar made matters worse," Gandhi reported a message received from his Inner Voice, a "cry ... from within."\(^{\text{64}}\)

\(^{\text{62}}\)See Gandhi article entitled "To Bihar", 6 November 1946; Harijan, 10 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, pp.81-2.

\(^{\text{63}}\)Gandhi's Speech at Kushtia, 6 November 1946; Bombay Chronicle, 7 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p.85.

\(^{\text{64}}\)Gandhi to Nehru, 5 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p.78.
Why should you be a witness to this slaughter? If your word, which is as clear as daylight, is not heeded, your work is over. Why do you not die.\textsuperscript{65}

This message "from within," otherwise identified by the Mahatma as the product of his "reasoning,"\textsuperscript{66} had resolved Gandhi to resort to a low diet in protest at the happenings in Bihar. And in his open letter to Bihar drafted on 6 November\textsuperscript{67} and published in Harijan four days later, Gandhi informed the "erring Biharis" that his low diet would become "a fast unto death" if they did not mend their ways. In his covering letter to Patel - sent along with the Sardar's copy of Gandhi's letter to Nehru - the Mahatma urged the Home Minister to strive to effect the desired change.

My going on living depends entirely on complete peace being established in India. You will certainly do everything to achieve that end.\textsuperscript{68}

Gandhi's journey to Noakhali was primarily impelled by the Mahatma's all-India political calculations. However, the breakdown of Indian society in many parts of the subcontinent, as expressed by the spreading communal slaughter, had, as well, apparently brought about a crisis of Gandhian belief. For the violent communalist behaviour displayed in Bengal, Bihar and in other places was a rejection of the Gandhian way of life, with its commitment to non-violence, as well as evidence supporting Jinnah's two-nation theory. By late 1946, at the political level, Gandhi was faced with the very real danger that the Muslim separatists would win for themselves a niche in the political structure of a united India rapidly acquiring sovereignty. As well, at the social level, the prospect of the emergence of an

\textsuperscript{65}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{66}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{67}See Chapter Four, n. 62 above.
\textsuperscript{68}Gandhi to Patel, 5 November 1946: \textit{C.H.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p.79.
Indian nation exhibiting the social ideals arising from Gandhian values was becoming increasingly remote. Gandhi's mission to Noakhali was his response to both crises.

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The Noakhali Satyagraha

For four months Gandhi remained in Noakhali and in the neighbouring district of Tippera, searching for a Gandhian solution to the problem of Indian disunity. In the course of his long career the Mahatma had often protested that his weapon of satyagraha had been misrepresented by the British, and as often accepted that it had been misapplied by nationalists during his mass campaigns. On 11 August 1920, during the build-up of the Non-Co-operation campaign, Gandhi had outlined the priorities underpinning his way of life. On that occasion, in an article published in Young India, he had held that "where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence."\(^6^9\) This was a theme to which Gandhi returned during his sojourn in Noakhali. On 6 November, in his reply to memoranda presented to him at Chandpur by Congress leaders of the Tippera district, Gandhi advised that "[p]eople must ... defend themselves .... [E]ven if one is surrounded by 1,000 people, one should, if need be, die fighting."\(^7^0\) Gandhi expanded on this theme the following day. In an address to a deputation of Hindu relief workers who

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\(^6^9\)Gandhi's article entitled "The Doctrine of the Sword"; Young India, 11 August 1920; C.W.M.G., Vol. 18, p.132.

\(^7^0\)Gandhi's Talk to Tippera District Congressmen, 6 November 1946; Hindu, 9 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p.88.
met him in the dining saloon of the river steamer, S. S. Kiwi, the Mahatma implied that, in his perception, the widespread adoption of satyagraha was an unlikely prospect. As Pyarelal recalled the event, it was the fighting example of King Leonidas and his three hundred Spartan warriors which Gandhi chose to recommend to his guests as the next best alternative mode of behaviour.

Twenty thousand able-bodied men prepared to die like brave men non-violently might today be regarded as a fairy-tale. But it would be no fairy-tale for every able-bodied man in a population of twenty thousand to die to a man like stalwart soldiers in open fight. They would go down in history like the immortal five hundred [sic] ... [at] Thermopylae.  

That Gandhi should have gone to the length of recommending the fighting example of the Spartans to the Hindu relief workers in Noakhali was perhaps an index of the critical nature of the threat to the Gandhian political viewpoint posed by Indian communal violence. Lest there might be any doubt that he was referring to physical combat, Gandhi explicitly assured the relief workers that he had "not asked you to discard the use of arms." The Mahatma went on to comment on the exploits of the East Bengali political activists who had carried out the Chittagong Armoury Raid on 18 April 1930. In identifying what he held to be the Raid's main fault, the Mahatma threw some interesting light on the nature of Gandhian morality.

The most tragic thing about the Armoury Raid people is that they could not even multiply themselves. Their bravery was lop-sided. It did not infect others.

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72Ibid., p.367.
73Gandhi's Talk to Relief Workers, 7 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p.91.
Gandhi's line of approach to the Hindu community's problems in Noakhali, as expressed to relief workers on 7 November, set the tone of the message to which the Mahatma gave voice during his four months in East Bengal: if the persecuted minority could not avail themselves of the use of satyagraha, they should instead at least stand up and fight in their defence. To set the scene in which the Hindus of Noakhali could adopt such a poise, it was necessary they remain in their homes, or, in the case of the refugees, return to the villages whence they had fled. As a first step towards this end, the Mahatma set about persuading the frightened Hindus of Noakhali to shed fear, while calling on the majority community to guarantee the security of Hindus living in their midst.

In pursuit of this objective Gandhi tried a number of different strategies. From 6 to 20 November he toured the main centres of Noakhali district urging the Hindu refugees to return to their homes in the ravaged villages. To still Hindu fears of their likely safety in the isolated villages, Gandhi proposed that one prominent Muslim together with one prominent Hindu in each village should accept responsibility for the safety of returning evacuees. This proposal failed to elicit the desired response from Muslims.\footnote{See Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.374-89.} Perhaps part of Gandhi's difficulty was that his large party, along with the security forces assigned by the Bengal Government to look after the Mahatma's welfare, was viewed with some apprehension by Muslims in their locales. Pyarelal caught the flavour of this aspect of Gandhi's Noakhali tour. As he
recalled the arrival of Gandhi's party in Chaumuhani on 7 November:

The arrival of the armed police and the military with a fleet of jeeps, armoured-cars and trucks created consternation among the local Muslims. The bazaar buzzed with rumours. One of them was that Gandhiji had come with a contingent of 'goondas' - an expression applied in Noakhali to anyone they do not like!\textsuperscript{75}

The incongruity of trying to make contact with ordinary people and advising them on their everyday security problems, while being surrounded himself by a large company of followers and guards, apparently impressed itself on the Mahatma. His body of companions insulated Gandhi from the feel, as well as from the effects, of the communal violence. Even so, the violence did lap around the perimeter of his entourage. On 7 November, two young local Hindu volunteers had gone missing while returning home from Gandhi's prayer meeting at Chaumuhani, the body of one of them being found a few days later floating in a canal.\textsuperscript{76}

On 20 November Gandhi adopted a new strategy. He split up his company, posting his followers alone or in pairs to live in some of the villages which had witnessed the exodus of Hindus. Gandhi took up residence himself in one of the assigned villages, Srirampur, located two miles northwest of the Ramgunj police post. He was accompanied by only a Bengali interpreter, Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose (later, a great anthropologist), and a stenographer. Gandhi remained at Srirampur for a little over a month. As he wrote to G. D. Birla on 26 November, it was his intention to remain in Noakhali, living in a village, for as long as "the Hindus and Muslims do not become sincerely well-disposed towards

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., p.371.
\textsuperscript{76}For Pyarelal's account of this incident, see ibid., p.376.
each other .... This will also put my non-violence to the test, and I have come here to emerge successful from this ordeal."

But, notwithstanding his intention to remain in isolated East Bengal pursuing a personal experiment in satyagraha, it was clear that the affairs of all-India politics were very much on the Mahatma's mind. He used the occasion of his letter to Birla to send a message to the six heavyweights of the Congress establishment: Nehru, Patel, Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Azad and Kripalani.

If it is possible to arrange for a sitting of the Constituent Assembly only with the help of the military, then it is better not to arrange for it. If it can be arranged peacefully, then the laws can be framed only for the participating provinces. Let us see what will be the future of the police and the military. We have also to see what Muslim majority provinces will do, how the British Government will conduct itself, and how the princes will behave themselves. I believe the State Paper of April 15 [? 16 May] will have to be changed probably.

It would seem that the Mahatma anticipated that the salient features of the all-India political scene would remain basically unchanged during his sojourn in East Bengal. In any event, Gandhi clearly did not intend that his removal from Delhi to Noakhali should betoken his withdrawal from the centre stage of high politics. Of course, earlier in his career - especially in 1930 and 1931, the period of the Salt March, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the Round Table Conference - Gandhi had been able, so to speak, to take the centre stage of all-India politics with him. The Salt March - an exercise in satyagraha - had provided the opening act of that period of virtually unchallenged Gandhian leadership of

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78 Ibid.
the nationalist movement. Perhaps Gandhi hoped that his satyagraha campaign in Noakhali would bring about another such period of Gandhian leadership.

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While Gandhi was in Noakhali, Wavell was venturing to come to grips with the dynamics of the political situation as brought into being by the advent of the coalition Interim Government. As Wavell noted, his Congress Ministers were "bitterly disappointed over the entry of the Muslim League into the Government which checks their attempt to seize power."79 Gandhi and Patel - without necessarily disagreeing with the Viceroy - would have put it in a different way, emphasizing another aspect of Wavell's observation: that, by having engineered the coalition arrangement, the Viceroy had opened the way for the condition of communal impasse to extend to the Executive Council, the highest organ of government holding together the subcontinent.80

During November, Wavell strove to reconcile the conflicting interpretations of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May being advanced by Congress and the League. Through many twists and turns it was eventually decided - Pethick-Lawrence initiating the move on 23 November81 - that invitations would be extended to Congress and the League to send two representatives each to London

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79W.L., 29 October 1946, p.366.
80Gandhi had protested to Wavell in regard to this danger; see Chapter Four, n. 35 above.
where, along with the Viceroy, discussions would be held with H.M.G.\textsuperscript{82}

The London Conference took place from 3 to 6 December, Nehru representing Congress, Jinnah and Liaquat the League, and Baldev Singh (who was both a Congressman and a Sikh) representing his confessional community. In a Statement delivered at the end of the Conference, H.M.G. upheld the League's interpretation of the provisions of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May relating to Grouping, urging Congress to do likewise.\textsuperscript{83} Nehru adopted the stance that the British position was "an amendment of the Statement of May 16th and went beyond it."\textsuperscript{84} Congress, he held, would thus need time to consider the new position.

Having returned to India, Jinnah declared that Congress acceptance of the British Statement of 6 December should precede the summoning of the Muslim League Council for the purpose of re-accepting the Statement of 16 May.\textsuperscript{85} Meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly duly commenced its sittings in New Delhi on 9 December, the League failing to put in an appearance. The Assembly also lacked representation of the princely states, the Princes having decided to remain - for the time being - in the lee of the League.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{82}For the British Cabinet decision to hold a Conference in London, see Cabinet Minute 3, 25 November 1946; ibid., pp.166-7.
\textsuperscript{83}See Statement by His Majesty's Government, 6 December 1946; ibid., pp.295-6.
\textsuperscript{84}Record of Meeting of Indian Conference in London, 6 December 1946; ibid., p.298.
\textsuperscript{85}For the Acting Viceroy's report of this development, see Colville to Pethick-Lawrence, 23 December 1946; ibid., p.408.
\textsuperscript{86}The Nawab of Bhopal indicated this intention to the Acting Viceroy in mid-December; see Colville to Pethick-Lawrence, 18 December 1946; ibid., pp.380-1.
During November and December 1946, the events on the all-India political stage took place against a background of a general deterioration of communal relations. On 20 November Wavell reported to Pethick-Lawrence that the Indian situation was "very near what will amount almost to open civil war between the communities."\(^\text{87}\) On 22 November, in bringing Pethick-Lawrence up to date with further developments, Wavell gave his official verification of an aspect of the communal violence the suspicion of which was causing such concern to Gandhi, now in his self-imposed exile in a remote village in Noakhali: that the violence in Bihar (and now also in the United Provinces) had been "deliberately planned ... by the lower strata of the Congress."\(^\text{88}\)

\[\text{The Noakhali and Tippera disturbances ... were probably instigated by supporters of the Muslim League, though I am certain that the leaders of the Muslim League had nothing to do with it. But the retaliations in Bihar and the United Provinces have been ... undoubtedly organised, and organised very thoroughly, by supporters of Congress; again I am sure that the leaders were not involved, though I think that some of the Bihar Ministers acted recklessly and irresponsibly in encouraging or failing to suppress the incitement of revenge for Noakhali.}\(^\text{89}\)

The Viceroy had come to believe there was no prospect of the communal violence being brought under control. As he explained to his Muslim League Ministers on 21 November, the ability of the Raj to govern India had been "very greatly weakened."\(^\text{90}\)

The recent troubles had shown that the police in many parts of India were affected with communalism and were no longer to be relied on for firm action against their own community. The same applied to a certain degree to the officials also .... Only

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\(^\text{87}\)Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 20 November 1946; ibid., p.119.
\(^\text{88}\)Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 22 November 1946; ibid., p.140.
\(^\text{89}\)Ibid., pp.139-40.
\(^\text{90}\)Note by Wavell of Interview with Muslim League Members of Cabinet, 21 November 1946; ibid., p.128.
the army had so far escaped any taint of communalism ... [but] this would not last indefinitely.\textsuperscript{91}

In reporting the gist of this "difficult and rather painful interview" to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy had described developments as "a tragic ending of our rule in India."\textsuperscript{92} Commenting further, this time on an unfavourable report from the Governor of the United Provinces regarding the impact of the coalition arrangement in the Executive Council in defusing the communal situation, Wavell sadly concluded that his hopes in this respect had indeed been dashed.

Wylie ... says that the effect of the coalition at the Centre has been nil, and I fear this, though a little exaggerated, is near the truth.\textsuperscript{93}

It occurred to the Viceroy that the coalition arrangement had had from the start an inbuilt flaw, because, for one of the Indian parties at least, communal feeling provided an essential political dynamic without which it could not aspire to a major role at the all-India level.

One of the great difficulties of the situation is that the Muslim League do in fact depend on communal feeling to maintain the strength of their organisation. They cannot afford to let it subside.\textsuperscript{94}

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On 20 November, the day of his arrival in the village of Srirampur, Gandhi was approached by Shamsuddin Ahmed, his ministerial minder. Suhrawardy's faction of the Muslim League in

\textsuperscript{91}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92}Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 22 November 1946; ibid., p.141.
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., p.142.
\textsuperscript{94}Ibid.
Bengal was increasingly anxious to find allies within Bengal's Hindu community. Suhrawardy realized that Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan at the Centre did not accept him as the leader of Bengal's Muslims, that they were likely to bring back Nazimuddin - the leader Suhrawardy had deposed - should they be in a position to do so. Suhrawardy now perceived Pakistan as a threat to his political prospects. The Premier and his colleagues had decided on a public relations exercise aimed at reassuring the Hindus: they wanted Gandhi's involvement to improve its prospects. They intended to set up officially sponsored Peace Committees of local Hindus and Muslims in the affected areas. A deputation of Hindu leaders of the district had also made its way to Srirampur, to put their case to the Mahatma. Once informed of the Bengal Government's scheme, the Hindu leaders nevertheless retained a preference for their original demand: the substitution of Hindu police officials for Muslim. In three days of discussions, Gandhi gave his approval to the Government's proposal, and persuaded the Hindu leaders to accept the plan and co-operate in its implementation.\textsuperscript{95}

On 24 November, Gandhi was visited by Sarat Chandra Bose. The prominent Bengal Congress leader was accompanied by the editor of Anand Bazar Patrika, Calcutta's radical nationalist newspaper, along with some men of the Indian National Army and some local Congress colleagues. Recounting his dealings with Suhrawardy in Calcutta, Bose held - and was probably justified in doing so - that the Muslim Leaguers in authority had not changed their

\textsuperscript{95}See Shila Sen, op. cit., p.219.
\textsuperscript{96}For an account of these discussions, see Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.397-9.
communalist spots, that the Peace Committees would not be likely to address effectively the security problems of the Hindus of Noakhali. Gandhi did not take issue with Bose on the Bengali's analysis of the Bengal Ministry's intentions. Instead, without actually naming Suhrawardy, Gandhi directed the discussion to the political context he believed had given rise to the current condition of the province.

In a democracy, if you set up a hooligan as the head of the Government, you lie in the bed you have made. The only remedy is to educate and convert the electorate by Satyagraha if necessary.\(^{97}\)

As a result of his own all-India political calculations, Gandhi had determined on a satyagraha campaign in Bengal with a view to mobilizing Bengalis at the mass level. The Mahatma probably agreed with Bose's view of Suhrawardy's Ministry, but Gandhi's intended political battle in Bengal was with communalism in the mass, not with the provincial politicians who had prospered in its reflection. So Gandhi directed Bose towards the larger issue - the issue which had all-India implications. It was an issue, of course, over which the Mahatma was hoping for assistance not only from Bose, but also from Suhrawardy - "hooligan" or otherwise. As Gandhi informed Bose:

I have not come here to do a good turn to this community or that. I have come to do a good turn to myself. Non-violence is not meant to be practised by the individual only. It can be and has to be practised by society as a whole. I have come to test that for myself in Noakhali.\(^{98}\)

In pursuit of this objective, on the previous day Gandhi had advised the deputation of Noakhali's Hindu leaders not to press

\(^{97}\)Gandhi's Talk with Sarat Chandra Bose, 24 November 1946; ibid., p.401.
\(^{98}\)Gandhi's Discussion with S. C. Bose, 24 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, pp.154-5.
for the security insulation of Hindu policemen.\textsuperscript{99} The maximization of contact between the embittered communities was a precondition for the Gandhian experiment in \textit{satyagraha}.

Within a week of Bose's visit, Gandhi gave signs that he was despairing of his current strategy for bringing \textit{satyagraha} to bear on the situation in Noakhali. In his correspondence, he increasingly referred to the "darkness" in which he found himself.\textsuperscript{100} Two reasons at least for the Mahatma's growing despondency can be gleaned from the evidence to hand. Both facts, in tandem, were threatening to break what remained of the social links between Hindus and Muslims in Noakhali, thus inadvertently aborting the experiment in \textit{satyagraha} for which purpose the Mahatma was hoping to conscript the district's population. On the one hand, Gandhi was increasingly having to fight a rearguard action against the proposal - being widely mooted - to concentrate the Hindus of Noakhali in areas where they were already in comparatively large numbers, the Muslims of the areas in question to be encouraged to move out in exchange for the newcomers. This idea of providing for Hindu security by their concentration in protective ghettos had gained currency partly because of the second cause for the "darkness" confronting the Mahatma: the failure of the Peace Committees to bring about improvement in communal relations. On 3 December, in a letter to Suhrawardy, Gandhi expressed his misgivings about how the Government's scheme was functioning.

Somehow or other the Committees ... have failed to inspire confidence .... [E]xodus continues and

\textsuperscript{99}See Chapter Four, n. 96 above.
\textsuperscript{100}For example, see Gandhi to J. B. Kripalani, 2 December 1946 and Gandhi to Kundar Dewan, 2 December 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, pp.180 and 181.
very few persons have returned to their villages. They say the guilty parties are still at large, some finding a place on the Peace Committees, that murder and arson still continue, that abducted women have not all been returned, that forcibly converted persons have not all returned, that burnt houses are not being rebuilt and generally the atmosphere of goodwill is lacking.\textsuperscript{101}

But Suhrawardy wanted a public relations exercise, aimed at reassuring Bengal's Hindus that the League Ministry was taking measures to restore communal peace — not necessarily the substance of an achieved peace. In high politics, appearances and expressed intentions counted for much; in an exercise in satyagraha, something rather more concrete was required. If, on the ground in Noakhali, the Peace Committees were not effecting communal peace, it was not in Suhrawardy's interest for the failure to be advertised. Apparently, it had already occurred to Suhrawardy that an association with a certain celebrated votary of Truth was likely to have its drawbacks. In his reply to Gandhi, Suhrawardy repeated — as the Mahatma noted in a return letter of 5 December — "the advice you have given me often enough that my place is in Bihar rather than in Noakhali."\textsuperscript{102} Gandhi declined to act on Suhrawardy's encouragement to depart from Bengal: unlike the Bengali Premier, the Mahatma's priorities were determined by all-India political considerations. On the same day that he replied to Suhrawardy, Gandhi's awareness of the centrality of Bengal to Jinnah's strategy informed the Mahatma's analysis of the situation as communicated in a letter to Agatha Harrison. Gandhi wrote: "What happens here will happen throughout India, because Bengal is the nerve centre."\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101}Gandhi to Suhrawardy, 3 December 1946; ibid., p.185.
\textsuperscript{102}Gandhi to Suhrawardy, 5 December 1946; ibid., p.195.
\textsuperscript{103}Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 5 December 1946; ibid., p.196.
Also on 5 December Gandhi had a meeting with the leaders of the Bengal branch of the Hindu Mahasabha, the party which had taken up the project of concentrating Noakhali's Hindu population in specified areas. Gandhi used the occasion to portray the Mahasabha's policy in this respect as implementing the Muslim League's two-nation theory, further informing the Mahasabha leaders that he was "not going to be a willing party to Pakistan."\(^{104}\) And in choosing his parting words to the Mahasabha leaders, Gandhi undoubtedly had in mind all-India political developments of recent years. He told them:

My own doctrine was failing. I don't want to die a failure but as a successful man. But it may be that I may die a failure.\(^{105}\)

* * *

During December 1946, increasingly aware of the continuing instances of communal outrage in Noakhali, Gandhi gradually resolved to adopt a new strategy for restoring communal peace in the district: he would undertake a walking tour, visiting as many as possible of the villages in the affected areas. Gandhi blamed himself for not having stopped the communal strife: he informed Pyarelal that he clearly lacked "the knack", indicating his "unfitness for the task."\(^{106}\) It was a Gandhian belief that a perfect exercise in satyagraha would be certain to give rise to a perfect result: satyagraha could not fail, only the vehicle could be flawed. So Gandhi resolved to conduct his proposed trek

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\(^{104}\) Gandhi's Discussion with Hindu Mahasabha Leaders, 5 December 1946; ibid., p.200.
\(^{105}\) Ibid.
\(^{106}\) Gandhi's Note to Pyarelal, after 4 December 1946; ibid., p.195.
barefoot, thus symbolizing its penitential nature. There was yet another condition which slowly took shape in Gandhi's mind, to be added to the symbolic baggage of his mission to the villages. This time, however, the symbol to be adopted was peculiar to his mahatmahood: his nineteen year old niece, Manu Gandhi, was to accompany him on his tour, to minister to his needs - one of these being performed by sleeping beside him at night, sharing his bed. This last resolve was to generate considerable controversy, eliciting commentary - much of it unfavourable - from the Mahatma's Congress associates, creating divisions even within the Gandhian camp.

It was Gandhi's belief - developed from his view of the Hindu ascetic tradition - that by sublimation of the sexual impulses it was possible to enhance one's power of presence, to increase one's store of psychic energy, and thus provide the adept with the ability to bring the force of Truth to bear on human relationships. By sleeping with Manu, Gandhi intended to demonstrate to all that he had attained such a condition of celibacy, lending weight to his message and authority to his presence. If the idea caught on, he could expect to be able to modify the behaviour of people around him - perhaps radically so. Gandhi's religious behaviour, in this instance at least, was motivated by political purpose.

The hardening of Gandhi's resolve for a new strategy occurred against a background of developing political crisis, a crisis affecting British - Congress as well as League - Congress relations. The British Government's Statement of 6 December, accepting the League's interpretation of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16 May, had been received with dismay by the Congress
leaders. The prospect of the effective implementation of the Cabinet Mission's Plan as regards the formation of Groups was anathema to the Congress establishment: in Group B and in Group C the Congress political representatives would be in the minority, and Congress domination of the rest of British India - politically confined within Group A - could not be brought to bear to effect all-India Congress control. Grouping, if put into effect, would give Jinnah his desired Pakistan - an Indian Muslim political homeland, constitutionally entrenched beyond the bounds of Congress rule. Congress acceptance on 25 June of the Cabinet Mission's Plan - as Wyatt points out - had been "bogus",\textsuperscript{107} as the Cabinet Ministers - certainly Cripps, at least - had realized. In any event, on 15 December, Patel wrote to Cripps, protesting that the Congressmen who had argued for acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's Plan - the Sardar prominently included - even "when Gandhiji was strongly against," now felt "that there has been a betrayal."\textsuperscript{108} As Patel put it:

\begin{quote}
In London the stage was set against us .... Your interpretation [of the Cabinet Mission's Plan as set out in the Statement of 6 December] means that Bengal ... can draft the constitution of Assam. It is amazing. Do you think such a monstrous proposition can be accepted by ... Assam?.... You can have no idea of the resentment and anger caused by your ... [Statement] .... If you think that Assam can be coerced to accept the domination of Bengal, the sooner you get rid of that illusion the better.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

In the wake of the Statement of 6 December Gopinath Bardoloi, the Congress Chief Minister of Assam, sent two of his party lieutenants to Noakhali, seeking the Mahatma's advice. During an

\textsuperscript{107}See Chapter Three, n. 191 above.
\textsuperscript{108}Patel to Cripps, 15 December 1946; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.477.
\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., p.476.
interview on 15 December, Gandhi advised the Assam Congressmen that their Ministry should resist the drift of events; they should, he said, look to the provisions of "the 1935 constitution" based as it was on "provincial autonomy."\textsuperscript{110} Apparently, now that Grouping was the key issue between the parties, Gandhi intended to serve Congress interests by championing provincial rights - originally a British device, as established by the 1935 Act, for preventing centralized control by the Congress High Command. The Mahatma presented this about-turn in policy as being directed at Congress. On 29 December his advice was published in \textit{Harijan}.

Assam should ... lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a kind of satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress .... I am hoping that ... Assam will lead the way. I have the same advice for the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{111}

A few days later, Gandhi addressed an open letter to the Sikhs on the subject of their participation in the Constituent Assembly. The \textit{Bombay Chronicle}, in reporting on 20 December the gist of his communiqué, quoted the Mahatma as having urged the Sikhs to "[r]evolt against the Congress."\textsuperscript{112}

Gandhiji ... has advised ... [the Sikhs] to demand an unequivocal declaration from the Congress that it shall never agree to Grouping in any shape or form. He has further advised them to walk out [of the Constituent Assembly] if no such undertaking was forthcoming.\textsuperscript{113}

Gandhi's efforts from the distance of his Noakhali sojourn to stir up the Sikhs and the Assam Ministry over Grouping were probably aimed at inducing Congress to adopt a hard line towards

\textsuperscript{110}Gandhi's Interview with Assam Congressmen, 15 December 1946; \textit{Harijan}, 29 December 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p.229.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., p.228.
\textsuperscript{112}Gandhi's Letter to the Sikhs, on or before 19 December 1946; ibid., p.242.
\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Bombay Chronicle}, 20 December 1946; cited ibid.
the British Government's Statement of 6 December. If such was the case, Gandhi registered a significant success. During the last week of December, Nehru led a high-powered Congress delegation to consult with the Mahatma at Srirampur. Kripalani, the new Congress President, was included in Nehru's group, the Pandit having resigned from the presidency during October so as to concentrate on his official state duties. The Congress leaders stayed with Gandhi for two days,\textsuperscript{114} returning to New Delhi on 30 December with a draft of Gandhi's advice.\textsuperscript{115} On 6 January 1947, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution accepting the Statement of 6 December - but with important reservations.

It must be clearly understood ... that this must not involve any compulsion of a province, and that the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab should not be jeopardized. In the event of any attempt at such compulsion, the province or part of a province has a right to take such action as may be deemed necessary in order to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned.\textsuperscript{116}

In sharp contrast to the Mahatma's success in hardening the Congress policy position in opposition to the spirit of the British Government's constitutional plan for a united independent India, Gandhi's efforts during December 1946 to influence Congress policy on the communalist front failed to elicit the desired response. By mid-December, goaded by Suhrawardy's repeated charge that the Mahatma was demonstrating a relative lack of interest in the fate of Muslims in Bihar as against his obvious concern for the welfare of the Hindus of Noakhali, Gandhi had decided that his efforts to restore communal peace should be given an official

\textsuperscript{114}For an account of this visit, see Pyareial, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.474-84.
\textsuperscript{115}See Gandhi's Instructions (to the Congress leaders), 28/30 December 1946; C.R.M.G., Vol. 86, pp.285-6.
\textsuperscript{116}All-India Congress Committee Resolution, 6 January 1947; T.P., Vol. IX, p.463.
dimension embracing both Bihar and Bengal. On 21 December Gandhi wrote a letter to Srikrishna Sinha, the Chief Minister of Bihar, informing him where his duty lay in putting into operation the official side of the Gandhian peace offensive.

I want the ministries of both ... [Bihar and Bengal] to hold an impartial inquiry by a joint committee to probe the incidents in both the provinces. Even if Bengal does not co-operate, it is the Bihar Ministry's duty to hold such an inquiry.\textsuperscript{117}

The Mahatma probably had little confidence that he would secure Sinha's co-operation, but apparently hoped that his old allies in the Congress High Command could be persuaded to enforce the Bihar Ministry's compliance. Gandhi gave Sinha a broad hint as to the nature of his intended strategy, mentioning in his letter that he was "sending a copy of this to Rajendra Babu,"\textsuperscript{118} Prasad being both the highest ranking Bihari within Congress and the Bihari with the longest record of attachment to the Gandhian Congress faction. On 25 December Gandhi moved to get the project under way, writing to Patel on the subject, hoping no doubt to enlist the services of the Home Minister, the Iron Man of Congress, in his endeavour to bring Sinha and his Bihar Congress colleagues into line with the Gandhian initiative.

You will have seen the report of the Bihar [Muslim] League .... It is dreadful even if half of it is true. I have no doubt at all that an impartial commission of enquiry, which is above reproach, should be immediately set up. There should not be delay of even a single day.\textsuperscript{119}

But six weeks later neither the Central Government nor the Bihar Ministry had given any indication of their intention of appointing

\textsuperscript{117}Gandhi to Sinha, 21 December 1946; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p.251.
\textsuperscript{118}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119}Gandhi to Patel, 25 December 1946; ibid., p.264.
a commission of enquiry in Bihar. On 5 February Gandhi again addressed a letter to Patel on the subject.

I hear that your opposition is reported to be the reason why the Bihar Ministry does not appoint an inquiry commission .... If a commission is not appointed, it will do great harm ... [and] I shall have no choice but to go to Bihar.120

In his reply of 10 February, the Sardar made no secret of his opposition to Gandhi's proposal, while at the same time claiming that the Governor of Bihar and the Viceroy had decided against an enquiry.121 Patel's reply was truthful on all counts. As Wavell informed Pethick-Lawrence on 12 February, on the "recommendation of the Governor of Bihar I have decided not to press for an enquiry into the Bihar disturbances," adding however, that "the Bihar Ministry are against it ... [and] the Congress High Command are probably lukewarm."122 The fate of Sir Patrick Spens' Commission of Enquiry into the Calcutta killings of August 1946 - abruptly wound up upon Independence123 - testified to the Sardar's attitude towards such investigations. Gandhi's efforts to press his Congress colleagues to institute an official enquiry into the Bihar communal slaughter proved futile.

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On 2 January 1947 Gandhi set out from Srirampur on the first stage of his walking tour of Noakhali. The symbolism of the occasion was unmistakable, recalling as it did the beginning of his Salt March sixteen years before, the event which marked the

120Gandhi to Patel, 5 February 1947; ibid., p.432.
121See Patel to Gandhi, 10 February 1947; ibid., p.432, n. 1.
123See Chapter Three, n. 261, above.
apogee of his career. On that historic occasion Gandhi had been accompanied by seventy-nine followers, his party swelling into the tens of thousands as he progressed towards the sea. For his Noakhali trek however, the Mahatma had hopes of being the focus of a more modest retinue - more modest in numbers anyway. As Pyarelal recalled, the Mahatma had "let it be known ... that he wanted no other companion but God in his pilgrimage."\textsuperscript{124}

It was not to be. While in a march against the Raj in 1930 the protection of the Deity might have sufficed, the Muslims of Noakhali were opponents of a different kind and these were sterner times. A group of Indian National Army men under "Colonel" Jiwan Singh - mostly Sikhs, though they had "left behind their kirpans"\textsuperscript{125} Gandhi reassured a prayer meeting on 6 January - was in charge of security within the Mahatma's party, and the Bengal Government had provided an official escort as well. Pyarelal recalled Gandhi's departure from Srirampur.

\begin{quote}
Abdullah, the [local] Superintendent of Police ... accompanied ... [Gandhi] from Srirampur to Chandipur. A party of twenty military-police carrying guns walked in front.\textsuperscript{126}
\end{quote}

The Bengal Government was taking no chances that its province would be the scene of India's assassination of the century. The elements of the Muslim community in Noakhali which nevertheless wished to express their opposition to the Mahatma's presence in their midst were thus able to do so only by symbolic gestures. Gandhi's secretary remembered one of the forms by which hostile

\textsuperscript{124}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.491.
\textsuperscript{125}Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 6 January 1947; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p.319.
\textsuperscript{126}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.491.
Muslims expressed their feelings as the Mahatma made his way to Jagatpur on 10 January.

The way to Jagatpur had been swept clean by [Gandhian] workers assisted by some local people. But some Muslims had fouled it overnight by scattering cow-dung and excreta over it!\(^{127}\)

Despite evidence of some local Muslim opposition to his presence in Noakhali, including the occasional dearth in some villages of Muslims willing to give him shelter for the night,\(^{128}\) Gandhi wrote to Suhrawardy confessing himself "embarrassed" at being "fully protected by armed police" and requesting that the official escort be withdrawn.\(^{129}\) Not that the Mahatma intended dismissing his party of I.N.A. Sikhs - "How can I reject [the service of] such friends, and why should I?" Gandhi asked of a prayer meeting at Chandipur\(^{130}\) - and even Suhrawardy, in the event of his withdrawing the policemen, was asked to provide an alternative security guarantee. However, the action which the Mahatma wanted the Muslim League Ministry to take would have directly contributed to the political purpose of Gandhi's presence in East Bengal. As Pyarelal paraphrased Gandhi's proposal, Suhrawardy was asked for "a complete change of heart and an all-out effort on the part of the [Bengal] Government to mobilize local Muslim opinion so as to provide an effective substitute for the armed escort."\(^{131}\) Perhaps not surprisingly, Suhrawardy preferred to keep the police escort on the job; if the Mahatma's presence in Noakhali was going to evoke a mass response,

\(^{127}\)Ibid., p.499.
\(^{128}\)See ibid., p.498. To offset this occasional problem, Gandhi's I.N.A. guards constructed a portable hut in which the Mahatma (and Manu) could sleep.
\(^{129}\)Gandhi to Suhrawardy, 8 January 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p.330.
\(^{130}\)Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 6 January 1947; ibid., p.319.
satyagraha - rather than the Muslim League's activists - would have to provide the catalyst.

It was not only the Bengal Government which was failing to act in harmony with the Mahatma's wishes: Gandhi's relations with Congress were increasingly developing a discordant flavour. In mid-January, in a letter to the Chief Minister of Bihar, Gandhi complained to Sinha of his Ministry's neglect in delivering a promised report on the situation in Bihar.

I was to get a note on Bihar. I have not received it, nor has a single well-informed person from Bihar come to me. It does not matter if someone cannot come but the note must come.\textsuperscript{132}

Earlier, around New Year, Gandhi had written to G. D. Birla in a similar vein, drawing to the industrialist's attention the failure of the Congress High Command to give due consideration to the Gandhian perspective.

I have to consider where my place is. My voice carries no weight in the Working Committee .... I do not like the shape that things are taking and I cannot speak out.\textsuperscript{133}

During January 1947, in a development which was perhaps symptomatic of the Mahatma's growing realization that Congress in power was not going to prove amenable to Gandhian control, Gandhi gave expression to the notion that the party stood in need of fundamental reform. In a letter to R. R. Diwakar, the Congress activist who had been prominent in the wartime underground after August 1942 and in later years was to become a Central Government Cabinet Minister and a Governor of Bihar, Gandhi indicated the direction which, in his view, the reform of Congress should take.

\textsuperscript{132}Gandhi to Sinha, after 13 January 1947; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p.350.
\textsuperscript{133}Gandhi to G. D. Birla, towards the end of 1946; \textit{ibid.}, p.295.
I am becoming more and more convinced that the four-anna membership should go. The membership of the Congress should be forty crores, the whole of the population.\footnote{Gandhi to Diwakar, 19 January 1947; ibid., p.370.}

This was a theme the Mahatma would increasingly develop during 1947 as India advanced towards independence: the notion that the changing political situation in India called for a fundamental change in the nature of Congress. With the arrival of independence, the change called for by Gandhi took on a more radical form; even the desirability of the continuing existence of the party was called into question.

Gandhi's reaction to the Muslim League's denunciation of the All-India Congress Committee's resolution of 6 January\footnote{See Chapter Four, n. 116 above.} reflected, in its implications, the growing distance separating the Mahatma from the Congress High Command. On 31 January the Muslim League Working Committee, meeting at Karachi, maintained that the Congress resolution of 6 January constituted a rejection of the British Government's Statement of 6 December, a rejection of "this final appeal of His Majesty's Government to accept the correct interpretation of ... the Cabinet Mission's Statement of May 16th."\footnote{Muslim League Working Committee Resolution, 31 January 1947; T.P., Vol. IX, p. 592.} Accordingly, the League's Working Committee called upon H.M.G. "to declare that the Constitutional Plan formulated by the Cabinet Mission ... has failed."\footnote{Ibid.} The Working Committee also maintained that "the Constituent Assembly and its proceedings and decisions are ... invalid and illegal, and it should be forthwith dissolved", and that, furthermore, "no useful purpose will be served by summoning a meeting of the Council of the All-India
Muslim League to reconsider its decision of the 29th July, whereby it had withdrawn the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan of 16th May 1946."138

On 3 February, in an address to a prayer meeting subsequently published in Amrita Bazar Patrika on 6 February and in Harijan on 23 February, Gandhi reviewed the political options still open to Indian nationalists in the wake of the League's stand. In advising on how to meet the circumstances of the growing cleavage at the all-India level between the parties, Gandhi maintained it was still open for individual provinces acting alone to "establish their independence in accordance with the [Cabinet Mission's Plan]."139 Gandhi was further developing the theme of provincial rights, hoping no doubt to bring greater pressure to bear on the Grouping proposal. Two days later the Mahatma notified Patel of his "long speech", a report of which had been "sent to the Press," a report which "summarizes my views on the subject."140 The Sardar might well have received Gandhi's communication with ambivalence. On the one hand, Patel would have readily understood that Grouping was the more obvious intended victim of Gandhi's initiative. However, on the other hand, it was not in the interests of the Congress High Command for Gandhi to encourage provincial Congress elements to act independently on constitutional matters: constitutional matters were the political reserve of the Congress establishment at the Centre.

Gandhi was getting increasingly out of touch with the Congress leaders. From his Noakhali fastness, the Mahatma - so he thought

138Ibid., pp. 592-3.
140Gandhi to Patel, 5 February 1947; ibid., p. 431.
was contributing to the debate at the Centre, attempting to strengthen the bargaining position of the Congress High Command by applying pressure on the Grouping proposal. But Gandhi was fighting the old political battle, the struggle aimed at routing the Muslim separatists, the objective being to remove Jinnah and the Muslim League altogether from the all-India political stage. In contrast, the Congress leaders at the Centre were thinking increasingly of a more radical approach to the problem posed by Jinnah and his men at the all-India level: to end the discord within the Indian political elite at the Centre, so to speak, by cutting into two segments the Indian political stage on which the parties acted out their respective roles - nationalist and Muslim separatist - securing for Congress the certainty of political supremacy in a truncated India and requiring the Indian Muslim separatists to come up with their own national performance.

Problems were mounting for the Congress establishment. The decision to accept office, effective from 2 September 1946, had created strains within Congress, the party having to adjust to playing a role subsidiary to state authority - something quite new in Congress experience. Kripalani, the Congress President, was unhappy with the new order, his Working Committee having become secondary to Nehru's "tea-party Cabinet"\(^{141}\) in the Congress decision making process. Also, Gandhi's "free Provinces of

\(^{141}\)This phrase - or, alternatively, the "kitchen Cabinet" - was used in reference to the informal gatherings of Congress Members of the Executive Council, often held prior to formal meetings of the Council. The informal gatherings were usually held at Nehru's New Delhi residence. By this means, the Congress leaders decided on the policy they would support, so as to present a united front against the Viceroy and the non-Congress Members of the Executive Council.
India"\textsuperscript{142} initiative pointed to - and possibly increased the likelihood of - another peril which might have at any time confronted the Congress leaders: that the "free Provinces," or some of them anyway, might decide to act on the basis of Gandhi's rationale. In Bengal, Suhrawardy's efforts to find political allies in the Hindu community provided the context for just such a potential development, and there were other provinces which also might attempt to steer an independent course: in particular, North-West Frontier Province - perhaps in a union with Pathan-dominated Afghanistan. Furthermore, independent action by provinces - even mooting such a notion - would have encouraged similar action by some of the larger princely states.

Conscious of the brittle nature of the interim political order, the Congress establishment were increasingly aware of the need to maintain momentum in their constitutional progress.\textsuperscript{143} There was a growing resolve in the minds of the power brokers within Congress, a conviction that, in order to be able to keep abreast of events, they could no longer afford the luxury of a constitutional conflict with the Muslim League. And there was only one sure way to break the constitutional impasse: to accede to the League's ostensible demand: Pakistan.

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\textsuperscript{142}Gandhi's Speech to Prayer Meeting, 5 February 1947; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 86, p. 435.

\textsuperscript{143}Ian Scott, the Viceroy's Deputy Private Secretary, had notified Wavell in early January 1947 that the level of opposition inside Congress from political elements connected with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Socialists made it clear that the "Congress Centre (Patel, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, etc)... will have to show results if it is to maintain itself." See Scott to Wavell, 8 January 1947; \textit{T.E.}, Vol. IX, p. 488.
During February 1947, with key figures within the Congress establishment reordering their priorities on the constitutional front, preparing to bring forward on to the Congress agenda the project of dumping a truncated Pakistan into Jinnah's lap, Gandhi's attention was being somewhat diverted by the development of a Gandhian domestic crisis. On 10 February, the problem which had arisen within the Gandhian camp was outlined by the Mahatma in a letter to Vinoba Bhave - not a short letter, and one devoted entirely to the Gandhian domestic issue at hand. Giving edge to the crisis, Kishorelal Mashruwala and Narahari Parikh, two Gandhian devotees who had assume responsibility for editing Harijan during Gandhi's sojourn in Noakhali,\(^{144}\) had tendered their joint resignation - in the informed Gandhian style, "as a token of protest and non-cooperation"\(^{145}\) - in view of a controversial aspect of the Mahatma's relationship with his granddaughter. As Gandhi wrote to Vinoba Bhave:

The friends in our circle have been very much upset because of Manu's sleeping with me. Kishorelal's agony is difficult to bear. He is so upset that he is on the verge of breaking down. The same is the case with Narahari .... [T]he co-workers' pain makes me lose confidence in myself .... If I don't let Manu sleep with me, though I regard it as essential that she should, wouldn't that be a sign of weakness in me ... would not my experiment in ahimsa and truth remain incomplete or be tainted?\(^{146}\)

If Jawaharlal Nehru's rise in the nationalist ranks had by the late 1930s identified him as the likely successor to Gandhi in terms of political leadership (to be duly acknowledged as such by the Mahatma), in the years following Gandhi's death it was to be

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\(^{144}\)See Gandhi's Statement to the Press, 20 November 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p. 139.

\(^{145}\)Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 598.

\(^{146}\)Gandhi to Bhave, 10 February 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, pp. 452-3.
Vinoba Bhave on whom would mainly descend, by general consensus, the lustre of Gandhi's mahatmahood - the efforts of Jai Prakash Narayan, amongst others, notwithstanding. The intellectual product of a Gandhian ashram upbringing, Vinoba Bhave had a less complex mind than that of the system's founder. His letter of reply to Gandhi on 25 February was as replete with devotion to Gandhian religious form as it was devoid of Gandhian political purpose. Disagreeing with the position Gandhi had adopted regarding his sleeping with Manu, Vinoba reminded the Mahatma of the established Gandhian judgement on celibacy: that "any consciousness of the difference between man and woman was contrary to ideal [observance of chastity]."

In practical terms, as far as developments on the Indian political stage were concerned, the issue raised by the Mahatma's sleeping habits was probably of significance only in so far as Gandhi's attention was diverted by the resulting controversy from otherwise being involved in influencing Congress policy changes during February and March 1947. Gandhi did find the matter burdensome, informing G.D. Birla on 14 February that the Manu episode was "taking up a lot of my time." Perhaps the episode was important in another respect: those who wished, for whatever reason, to reduce the Mahatma's public standing were provided with the option of attacking his reputation on grounds which otherwise - because of Gandhi's age alone - would have been almost

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147 Following Gandhi's death, Jai Prakash Narayan, a prominent leader of the Congress Socialist Party and long an advocate of violent activism against the Raj, became converted to non-violence. For many years thereafter, he provided a symbolic mouthpiece of leftist opposition to the lack of social reform under Congress rule.

148 Editors' paraphrase of Bhave to Gandhi, 25 February 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 86, p. 453, n. 2.

unthinkable. Such opponents could snipe at the Mahatma from the safety of the crowd, there being, as G.D. Birla recalled, "no dearth of uncharitable critics who would impute all sorts of blemishes to him."\textsuperscript{150} By February, Patel was alert to the vulnerability of Gandhi's position. As Birla remembered the occasion, the Sardar warned Gandhi (or perhaps goaded him) with stern advice, that "though perfectly spotless, [he] should conduct himself as the world desired him to do."\textsuperscript{151}

It was not Gandhi's style to back away from an awkward commitment, even though Manu took some of the heat out of the issue towards the end of February: she requested Gandhi to discontinue the practise of their sleeping together "for the time being ...[as a] concession ... to the feelings and sentiments of those who could not understand his stand."\textsuperscript{152} But Gandhi continued to hold to his conviction. So the issue dogged his trail, taking its toll, perhaps, of the Mahatma's self-assurance. Thus Gandhi noted in his diary on 16 March, in recording the gist of talks with two friends on the subject of his preferred approach to the practice of celibacy, that he "[d]id not like X's way of questioning and the accompanying smile on his face."\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{150}G.D. Birla, op. cit., p. 322.
\textsuperscript{151}Birla's paraphrase of Patel to Gandhi, early February 1947; ibid.
\textsuperscript{152}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 587.
\textsuperscript{153}Gandhi's Diary, 16 March 1947; ibid., p. 590. Pyarelal prefers to exercise his discretion by keeping secret the identity of the two men with whom Gandhi held the discussion. The two men were Swami Anand and Kedar Nath. They held their discussions with Gandhi at Patna on 15 and 16 March 1947. See Gandhi's Discussion with Swami Anand and Kedar Nath, 15/16 March 1947; \textit{C.W.N.G.}, Vol. 87, pp. 89-92. Swami Anand was an important figure in the Indian nationalist movement. Early in the century he had been involved with Mrs. Annie Besant and had been employed at one of her educational institutions. Later, Swami Anand joined Tilak and worked on Tilak's weekly newspaper. He met Gandhi in 1917, and for three years provided a link between Tilak and Gandhi, commuting between Poona and Sabarmati. After 1920 Swami Anand worked on several of Gandhi's newspapers. During the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, Swami Anand was Sardar Patel's secretary. In later years he founded a Gandhian ashram. After independence, he conducted various
Apparently, the costs of mahatmahood were rising; the religious accoutrements of his political approach increasingly required the Mahatma's attention, burdening the journey and obscuring the objectives of Gandhi the politician.

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While Gandhi continued on his barefoot pilgrimage through the villages of Noakhali, decisive steps were taken at the constitutional level in promoting progress towards the independence of India. It was the British Government which initiated the further constitutional progress. Attlee took a prominent role in shaping the decision for a change in British policy, being influenced in his choice of the options available by the views of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Prime Minister having invited him on 18 December to succeed Wavell as Viceroy\textsuperscript{154} as part of the intended initiative.

Over a period of many months, as an aspect of his emergency "Breakdown Plan," Wavell had been urging H.M.G. to set a definite term to British rule in India.\textsuperscript{155} Mountbatten was also convinced as to the advantage of setting a time limit to the transfer of power, even going so far as to make it virtually a condition of relief efforts for refugees. Like Gandhi, Swami Anand was a native of Kathiawad.

\textsuperscript{154}For Mountbatten's reply to Attlee's invitation, see Mountbatten to Attlee, 20 December 1946; \textit{I.E.}, Vol. IX, p. 396.

\textsuperscript{155}See Chapter Three, n. 279 above. Wavell advised a British military withdrawal from India in stages, beginning not later than 31 March 1947 and ending within one year.
his acceptance of the appointment as Viceroy. Unlike in Wavell's case, a personal consideration provided some extra incentive for Mountbatten's insistence on a time limit for the Raj: Mountbatten had a promising naval career to pursue. For Mountbatten, his Viceroyalty was an interval between Royal Navy appointments.

On 20 February H.M.G. issued a Statement on Indian Policy along with a simultaneous announcement of the intention to terminate Wavell's "wartime appointment," the latter of which further informed the public that Viscount Mountbatten of Burma "will be entrusted with the task of transferring to Indian hands the responsibility for the government of British India." The change of office was to take place during March 1947. In the light of the Statement which preceded this intelligence, it was clear that Mountbatten would not be Viceroy for more than fifteen months.

His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to ... effect the transference of power into ... Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. H.M.G. had lit a sixteen month fuse under the unstable mix of political forces still functioning - if ever less peaceably so - within the facade of a united India. To the primordial imperatives shaping the behaviour of the communalist groups pressing their claims ever more violently within the body politic

\[^{156}\text{See Mountbatten to Attlee, 12 January 1947 and 11 February 1947; T.F., Vol. IX, pp. 497-8 and 666-9.}\]
\[^{157}\text{Attlee's Announcement in Parliament, 20 February 1947. For the text of the Announcement, see Attlee to Wavell, 12 February 1947; ibid., pp. 678-9.}\]
\[^{158}\text{His Majesty's Government Statement on Indian Policy, 20 February 1947; ibid., p. 774.}\]
of an expiring Raj, H.M.G. had applied the catalyst of a limitation of time.

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The Decision for Partition

In the weeks following the Statement of 20 February, events of major significance occurred in quick succession, radically reshaping the contours of the Indian political landscape.

At the all-India constitutional level the Statement was generally well received. The nationalist camp responded the most favourably, the Hindustan Times on 21 February praising H.M.G. for having taken "a historic decision which will finally end the Indo-British conflict in a manner worthy of civilized nations."\(^{159}\) The following evening Nehru confirmed the Hindustan Times judgement, holding that the British Government's decision to impose a time limit had been a "wise and courageous one," removing as it had "all misconception and suspicion," bringing in its wake "reality and a certain dynamic quality to the present situation in India."\(^{160}\)

At lower levels of Indian politics, particularly in certain provinces, the Statement of 20 February was accorded a less favourable overall reception - especially so by political leaders operating close to the cutting edge of communal politics. The Statement's likely consequences for the communal situation in Bengal might - amongst other things - have been exercising Azad's

\(^{159}\)Hindustan Times, 21 February 1947; cited in Abell to Harris, 21 February 1947; ibid., p.775.

\(^{160}\)Nehru's Statement to the Press, 22 February 1947; Hindustan Times, 23 February 1947; ibid., p.790.
thoughts when he confessed to reporters that "Mr. Attlee's statement ... had evoked mixed feelings in his mind."[161] Khizar was rather more emphatic in his denunciation of the British initiative: he described the Statement as "the work of lunatics."[162] The Punjab Premier was scarcely unjustified in regarding the British initiative, if not its authors, as unbalanced: the Statement signalled the end of the Unionist Ministry in the Punjab, the end of the British Punjab as a functioning political entity, and the end of a Punjabi society of interspersed Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. And, in turn, the social and political collapse of the Punjab signalled the end of a united India. Diverse political forces conspired to bring about this sequence of events. The dynamic factor which was to sweep away the old order in the Punjab was provided by the communal activists operating at the base of Punjabi society, whereas it was the consequential response of the dominant faction of the Indian political elite at the Centre which was to eventually bring to pass the division of India.

On 2 March, with the League's activists parading in the streets of Lahore, Khizar resigned from office. In the wake of the Unionist Ministry's demise, the Punjabi social order imploded into overt communal civil war, the Governor having to take charge under Section 93. For the remainder of 1947, the province was to be the scene of the subcontinent's most horrific communal slaughter. The casualties in the Punjab would be counted in the hundreds of thousands. As well, a terror-driven exchange of population would virtually eliminate the Hindu and Sikh

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communities of the western areas and reduce to insignificance the Muslim presence in the eastern districts.

The outbreak of communal disorder in the Punjab - beginning in the capital, Lahore, on 4 March, spreading first to Multan the following day and later to Amritsar and Rawalpindi - brought the province "face to face with the Pakistan issue," as Wavell reported to Pethick-Lawrence, the Viceroy adding that "the strain on the Services and on the Army is likely to be considerable." These developments in the Punjab also brought Pakistan on to the top of the Congress agenda at the Centre, galvanizing the Congress establishment into action. During a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, held from 6 to 8 March, the Congress leaders resolved to grasp the nettle of partition. The Congress leadership decided to cut their losses in their constitutional conflict with the Muslim League at the all-India level, by setting the scene for the ready exit of at least some of the subcontinent's Muslim majority areas from the Indian Union. The Working Committee's Resolution of 8 March proclaimed the rationale behind the new line of approach.

The Punjab ... [has witnessed] an orgy of murder and arson and Amritsar and Multan have been scenes of horror and devastation .... [T]here can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab by violence and coercion .... Therefore it is necessary to find a way out .... This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two Provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part.\[164\]

Gandhi learnt of this development from the newspapers. On 20 March he wrote to Nehru, expressing his desire to "know the

\[163\] Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 5 March 1947; ibid., p.870.
\[164\] Congress Working Committee Resolution, 8 March 1947; ibid., p.901.
reason"165 behind the resolution. On 25 March Nehru responded: most of the members of the Working Committee, he said, had felt that "we must press for this immediate division so that reality might be brought into the picture." One should not - the Pandit's letter seemed to imply - question reality.

If events in the Punjab had provided the focus for this Congress policy departure, the conviction - particularly in the minds of Patel and Nehru - that such a move had become necessary owed a great deal to developments within the Interim Government. Liaquat Ali Khan, in his capacity as Member for Finance, had brought forward budget proposals which had created a crisis of confidence in the ability of the Congress leaders to protect the interests of India's industrialists and merchants. On 5 March, Wavell reported to Pethick-Lawrence on the nature of the problem confronting Patel and Nehru.

Liaquat's budget has been most ... ingenious .... He has framed a socialistic budget which appeals to the genuine socialist in the Congress party but horrifies the capitalists. Thus, while securing considerable popular support ... he has driven a wedge deep into the Congress party.167

The conjunction of events in early March 1947 brought about a moment of truth, an illustration - in Nehru's own words - of "reality," on the social, as well as on the communal, political front. The move by the Congress leaders - to cut Jinnah and his men out of the political action at the Centre - was at least partly a response to the desire to protect the class structure of Indian society, the values of which the Congress establishment reflected. The political constraints arising from class values,

166Nehru to Gandhi, 25 March 1947; ibid., p.125, n. 1.
as well as the more evident desire for Congress party domination along with considerations of India's internal national security, informed the Congress establishment's historic decision to jettison from the Indian body politic the more unsupportable centres of the communalist mayhem being generated by imperatives arising from the Indian social base.

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The Bihar-Bengal Strategy

On 24 February Gandhi ended his barefoot walking tour of Noakhali and Tippera, having visited 47 villages in the course of walking 116.5 miles.\textsuperscript{168} The Noakhali Satyagraha had ended in failure. Indeed, the Muslim communalists of the area were tightening their grip: they had begun to apply a general labour and customer boycott of the Hindu community.

During the last section of the walking tour Gandhi's own party had felt the effects of mounting Muslim opposition, what with hostile hand-written posters stuck on trees along their route, bridges cut down in their path, and problems of finding accommodation for the Mahatma in some of the villages visited. More generally, as Pyarelal recalled, by late February "[r]eports had been coming in for some time past from various centres showing that the situation was deteriorating."\textsuperscript{169}

Gandhi determined on a new strategy: to effect his purpose of reversing the slide towards communal polarization in Bengal by

\textsuperscript{168} These figures are provided in the Editors' Note, \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 87, p.38, n. 3.
\textsuperscript{169} Pyarelal, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 1, p.559.
first bringing about communal reconciliation in Hindu-majority, Congress-controlled, Gandhian-prone Bihar, in the expectation that such an achievement would be reflected by a similar transformation in Hindu-Muslim relations in Suhrawardy's Bengal. It was widely believed - and, indeed, it was probably true - that the deterioration in communal relations in Bengal had led to the same condition in Bihar. Gandhi's new strategy aimed at utilizing this reputed symbiotic relationship between the communal situations in the two provinces, a reputed relationship to which Gandhi had already endeavoured to give concrete expression by his proposal for an official joint commission of enquiry "to probe the incidents in both the provinces."  

On 2 March Gandhi left East Bengal, bound for Bihar. On the surface, the Mahatma's journey did not call for an explanation. For four months he had been resisting the mounting pressure of his Muslim correspondents whose letters - "angry letters, threatening letters, sometimes even abusive letters" as his secretary remembered - queried why Bihar, rather than Noakhali, was not the scene of his mission. In his reply of 25 January to one such questioner - the President of the Monghyr (Bihar) District Muslim League - Gandhi had himself admitted that "the atrocities committed ... in Bihar ... were in magnitude much greater than in Noakhali." And, during February, the Mahatma himself had initiated measures which prepared the ground for a move from Noakhali to Bihar. On 8 February Gandhi had instructed one of his

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170 See Chapter Four, n. 117 above; also, see n. 119 and n. 120 of the same chapter.


I.N.A. "colonels", Niranjan Singh Gill, to proceed to Bihar, asking him to "prepare a fairly exhaustive report"\textsuperscript{173} on the communal situation there. Suhrawardy had assisted the project, providing Gill with introductory letters to leading figures of the Bihar Muslim League. For Suhrawardy, the sooner the Gandhian investigation into Indian communal problems moved away from his province the better: uncovering in Bengal the more unpleasant aspects of Indian social divisions did not serve his political interests. For his part, Gandhi had, in any case, needed to separate Gill from his other I.N.A. "colonel," Jiwan Singh: the two men had "not hit it off," as Gandhi wrote to Nehru, the Mahatma adding that the "I.N.A. seems to have split up."\textsuperscript{174} By 24 February, with Gill's account at hand, Gandhi wrote to Nehru that the finding "somewhat reflects upon the Sinha Ministry."\textsuperscript{175} On 28 February Gandhi was handed a letter sent by Dr. Syed Mahmud, a Muslim Congressman and Member for Development in the Bihar Government, requesting the Mahatma to come to Bihar. Mahmud's letter indicated - as Gandhi had feared all along - that Congressmen had indeed been responsible, at least in some cases, for the atrocities visited upon the Muslims of Bihar.\textsuperscript{176} At a prayer meeting that evening, Gandhi declared his intention to act on Dr. Mahmud's request. Gandhi's address was reported in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on 2 March.

Dr. Mahmud had written to him ... [informing him] that all was not as rosy as it should be and that his presence in Bihar would ease the situation .... He could not resist Dr. Mahmud's letter ....

\textsuperscript{173}Gandhi to Gill, 8 February 1947; ibid., p.446.
\textsuperscript{174}Gandhi to Nehru, 24 February 1947; ibid., Vol. 87, p.13.
\textsuperscript{175}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176}For an account of Syed Mahmud's message to Gandhi, see Fyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.615.
Gandhi ... said that he had decided to go to Bihar ... to effect a change of mentality among the Hindus of Bihar.177

Gandhi arrived in Patna on 5 March. Rajendra Prasad, Srikrishna Sinha and Jai Prakash Narayan—representing respectively the Congress High Command, the Bihar Congress Ministry and the Congress Socialist viewpoint—were on hand to greet the Mahatma. For several days Gandhi was engaged in interviews with these three and other political leaders of Bihar. In well-drilled Gandhian style, Prasad told Gandhi that "genuine repentance was lacking"178 on the part of the Hindu community at large and that, more alarmingly, as Gandhi repeated at a prayer meeting, the theory was abroad that "the Bihar riots had arrested the crimes in Noakhali, otherwise Hindu's everywhere would have suffered a similar fate."179 Face to face with the Mahatma at last, Sinha blamed the British for the outbreaks, the Chief Minister holding that the "Chief Secretary and the Inspector-General of Police, both Englishmen, had let them down," that, more generally, "British officers were having their revenge for [the Quit India disturbances of] 1942."180 For his part, Jai Prakash Narayan—certainly no lover of the Raj—provided Gandhi with an account of the riots that was probably much closer to the truth, Pyarelal recollecting that the Socialist leader's evidence "was highly damaging to the Government and the Congress."181 Perhaps the most credible indictment of Sinha's Government was provided on

177Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 28 February 1947; Amrita Bazar Patrika, 2 March 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 87, p.29.
179Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 5 March 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 87, p.45.
180Gandhi's Discussion with Bihar Provincial Congress Committee Members, 9 March 1947; ibid., pp.59-60.
7 March by a delegation of local nationalist Muslims, the ranks of whom in Bihar were drawn in the main from the Momin community, long a source of support for Congress. During the riots, the Momin - low in the social scale - had suffered at least as much as any other Muslim group. In their submissions to the Mahatma, as Pyarelal remembered, the Momin delegation "alleged that many people high up in the Congress had taken part in the riots."

Sufficient evidence had been laid before the Mahatma to convince him all was not well with Congress in Bihar. But Gandhi did not respond by endeavouring to cleanse the Augean Stables of Sinha's Ministry. Gandhi was seeking a mass demonstration of reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims in Bihar, with a view to the beneficial effect such a demonstration might well have on communal relations in Bengal. Evidence of mass Hindu-Muslim reconciliation in Bengal was still the Mahatma's objective, evidence which would refute the claims of Muslim separatist leaders at the Centre. Beginning on 12 March, Gandhi set out daily, visiting the affected areas around Patna, preaching his message of the need for Hindu atonement and urging communal reconciliation.

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On 22 March Mountbatten arrived in New Delhi. The Viceroy and the Viceroy-designate were well met, Wavell having endeavoured to spike the guns of party controversy over the termination of his Viceroyalty, and, at a more personal level, having assured the

182 Ibid.
King that "since the Government have thought it advisable to make a change, they could certainly not have made a better choice." The following day the last viceregal guardian of the spirit of Empire departed from New Delhi: Wavell's replacement was cast in the Little England political mould. On 24 March Mountbatten was sworn into office, the thirty-fourth and last of the British Governors-General of India.

With the change of Viceroy, the Indianization of Indian politics - a process Gandhi had begun with his overhaul of Congress in 1920 - finally extended into the Viceregal Lodge. For Mountbatten had a simple approach to the problem of bringing about Indian constitutional progress: first discovering, then proposing to H.M.G. to put into effect, the preferred policy of his Ministers - in fact, the preferred policy of the Congress establishment as communicated to him by the leading Member of the dominant faction of the Coalition Executive, Nehru. Mountbatten's line of approach was a promising basis for achieving for the new Viceroy a close personal relationship with Nehru, indeed, for setting a new tone to British-Congress relations. This consideration might well have weighed heavily upon important political elements within H.M.G. when the decision was made to change Viceroy. In any event, on 4 March, Cripps - long an ally of the Congress leaders - wrote to Patel, assuring the Sardar of the pending boost to the Congress position.

I am sure you will like Mountbatten enormously as I do and respect him. He is very advanced in his views as you will find and you will like him too.  

184Wavell to King George VI, 24 February 1947; ibid., p.811.  
Back to the Centre

Having declared at the Viceroy's swearing-in ceremony on 24 March that to the problem of transferring power "a solution must be reached within the next few months," 186 Mountbatten devoted the early weeks of his Viceroyalty to eliciting the views of the political leaders of India. Gandhi was included amongst the Viceroy's selection of leaders, Mountbatten having written to the Mahatma on 22 March inviting him to an interview if he could free himself from his commitments in Bihar. On 26 March Gandhi replied, accepting the Viceroy's "kind call." 187

It had been six months since Gandhi had last received a summons (on 26 September 1946 188) from the Viceregal Lodge: a long time to have been cut off from one of his main sources of political power - the British perception of him as the most important leader within the nationalist movement with whom they could have dealings - and this was during a time of momentous changes in Indian political arrangements. For the first time in over a quarter of a century, from Lord Reading's assumption of office in 1921, it was from a position in a queue of Indian leaders that Gandhi had to make his approach to the new Viceroy. Nor was Gandhi in the front of the queue, not even in British perceptions: King George VI had bidden fair fortune to his cousin's mission to India by writing to Mountbatten that he would "follow your dealings with N[ehru] and J[innah] with the greatest

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188 See Chapter Four, n. 9 above, along with the preceding passage of the paragraph of which it is part.
of interest."\textsuperscript{189} Of course, His Majesty had been the recipient of rather unfavourable commentary by Wavell – particularly during the last year of his viceroyalty – on the role of the Mahatma in Indian politics: that "old snake," that "inveterate enemy of the British, old man Gandhi."\textsuperscript{190}

Gandhi arrived in Delhi on the early morning of 31 March. The Mahatma was aware of the way things were shaping at the all-India level. As Azad recalled, upon his arrival Gandhi addressed the Maulana:

\begin{quote}
Partition has now become a threat. It seems Vallabhbhai [Patel] and even Jawaharlal [Nehru] have surrendered.\textsuperscript{191}
\end{quote}

But Gandhi had not accepted the need to write the Muslim separatists into the Indian independence script – at least, not at that stage. During early April, Gandhi conducted his last initiative on the all-India political stage aimed at preserving the unity of the subcontinent. In his attempt to prevent partition, Gandhi endeavoured to persuade Mountbatten and the Congress establishment that the Muslim League should be invited to form a Government for a united India.

During the evening of 31 March, Gandhi met with Mountbatten for the first time. Four further interviews between the two men took place each day from 1 to 4 April. Gandhi used the sequence of meetings to bring forward his plan that Jinnah be invited to form an all-India Interim Government of his own selection – this being, of course, the same plan the Mahatma had recommended to the Cabinet Mission (on 3 April 1946) one year before, though even on

\begin{footnotes}
\item[190] Wavell to King George VI, 24 February 1947; ibid., p.802.
\item[191] Azad, op. cit., p.186.
\end{footnotes}
that occasion Wavell had recorded "I had heard this idea put forward before."\textsuperscript{192} Gandhi first broached the proposal to Mountbatten (perhaps appropriately) on 1 April. Informing an astonished Viceroy that "he did not mind Jinnah or the Muslim League turning the whole of India into Pakistan,"\textsuperscript{193} Gandhi outlined the conditions under which the proposed "Jinnah Government" would operate.

[H]e was now prepared under Mountbatten's umpireship ... to invite Jinnah to form a Government ... and to present his Pakistan plan for acceptance even before the transfer of power. The Congress would give its whole-hearted support .... [T]he Muslim League ... would have no further excuse for continuing the movements of organised lawlessness which it had launched in some of the Provinces. These must be called off. Further ... if the League did not accept the offer, the same offer ... should be made to the Congress. The old policy of trying to please both parties must be given up.\textsuperscript{194}

The plan accorded with the normative rationale of Gandhian theory: if Pakistan was an "untruth," the flaws in Jinnah's political ideas would become apparent when - once in power - he tried to put them into effect.

The Congress leaders took suitable action to ensure that the new Viceroy would not be likely to attempt to act on Gandhi's advice: Mountbatten was a political gift from H.M.G. to the Congress establishment - a political gift of great value - and, as such, was to be jealously guarded. On 1 April, when provided by the Viceroy with an account of what the Mahatma had proposed, Nehru was most dismissive, recalling that the Cabinet Mission had rejected the idea as "quite impracticable," and holding that - in

\textsuperscript{192}\textit{M.J.A}, 3 April 1946, p.236.
\textsuperscript{193}Gandhi's Interview with Mountbatten, 1 April 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.78.
\textsuperscript{194}Ibid.
view of the League's subsequent adoption of the policy of Direct Action - Gandhi's plan was "even less realistic now than a year ago."\(^{195}\) But the Pandit was "not surprised"\(^{196}\) at Gandhi's line, providing for the Viceroy's benefit an explanation for the Mahatma's misjudgment.

[Nehru] said he was anxious for Mr. Gandhi to stay a few days longer in Delhi, as he had been away for four months and was rapidly getting out of touch with events at the Centre.\(^{197}\)

Word soon got around that, given the enhanced power of the Congress establishment in determining which items would be brought on to the political agenda at the Centre, Gandhi's proposal for a "Jinnah Government" was a non-starter. At the Viceroy's staff meeting on 5 April, the heavyweights amongst the team of top-ranking experts whom had accompanied Mountbatten to India - especially General (Pug) Ismay and Sir Eric Mieville - dismissed Gandhi's scheme: the Mahatma's plan was described as "an old kite flown without disguise,"\(^{198}\) as Alan Campbell-Johnson, the Viceroy's Press Attaché, recorded. Of course, in deciding on the political feasibility of Gandhi's scheme, there was no need to seek Patel's view: in Indian political circles "[t]he Sardar's opposition to any such plan was well known."\(^{199}\)

In his attempts to guide the new Viceroy towards adopting his scheme, Gandhi's more general advice to Mountbatten - as to what, in the Gandhian view, was the appropriate British role in India - probably damaged the Mahatma's prospects of success. Mountbatten

\(^{195}\) Record of Interview between Mountbatten and Nehru, 1 April 1947; T.P., Vol. X, p.70.
\(^{196}\) Ibid.
\(^{197}\) Ibid.
\(^{198}\) Record of Mountbatten's Staff Meeting, 5 April 1947; Alan Campbell-Johnson, Mission with Mountbatten, Bombay, Jaico, 1951, p.60.
wanted a transfer of power with a minimum of disorder. Gandhi's advice on the wider issues was scarcely likely to assist in achieving rapport between the two men. Mountbatten received his initiation into the non-violent mystery of the Gandhian perception of the options available to the British during his interview with Gandhi on 1 April. Campbell-Johnson recorded at the time:

[Gandi] told Mountbatten that he had ... to be firm and face the consequences of the sins of his predecessors. The British system of 'Divide and Rule' had created a situation in which the only alternatives were a continuation of British rule ... or an Indian blood-bath. The blood-bath must be faced and accepted.200

Though employing Campbell-Johnson's account as a source, Pyarelal preferred to paraphrase Gandhi's advice to Mountbatten a little differently, using terminology a little less raw, while retaining by implication the meaning of the Mahatma's response.

Gandhiji told the Viceroy ... to accept the logic of the 'Quit India' demand and retire unconditionally leaving India to her fate. The role of peace-maker in the ... [Indian communal situation] was not for [the British].201

Even while the sequence of discussions with the Viceroy was still in progress Gandhi, to his visible distress, was forced to be witness to the British - or at least the Raj's police - acting the part of peace-maker at the Mahatma's own prayer meetings. It had long been Gandhi's practice to have readings from Muslim and Parsi - as well as Hindu - sacred texts during his public devotions. In Delhi, members or supporters of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (R.S.S.) - a militant Hindu organization - adopted the ploy of loudly objecting to readings from the Koran. One young man used this tactic to disrupt Gandhi's prayer meeting

200Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 1 April 1947, p.57.
201Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.79.
on 1 April,\textsuperscript{202} two others did likewise the following day,\textsuperscript{203} and no fewer than thirty protesters created disorder at the prayer meeting on 3 April.\textsuperscript{204} On this last occasion the police intervened to restore order, Gandhi retiring from the dias with the prayers unsaid.

On 4 April, the gathering momentum within Congress for a solution to the constitutional impasse as based on partition manifested itself. The Hindu members of the Central Legislature from Bengal submitted a statement to the Viceroy calling for a partition of Bengal.\textsuperscript{205} In tandem to this initiative by their party colleagues at the Centre, the Executive Committee of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution on the same day, holding that if H.M.G.

contemplate handing over its power to the existing [Muslim League] Government of Bengal ... such portions of Bengal as are desirous of remaining within the Union of India should be ... formed into a separate Province.\textsuperscript{206}

Against the background of a developing consensus within Congress for partition, during the second week of April Gandhi took his plan for a "Jinnah Government" to some of the key members of the Congress Working Committee - notably Azad, Nehru, Kripalani, Prasad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan - but steered clear of Patel. By the evening of 10 April, it was clear what was the Congress establishment's collegiate position on the subject. Pyarelal learnt how the Mahatma had fared (Pyarelal and the main

\textsuperscript{202}See Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 1 April 1947; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 87, pp.183-8.
\textsuperscript{203}See Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 2 April 1947; \textit{ibid.}, pp.189-90.
\textsuperscript{204}See Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 3 April 1947; \textit{ibid.}, pp.194-8.
\textsuperscript{206}Resolution of Executive Committee of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, 4 April 1947; \textit{ibid.}, p.84.
body of the Gandhian workers having remained behind in Noakhali in their assigned villages):

[The] weather was gruelling, tempers ran high, there were heated discussions, confused counsels, frayed nerves. Gandhi and ... [Abdul Ghaffar] Khan were strongly opposed to any partition under the British aegis. To Gandhi's mind, for the Congress to ask for partition of the Punjab and Bengal by the British sounded like a counsel of despair. He was opposed to the whole logic of partition .... But he could not convince them .... He and his colleagues had come to the parting of ways.  

On 11 April Gandhi wrote to Mountbatten reporting his failure to convince the Congress leaders to adopt his proposal for a "Jinnah Government," indeed that he had "failed to carry any of them with me except ... [Abdul Ghaffar] Khan." Support for Gandhi's proposal by Abdul Ghaffar Khan was of little import. With the outbreak of communal violence in the adjacent Punjab in early March, popular sentiment in North-West Frontier Province had begun to run increasingly strongly in favour of Muslim separatism. By late March, the authority of the North-West Frontier Province's Congress Ministry - headed by Abdul Ghaffar Khan's half-brother - had begun to crumble. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi," had found that there was no longer a role for him at Peshawar. Against this background, during March he had travelled to Patna to join Gandhi in Bihar. The Frontier Congress leaders were probably hoping that if the Bihari Hindus responded positively to the Mahatma's presence and stopped the killing of Bihari Muslims, the credit for saving their co-religionists in Bihar would be shared by their own "Gandhi", to rub off on them. But instead, the situation had continued to

207pyarealal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.84.
deteriorate on the Frontier, with the Congress Government resorting increasingly to the use of troops against hostile demonstrations in Peshawar. On 22 March Sir Olaf Caroe, the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, wrote to Mountbatten predicting the end of Congress rule.

[T]he influence of the North-Western Punjab ... and the [Pathan] tribes ... - all declaiming against Hindu-Sikh domination - is, I think, certain to squeeze Congress out before long, for Congress is not natural here.\textsuperscript{209}

On the night of 12 April Gandhi left Delhi, taking the train to Patna. Earlier that day around noon he had paid a farewell visit to the Viceregal Lodge, advising Mountbatten to proceed on his own authority with the Mahatma's plan for a "Jinnah Government" - if, that is, the Viceroy "ardently believed in it."\textsuperscript{210} Mountbatten declined.

Mountbatten used the occasion of the Mahatma's farewell visit to enlist Gandhi's support for another project. In something of a replay of Wavell's effort of 27 October 1946 to get the party leaders to issue a joint appeal calling for an end to communal strife,\textsuperscript{211} Mountbatten made a similar request of the Mahatma. On the earlier occasion, it will be remembered, Gandhi had refused to be involved on a par with Jinnah. But a direct request from the new Viceroy was apparently more difficult to decline. Gandhi acceded to Mountbatten's request, while setting the stage for Jinnah's likely refusal to participate by holding that "the statement, to have any value, should be signed by Mr. Kripalani on

\textsuperscript{210}Record of Interview between Mountbatten and Gandhi, 12 April 1947; \textit{ibid.}, p.211.
\textsuperscript{211}See Chapter Four, n. 52 above, along with the paragraph of which it is part.
behalf of the Congress as a whole.\textsuperscript{212}

But, on the heels of the failure of his "Jinnah Government" initiative, Gandhi lost the symbolic battle as well. After arriving at Patna on 13 April, Gandhi received a message from Mountbatten. The Viceroy informed a no doubt unsurprised Gandhi that Jinnah had refused to be included on the Joint Appeal if Kripalani was to be involved, and that unless the "statement bears ... [Gandhi's] signature alone Mr. Jinnah will not sign."\textsuperscript{213} In his reply to Mountbatten, Gandhi held to his view that the "President [of the] Congress should also sign", leaving however the final decision on the matter to "you and Panditji."\textsuperscript{214} But Nehru failed to rise to the occasion, preferring to leave the issue entirely for Mountbatten to decide. On 15 April the Viceroy issued the Joint Appeal over the signatures of only Gandhi and Jinnah.

We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India .... We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call upon all the communities of India ... to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder ... [and] to avoid both in speech and writing any words which might be construed as an incitement to such acts.\textsuperscript{215}

The conjunction of interests at the Centre between H.M.G. and Congress, which the arrival of Mountbatten in India had signalled, had in turn permitted a closing of ranks at the personal level between the Viceroy and his Congress Ministers. From mid-April 1947, it had become apparent that the Viceroy and the Congress

\textsuperscript{212}Record of Interview between Mountbatten and Gandhi, 12 April 1947; \textit{T.E.}, Vol. X, p.212.
\textsuperscript{213}Mountbatten to Gandhi, 13 April 1947; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 87, p. 277, n. 1.
\textsuperscript{214}Gandhi to Mountbatten, 14 April 1947; \textit{ibid.}, p. 277.
\textsuperscript{215}Joint Gandhi-Jinnah Appeal, 15 April 1947; \textit{ibid.}, p. 261.
establishment would never again require the Mahatma's services as their go-between. From mid-April 1947 to independence—courtesy meetings aside—Gandhi's dealings with the Viceroy, in effect, would be managed by the Congress Ministers. There was now no avenue whereby the Mahatma could prevent Muslim separatism from informing Indian independence—at least, not at the Centre, not in opposition to the intentions of the Congress establishment. In Gandhi's desire to discover a way by which to rout the Muslim separatists from the all-India political stage, there was by mid-April only the rather forlorn hope of somehow subverting the Muslim separatist position in Bengal by action at the mass political level.

By mid-April 1947, in view of the likely failure of any further efforts by Gandhi to reverse the movement towards communal polarization in Bengal, it was clear that, in any independence scheme, the Muslim separatists at the all-India level would have to be dealt with in their own communal separatist terms. Of course, it was nevertheless still open to Gandhi to decide on which form of expression for Muslim separatism to support: a power-sharing scheme within an all-India polity as desired by Jinnah—such a scheme still holding pride of place on the constitutional political agenda in the form of the Cabinet Mission's Plan—or the Congress establishment's preferred way of dealing with the Muslim League—indeed, in a way with partition.

* * *

Gandhi gave an early indication—so to speak—as to which side of the field he would prefer to play on at the Centre should
his efforts at the mass level to subvert Muslim separatist claims result in final failure. On 13 April, on the train to Patna, Gandhi wrote to Patel. In his letter to the Sardar, the Mahatma referred to the "frequent differences between your approach and mine" in the light of which he asked of Patel "would it be advisable for me to meet the Viceroy even as an individual?"\textsuperscript{216} Apparently, the Congress establishment's intended political guardianship of Mountbatten was not going to meet with Gandhian resistance. Indeed, in receipt of Gandhi's letter, it would have been obvious to Patel that the Mahatma's opposition to the Congress establishment's intended course of action had significantly softened.

It is quite possible that what you can see while administering the affairs of millions may not be realized by me. If I were in the place of you all, I would perhaps say and do exactly what you are saying and doing.\textsuperscript{217}

In seeking to bring to pass the partition of India, the Congress leaders no doubt expected problems to arise ahead. But at least, Patel would have understood, the problems were unlikely to be Gandhian problems.

Gandhi spent the second half of April in and around Patna, working anew on the communal problems of Bihar — "that land of devastated villages and ruptured human relationships,"\textsuperscript{218} as Pyarelal described the province. While Gandhi was in Bihar, Mountbatten, having completed the initial phase of enquiry and elucidation of the opinions of the political leaders of India, was planning how best to proceed with the transfer of power. The

\textsuperscript{216}Gandhi to Patel, 13 April 1947; ibid., p. 271.
\textsuperscript{217}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{218}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 85.
Viceroy's British staff had come up with two main options: "Plan Union", which envisaged putting into effect the Cabinet Mission's scheme for an Indian Union with Grouping of provinces; and "Plan Balkan", which contemplated, as a fall-back position, the devolution of power to the provinces, leaving to the provincial Governments the decision whether to subsequently combine their sovereign provinces in an Indian federal state or to set up two or more states. But even at this early stage, Mountbatten's team had already adopted measures brought forward by Indian political elements — most notably the idea being promoted by the Congress leaders that the partition of the Punjab and Bengal should precede the transfer of power. However, the Congress establishment were not the sole Indian political faction able to convince the Viceroy's men to adopt measures which would determine to their advantage the shape of things to come: the Muslim League leaders were also successful in this respect. For the Viceroy's team decided also to hold a plebiscite in the Muslim majority Sylhet district of Assam and proposed to schedule new elections in the North-West Frontier Province. Evidently, as a result of pressure from both sides of the Indian political arena, self-determination of Jinnah's hypothesized "two nations" was fast becoming the guiding principle shaping the emerging independence formula.

During late April, the Congress establishment provided Mountbatten's men with help to expedite their progress towards the formulation of an independence scheme based on partition. With the Congress leaders now wanting the partition of the Punjab and Bengal as quickly as possible — followed by an early independence — in their view, the sooner "Plan Union" and "Plan Balkan" were removed from consideration the better. In this context, a third
Plan rose into view to claim the attention of the Viceroy's staff, a Plan which Ismay preferred to identify - probably with a knowing glance at the Home Ministry - as the "V.P. Menon Plan".219

Since the formation of the Interim Government in September 1946, the Reforms Commissioner had developed a close relationship with the new Home Minister. This development had not escaped Wavell's notice, the Viceroy recording in his diary as early as 28 November 1946 that "Menon ... has for some time past been too much the mouthpiece of ... Patel."220 By 21 January Wavell was privately holding that "Menon ... is now very much in Patel's pocket".221 So it was not surprising, perhaps, that the "V.P. Menon Plan" had Patel's political thumb - print on it. The Plan envisaged a British partition of India and an early transfer of power under "the existing [1935] Constitution",222 the two transitional successor-state Dominions subsequently being separately responsible for drawing up their respective constitutions in their respective Constituent Assemblies. The essential novelty of the Plan was that it removed the Muslim

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221Ibid., 21 January 1947, p. 412. Menon's close relationship with Patel, as observed and described by Wavell, reflected a wider development attendant on the transfer of power: the politicization of the Civil Service as an arm of the governing party. N.B. Bonarjee of the Indian Civil Service, Chief Secretary under the Congress Ministry in the United Provinces during 1947, was - like Menon - required to adjust to the change of administrative ethic, a change which, in Bonarjee's words, called for "a politically aligned Civil Service ... [which] would be not so much the instrument of the Government as a cog in the machinery of the Congress Party organization." Bonarjee holds that the difference between British and Indian cultural values determined the change. He writes: "No courtier himself, the Englishman had little admiration for the species, and the 'yes-man' was not given [under British rule] the high status later accorded him by independent India's leading politicians .... Party faction and party politics in every sphere are the breath of life in independent India." See N.B. Bonarjee, Under Two Masters, London, Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. (in order as cited) 239, 101-112.
League from being a party to Indian independence, by reserving constitution-making for the post-independence era. Menon warned—not unreasonably, given Indian politicians usual scriptural proclivities—that such activity would be likely anyway to take "not less than 4 or 5 years", and recommended that this should best take place under circumstances of "leisure and sobriety".\textsuperscript{223} The Plan, moreover, was sugar—coated for British acceptance: by steering clear of constitutional change the Raj would avoid "very great administrative dislocation", and—even more alluring—the rapid transfer of power would mean that, though effecting the partition, H.M.G. would not be "responsible for the ultimate outcome".\textsuperscript{224} Also in this accommodationist vein, the Plan carried no ideological baggage—there being no mention of a Gandhian "change of heart" or, for that matter, a Nehruvian "independent Sovereign Republic" and a "tryst with destiny": that could come later. It was a Plan to effect Britain's release from India rather than to induce atonement amongst the British for their Imperial rule. It was a Plan likely to be given fast passage in the British Government's corridors of power.

During the last week of April, with V.P. Menon having introduced the outline of the Congress establishment's preferred independence scheme, the gist of the Plan increasingly informed the proposals put forward at the Viceroy's staff meetings. With the prospect that an official independence-with-partition scheme would soon be made public, the Congress leaders had to prepare themselves for the moment when they would have to publicly approve

\textsuperscript{223}Ibid., p. 440. In the upshot, Indian politicians were to have sufficient leisure eventually to establish their republic on the basis of the reputedly lengthiest constitutional document of the modern age. 
\textsuperscript{224}Ibid., pp. 438-9.
such a scheme. The Congress leaders were in a position to calculate the likely timing of the approaching event: both Nehru and Jinnah were officially kept abreast of most of what was being decided on in the Viceroy's staff meetings.\textsuperscript{225} As the moment loomed, the Congress High Command demonstrated considerable anxiety for the supreme living symbol of their legitimacy as spokesmen for the Indian nationalist movement to be on display: they decided they wanted the Mahatma in their midst. As early as 23 April, Nehru sent a telegram to Gandhi, alerting him to the approaching moment of decision, and requesting the Mahatma's presence for the anticipated formal Working Committee meeting and the crucial statement supporting partition which would need to be broadcast in its wake.

The first week of May is likely to see the formulation of Mountbatten's scheme for the future .... His intention is to have a rough framework ready by then - to discuss ... and then finalise ... after reference to the British Government .... [A]ll of us would like you to be near us for advice and guidance. I hope ... that you will be able to come.\textsuperscript{226}

The following day Gandhi wrote to Patel affirming that he would return to Delhi in early May.\textsuperscript{227}

Gandhi arrived back in Delhi on 1 May. The Congress leaders had the stage set and the supporting cast assembled for the critical moment when they would make official the Congress acceptance of the principle of partition. In response to an urgent request from Nehru - the Pandit "earnestly pressing" for

\textsuperscript{225}For an indication of the extent to which Nehru and Jinnah were cognizant of Mountbatten's draft plan for a partition scheme for transferring power, even before Ismay and Abell took it to London on 2 May for the Cabinet India Committee's consideration, see Mieville to Mountbatten, 30 April 1947 (two documents); ibid., pp. 487-9.

\textsuperscript{226}Nehru to Gandhi, 23 April 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{227}See Gandhi to Patel, 24 April 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 87, pp. 353-4.
his attendance, as the Mahatma explained to his granddaughter\textsuperscript{228}\textsuperscript{229}\textsuperscript{230} Gandhi was present that afternoon at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhi did not significantly contribute to the debate, Pyarelal holding that the "divergence between his point of view and that of the rest of the Committee, he felt, was so great that his participation ... could not serve any useful purpose". The Mahatma nevertheless remained at the meeting for its duration. With Gandhi included in their collegiate line up, providing the occasion with the legitimacy of his presence, the Congress leaders moved openly to put partition at the top of the all-India political agenda. After the meeting Nehru wrote to Mountbatten, providing the Viceroy with the green light from Congress for H.M.G. to proceed with the partition of India.

\begin{quote}
[O]ur Committee are prepared to accept the principle of partition based on self - determination as applied to definitely ascertained areas. This involves the partition of Bengal and Punjab .... We are passionately attached to the idea of a United India, but we have accepted the partition of India in order to avoid conflict and compulsion .... Even before and apart from such partition, recent events have made an administrative division of both Bengal and Punjab an obvious and urgent necessity.
\end{quote}

On 4 May Gandhi had an interview with Mountbatten. The Viceroy outlined the partition scheme his staff had prepared - a draft of which Ismay had on the previous day taken to London for the British Government's consideration - emphasizing to the Mahatma its democratic aspects: that the Members of the Legislative Assemblies of the Punjab and Bengal - sitting separately in their respective groups of Muslim majority districts

\textsuperscript{228}Gandhi's Talk with Manu, 1 May 1947; ibid., p. 396.
\textsuperscript{229}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 158.
and other districts - would decide whether to proceed with 
partition, Gandhi was not impressed. He protested that "he did not 
agree that ... [the British] were leaving the people of India a 
free choice since ... [they] were practically imposing partition 
on them".231 Asked for an alternative suggestion as to how to 
proceed, Gandhi once again affirmed his preference for a "Jinnah 
Government" and, failing that, a Congress Government - this time 
on the basis of "immediate Dominion Status" with Mountbatten as 
Governor - General until June 1948, after which he was to "leave 
them to their own devices".232 Mountbatten protested that such a 
scheme would mean civil war, in reply to which Gandhi reminded the 
Viceroy that Jinnah had signed the Joint Appeal of 15 April, 
denouncing the use of force to achieve political ends.233 
Mountbatten brought the interview to an end with a pointed 
rejection of the Mahatma's plan.

I told him Jinnah signed in good faith ... [of] a 
fair decision and ... the Muslims would ... go to 
war if I attempted to betray them in this manner. 
In any case ... H.M.G. would never allow me to 
hand over a colossal minority like the Muslims 
into the power of Congress and I much regretted 
therefore that his plan was not acceptable.234 

Gandhi's interview overlapped with the arrival at the 
Viceregal Lodge of Mountbatten's next visitor: M.A. Jinnah. Not 
since their talks of September 1944 had the two elderly leaders 
met face to face, Mountbatten taking the opportunity to bring them 
together for a while in the same room. Their verbal exchange 
however, far from being fruitful, was scarcely audible. With

231 Record of Interview between Mountbatten and Gandhi, 4 May 1947; ibid., 
p. 611. 
232 Ibid. 
233 See Chapter Four, n. 215 above. 
234 Record of Interview between Mountbatten and Gandhi, 4 May 1947; T.P., 
their respective chairs - large, heavy chairs - set far apart and, as Campbell-Johnson recorded, with the two old men "quite unable to raise their voices sufficiently ... they seemed to be like two old conspirators engaged in long - distance dumbshow".235

Mountbatten persuaded his two guests to arrange to meet in more congenial circumstances. The Viceroy might have thought - and so might have Gandhi and Jinnah - that some movement away from the partition scheme was still possible. Patel might have thought so too: he protested to Gandhi that such a meeting would damage the Congress position by enhancing Jinnah's prestige.236 But Gandhi went ahead, meeting with Jinnah on 6 May at Jinnah's New Delhi home. However, Patel could rest secure: as Campbell-Johnson recorded the outcome, "the meeting ... was clearly abortive".237 It was hardly surprising: unlike their respective political positions as they stood in September 1944, by May 1947 neither Gandhi nor Jinnah held securely the leadership option whereby Congress and the League could have been brought together in a power-sharing arrangement merely on the basis of a Gandhi-Jinnah agreement. By May 1947 the Congress High Command were committed to partition. In the League's case, by May 1947 the forces of Muslim separatism - especially in the Punjab - were so aroused at the mass level that Jinnah's role at the Centre was, to a significant extent, increasingly becoming a ritual function: to articulate the rationale for a sovereign Pakistan for which objective the Muslim communal activists intended to engage in battle with or without Jinnah's sanction. So, the two aged

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235Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 5 May 1947, p. 98.
leaders agreed statement, issued for publication after their meeting, merely affirmed that Gandhi opposed while Jinnah supported "the principle of division," both men promising furthermore to "do our best in our respective spheres" to ensure that their Joint Appeal for communal peace of 15 April was put into effect.\textsuperscript{238} Campbell-Johnson closed his journal entry for the day musing on Gandhi's position as the odd man out - as he appeared to be - on the all-India political stage.

The unresolved question is just how far Gandhi can or will resist the tidal flow of events towards partition.\textsuperscript{239}

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A Sovereign Bengal?

The movement towards partition might have seemed to Campbell-Johnson as having assumed tidal proportions, but one significant part of the Indian body politic had not been submerged - not yet anyway - by the flow. An interesting political development had occurred in Bengal, a development which held out the promise of derailing the seemingly inexorable progress towards partition.

The prospect of the partition of Bengal had, understandably, been received with consternation by Suhrawardy and his Ministers: the industrially advanced Western districts of the province - as well as Calcutta - were predominantly Hindu, and economic links with Assam were an important source of wealth for Bengal. The rural rump of Muslim majority East Bengal, moreover, was isolated from the rest of Muslim majority India - more than a thousand

\textsuperscript{238}Gandhi and Jinnah's Agreed Statement to the Press, 6 May 1947; \textit{C.W.M.G.}, Vol. 37, Appendix, XVI, p. 550. 
\textsuperscript{239}Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 6 May 1947, p. 99.
miles separating it from the Indus Valley where the remainder of the Muslim dominated provinces were grouped.

Suhrawardy's faction of the Bengal Muslim League was not alone in opposing the partition of Bengal. European business interests had a stake in keeping the jute-growing districts of East Bengal and the Calcutta area's jute mills under the same administrative regime. More importantly, the Bengali language and culture were also unifying factors, factors to which Bengal's nationalist Hindus were historically susceptible. So there was promising political material in Bengal for constructing an anti-partitionist front. However, there was one rather awkward aspect to the political balance in Bengal which - at least, for an Indian nationalist - would give a strange flavour to any struggle aimed at fending off the spectre of partition: there was, in Pyarelal's words, "not the slightest chance of the Hindus agreeing to a United Bengal joining Pakistan or the Muslims consenting to its retention in the Indian Union". 240 If a united front was to be formed, aimed at preventing the partition of the province, the message would have to be expressed in terms of independent Bengal: independent of both India and Pakistan.

Gandhi was apparently willing to explore the possibilities. On 7 May he left Delhi bound for Calcutta. Upon his arrival he took up residence at Sodepur, conducting interviews over the next few days with some of the elements of the potential Bengal anti-partitionist front.

Sarat Chandra Bose, in his capacity as President of the All-Bengal Anti-Pakistan Committee, was actively promoting the United

Bengal cause. Bose called on Gandhi at Sodepur on 9 May, returning the following day in the company of Abul Hashem, the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League. In conversation with the Mahatma, Abul Hashem argued the case for a tripartite division of the subcontinent — into India, Pakistan and United Bengal. Gandhi was sceptical of the Leaguer's line of argument, asking Hashem what would prevent Pakistan and a United Bengal from eventually coming together in a "voluntary federation" on the basis of pan-Islamic solidarity — or, for that matter, from a United Bengal entering "into voluntary association with ... India". Abul Hashem volunteered no reply.

Gandhi was obviously suspicious of the motives of at least the Muslims involved in the movement for a sovereign Bengal. Suspicion certainly clouded the atmosphere during the meetings between Gandhi and Suhrawardy on 11 May and again on 12 May. Suhrawardy took the initiative during the discussions, outlining for the Mahatma his scheme for a sovereign Bengal. In contributing to the talks, Gandhi preferred to analyse what he held were the past failings of Suhrawardy's Ministry in dealing with the communal outbreaks in Bengal. Suhrawardy hotly denied his Government's culpability in such matters. However, at the conclusion to their meetings, Gandhi offered Suhrawardy his services.

I recognise the seriousness of the position in Bengal in the matter of the partition. If you are absolutely sincere ... and ... would retain Bengal ... intact by non-violent means I am quite willing to act as your honorary private secretary and live

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241 Gandhi's Interview with Abul Hashem, 10 May 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 87, p. 443.
242 See Gandhi's Interviews with Suhrawardy, 11 and 12 May 1947; ibid., pp. 452-3 and 458-60.
under your roof till Hindus and Muslims begin to live as [the] brothers that they are.\textsuperscript{243}

Gandhi - with a view to his all-India objectives - was still seeking a demonstration of mass Hindu-Muslim reconciliation in Bengal. On 13 May the Mahatma spelt this out during a conversation with Shyamaprasad Mookerjee, the President of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, whose organization had since mid-March been advocating the partition of the province. Mookerjee had heard that the scheme for a sovereign Bengal had been given Gandhi's blessing. It was a scheme which, the Mahasabha leader believed, was being sponsored by British commercial interests. Gandhi advised his visitor to look to the scheme's merits rather than its parentage. In Pyarelal's account of the interview, Gandhi intimated to Mookerjee the merits of Suhrawardy's scheme as the Mahatma himself saw them.

Since recognition of the fundamental unity of the people of Bengal, whether Hindus or Muslims, constituted the basis of Suhrawardy's proposal and since the Bengal Muslims were numerically preponderant in Pakistan, as envisaged by the Muslim League, repudiation of the two-nation theory in action by the Bengal Muslim League ... would leave nothing of the Pakistan plan based on that theory.\textsuperscript{244}

Gandhi was still hoping to rout the Muslim separatists on the all-India political stage, to undermine Jinnah's ostensible "two-nation" rationale for Pakistan. Ironically, at this juncture, Jinnah provided evidence that he was not unwilling that the "two-nation" theory should indeed be qualified - to some extent, anyway. Gandhi, in his analysis of the merits of the "sovereign Bengal" scheme as expressed to Mookerjee, was proposing to do battle with the shadows cast by Jinnah's theoretical posture on

\textsuperscript{243}Gandhi to Suhrawardy, 12/13 May 1947; ibid., p. 460.
\textsuperscript{244}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 184.
the all-India political stage. For Jinnah, the concept of the Indian Muslim nation was no longer merely a convenient theory: at the mass level, the idea had induced sufficient numbers of Indian Muslims — especially in the Punjab — to behave in a manner which threatened to destroy the prospect of preserving the unity of India, the requisite for Jinnah's desired power-sharing arrangement in an all-India polity. So Jinnah endorsed the scheme for a "sovereign Bengal", seizing the opportunity it presented for aborting the Congress project of cutting him out of the action at the all-India Centre by the expulsion from the Indian body politic of some of the more communally disturbed Muslim majority areas. On 26 April Jinnah assured Mountbatten of his support for Suhrawardy's scheme, that he would be "delighted" to see Bengal "united and independent". 245 Jinnah publicly took a stand against partition of the province in a statement published in *Dawn* on 1 May.

> [T]he question of partitioning Bengal and the Punjab is ... a sinister move actuated by spite .... [T]he British Government should not countenance it because the result of that will be, logically, that all other provinces will have to be cut up in a similar way .... The Congress ... have put up the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal and the Sikhs in the Punjab. 246

While the Muslim League leader was supportive of the scheme for a "sovereign Bengal", the British, for their part, might have been open to persuasion. This was especially the case in London, where the influence of the Viceroy's Congress Ministers was less felt. As late as 17 May, in a "Statement of Policy" drafted for the Cabinet India and Burma Committee by the Earl of Listowel, the

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new Secretary of State for India (Pethick-Lawrence, worn out from his duties at the India Office, had resigned on 23 April 1947), the principle of "Provincial option" was affirmed.

There are strong practical arguments for giving the ... option of remaining united and framing its own constitution certainly to Bengal and probably also to the Punjab.\textsuperscript{247}

Congress was the party at the all-India Centre which torpedoed the scheme for a "sovereign Bengal". On 20 May Sarat Chandra Bose and his colleague Kiran Shankar Roy, the Leader of the Opposition in the Bengal Assembly, reached an agreement with Suhrawardy and some other leaders of the Bengal Muslim League on a power-sharing arrangement for an independent Bengal.\textsuperscript{248} Neither party to the agreement was standing on a firm political base; Suhrawardy had failed to gain support for the measure from a large faction of the Bengal Muslim League, while Bose and Roy were not acting officially on behalf of the Bengal Congress. Patel went into action to abort the initiative, pressing Bose in a letter of 22 May to "take a united stand"\textsuperscript{249} with the Congress High Command on the partition issue and using his contacts in the Bengal Congress to stiffen the resolve for the partition of the province. Nehru also threw his weight against the Bose faction, announcing before 27 May that Congress would "agree to Bengal remaining united only if it remains in the Union."\textsuperscript{250} Anxious as he was, at all costs, to remain in concert with his Congress Ministers, Nehru's stand brought Mountbatten down off the fence, the Viceroy closing ranks

\textsuperscript{247}Listowel's Draft Statement of Policy for the Cabinet India and Burma Committee, 17 May 1947; ibid., p. 877.
\textsuperscript{248}For the text of the agreement, see Suhrawardy's Memorandum to Kiran Shankar Roy as reported in Burrows to Mountbatten, 19 May 1947; ibid., pp. 905-6.
\textsuperscript{249}Patel to S.C. Bose, 22 May 1947; \textit{S.P.C.}, Vol. 4, p. 44.
with the Congress establishment on the issue. On 28 May — the Viceroy having returned to London on 18 May to confer with H.M.G. — Mountbatten drew the India and Burma Committee's attention to Nehru's announcement. The Viceroy expressed his fear that "in view of this development, the prospects of saving the unity of Bengal ... had been gravely prejudiced." 251 H.M.G. lost interest in the "sovereign Bengal" project: perhaps the British Cabinet calculated that there was no point in allowing their enfeebled Imperial left hand in the India Office to work against their resolute Little England right hand in New Delhi.

Gandhi also lost interest in the scheme to preserve the unity of Bengal. He had returned to Patna and been delayed there as a result of Manu Gandhi being committed to hospital with appendicitis. (With the Mahatma's favourite granddaughter in dire need of modern surgical treatment, naturopathy was brushed aside. 252) On 23 May Sarat Chandra Bose wrote to Gandhi in Bihar, reporting the terms of the power-sharing arrangement agreed by Suhrawardy for the proposed independent Bengal. In his reply of 24 May, Gandhi objected to the provision whereby decisions would be made in the proposed coalition by "mere majority" vote. 253 In a passage reminiscent of Jinnah's "Pakistan" intentions for the Centre, Gandhi insisted of Bose that in Bengal "[e]very act of Government must carry with it the co-operation of at least two thirds of the Hindu members in the executive and the legislature". 254 Gandhi and Jinnah's similarity of instinct when

251 Cabinet India and Burma Committee Minute 2, 28 May 1947; ibid., p. 1014.
252 For Gandhi's subsequent lament over this "matter of shame," see Gandhi to Dinshah Mehta, 16 May 1947; C.W.M.G., Vol. 87, pp. 477-8.
253 Gandhi to S.C. Bose, 24 May 1947; ibid., p. 526.
254 Ibid.
faced with a similar political need - to protect the interests of their respective confessional community from a minority standpoint in a power-sharing arrangement - was striking. Gandhi declined to give his blessing to the agreement, proposing instead "to discuss the draft with the Working Committee."\textsuperscript{255} On his return to Delhi on 25 May, the Mahatma's consultation with the Congress leadership apparently convinced him that at the Centre there was no longer any political mileage to be obtained form the "sovereign Bengal" scheme. After meeting with Bose on 6 June - the Bengali having come to Delhi to press his case - Gandhi wrote down some advice for the principal Congress exponent of the scheme for perpetuating the unity of Bengal. In the typical Gandhian style when pronouncing upon a political issue which had been decided, the Mahatma's political obituary notice to Bose registering the passing of any realistic hope for effecting a "sovereign Bengal" was combined with incidental issues of moral concern.

I have ... discussed the scheme ... with Pandit Nehru and the Sardar. Both of them are dead against the proposal .... They feel also that money is being lavishly expended in order to secure Scheduled Caste votes .... [T]he unity purchased by corrupt practices would be worse than a frank partition .... I see also that there is no prospect of [a] transfer of power outside the two parts of India ..... [Y]ou should give up the struggle for [the] unity of Bengal and cease to disturb the atmosphere that has been created for the partition of Bengal.\textsuperscript{256}

The "sovereign Bengal" episode demonstrated the extent to which Gandhi and the Congress establishment were in accord over the decision of the Congress leaders to promote an independence scheme based on partition. Gandhi had been reluctant during March

\textsuperscript{255}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{256}Gandhi to S.C. Bose, 8 June 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 187-8.
and April 1947 to accept the Congress High Command's decision to press for partition, the Mahatma - unlike the Congress Ministers - being willing to struggle a lot longer in an attempt to overcome the Muslim separatists - irrespective of the damage likely to be inflicted to the Indian political and social structure or of a possible delay in achieving independence. The Mahatma had greater will-power and greater patience than most - if not all - of the Congress leaders. But once Congress had committed itself to press for an early independence - which, in the current political conditions, would necessarily be informed by Muslim separatism - Gandhi was in accord with the Congress establishment in regard to the form in which Muslim separatism should be expressed. If the only choice was between either a power-sharing arrangement between Congress and the League in an all-India polity or the partition of India into two sovereign states, Gandhi's preference was for partition. Since the Second Simla Conference of early May 1946, this preference had all along informed Gandhi's - and the Congress establishment's - opposition to the Cabinet Mission's efforts to achieve a Scheme A type of all-India power-sharing settlement: in particular, the Congress leaders' determination to ensure that Grouping was never put into effect. In his letter to Cripps of 8 May 1946, objecting to the principle of parity between Hindus and Muslims at the Centre, Gandhi had spelt out quite openly his preference: that "parity ... is really worse than Pakistan". Furthermore, as his letters to Bose of 24 May and 8 June 1947 indicated, Gandhi preferred the partition of Bengal rather than Bose's proposed power-sharing scheme for the province.

257 See Chapter Three, n. 90 above; also, see n. 86 of same chapter.
258 See Chapter Four, n. 254 and n. 256 above.
Moreover, in the earlier of the two letters to Bose, Gandhi's insistence that "two thirds of the Hindu members in [the proposed sovereign Bengal's] ... executive and ... legislature" should exercise veto power, probably illustrated the essentially Hindu nationalist nature of the Mahatma's opposition to power-sharing schemes.

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Towards Independence with Partition

On 30 May Mountbatten arrived back in New Delhi, H.M.G. having authorized him to proceed along the lines of the "V.P. Menon Plan". Down in the Bhangi Colony, Gandhi had been using his prayer meetings to preach against the "vivisection of the motherland," and in terms "disquietingly militant" (so the Times of India reported on the day of the Viceroy's return to the capital). But the Congress leaders did not appear to be too concerned at this development: in any event, they took steps to reassure the Viceroy that such was the state of affairs. At the Viceroy's staff meeting on 2 June, V.P. Menon assured the gathering that "it was Sardar Patel's opinion that not too much account should be taken of the recent utterances of Mr Gandhi in favour of a united India."

On 2 June, the Viceroy took the Partition Plan to the Indian parties. Mountbatten secured the ready agreement of the Congress leaders - Nehru, Patel and Kripalani - and, while Jinnah proved "rather more difficult," as the Viceroy reported to Listowel, the

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260Viceroy's Staff Meeting Minute, 2 June 1947; ibid., pp. 3-4.
Muslim League leaders - Jinnah, Liaquat and Nishtar - joined their Congress opponents in promising "to do their utmost to make it work in a practical and peaceful spirit." 261

Also on 2 June, Gandhi was summoned to the Viceregal Lodge for an interview. Campbell-Johnson recorded that the Viceroy approached the meeting "with considerable trepidation" 262 - no doubt in view of the Mahatma's recent "disquietingly militant" public utterances "in favour of a united India." Mountbatten need not have worried: the Mahatma's harangues against "vivisection" were reserved for prayer meetings, not for private conversations with the Viceroy or - for that matter - for confidential deliberations with the Congress leaders. Indeed, with Mountbatten and Gandhi together alone, very little was said at all: the Mahatma was observing his day of silence. Gandhi used the occasion to communicate Abdul Ghaffar Khan's request for the removal from office of the Governor of North-West Frontier Province - the Mahatma, for his own part, adding "if it can be done decorously". 263

By the evening of 2 June, in the round of meetings conducted by the Viceroy, no Indian leader had raised any serious objection to the Partition Plan. However, Jinnah attended the Viceroy again the same day around the hour of midnight. At this late hour, Mountbatten was at last up against the one Indian leader at the Centre - the real odd man out - who was willing to make a stand against partition. For - without his Muslim League colleagues present - Jinnah attempted to stall the movement towards

261 Mountbatten to Listowel, 2 June 1947; ibid., p. 52.
partition, insisting that only the Muslim League Council could make a decision on the Viceroy's Partition Plan. But Jinnah's demand failed to impress the Viceroy: given the almost furtive nature of the League President's approach, Mountbatten sensed the weakness of Jinnah's political position. The Viceroy railroaded the League leader, Mountbatten declaring that he himself would speak for the League in open conference with the other party leaders, challenging Jinnah either to raise an objection in open debate or to nod in acquiescence. Jinnah acquiesced.\footnote{For an account of the midnight interview between Mountbatten and Jinnah and its sequel the following day, see Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 3 June 1947, pp. 119-20.}

The next day, the Partition Plan for the independence of India - "a transfer of power this year on a Dominion status basis to one or two successor authorities"\footnote{Statement on Indian Policy, 3 June 1947; \textit{T.P.}, Vol. XI, p. 93.} - was announced over All-India Radio. On cue, Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh followed up the announcement with supportive messages for their respective followers.\footnote{For an account of Nehru's, Jinnah's and Baldev Singh's broadcast messages, see Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 3 June 1947, pp. 124-5.}

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The Indian party leaders' decision to support the Partition Plan required ratification, respectively by the All-India Muslim League Council and the All-India Congress Committee. With this purpose in view, Jinnah summoned the Muslim League Council to meet in session on 9 June at the Imperial Hotel, New Delhi. Having officially rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan at their previous meeting (in late July 1946), the Council could scarcely but
otherwise agree with H.M.G.'s latest Plan, resolving that the "only course open is the partition of India." The Council formally announced its acceptance of the "fundamental principles of the Plan" - four hundred Council members voting in favour, eight voting against.

Jinnah had very little to contribute to the debate. Queried from the floor as to the fate of the Muslims left in Hindustan, the Quaid-i-Azam of the Muslims of India abdicated, advising that it was "obviously a question for the minorities in the Indian Union to take up in their Constituent Assembly." The Muslims of Hindustan would have to find themselves a new advocate: Mr Jinnah was otherwise engaged.

The Congress leaders faced a more difficult task in securing their followers ratification of the decision to accept the Partition Plan. A number of significant groups within Congress - nationalist Muslims, confederates of the Hindu Mahasabha, socialists and others - were willing openly to oppose the partition of the subcontinent. And, in their determination to prevent partition, many of the members of these groups looked to the Mahatma to provide leadership - leadership, as Pyarelal put it, for "a crusade" against the Congress leaders' decision for partition.

Of course, Gandhi resisted all entreaties of his correspondents and visitors to make a stand against partition: in his dealings with the Viceroy and the Congress leaders during the

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268 Ibid.
269 All-India Muslim League Council Meeting, 9 June 1947; ibid., p. 567.
270 Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 244.
first half of April 1947, that was a battle he had already fought and lost. His petitioners from the rank and file of Congress had not caught up yet with developments; they did not realize yet the extent to which the Mahatma was himself committed to partition. Gandhi endeavoured to disillusion his petitioners, informing one of his correspondents in early June that he had "no desire to launch any struggle against what promises to be an accomplished fact."\textsuperscript{271} One correspondent asked Gandhi whether, in view of his strong feelings for Indian unity, he would not fast unto death, while another reminded him of his former proclamation that "vivisection of India would be vivisection of himself."\textsuperscript{272} In an address to a prayer meeting on 9 June, Gandhi replied publicly to the second charge. As Pyarelal recorded:

When he made the statement in question, he believed he was voicing public opinion. But when public opinion was against him, was he to coerce it?\textsuperscript{273}

By disillusioning his petitioners publicly, Gandhi set the stage for the moment when he would be called upon by the Congress leaders to support the Partition Plan in an address to the All-India Congress Committee. The crucial Congress gathering took place on 14 and 15 June. The promise that the Mahatma would assist the Congress leaders, in persuading the sovereign Congress body to ratify their leaders' decision to support partition, had been implicit in Gandhi's willingness to be present during the Working Committee's meeting on 1 May.\textsuperscript{274} The vital importance for the Congress leaders of having the Mahatma included in their

\textsuperscript{271}Gandhi to an unnamed correspondent, early June 1947; ibid.
\textsuperscript{272}Ibid., p. 245.
\textsuperscript{273}Gandhi's Address to Prayer Meeting, 9 June 1947; ibid.
\textsuperscript{274}See Chapter Four, n. 230 above, along with the paragraph of which it is the concluding passage.
muster for this critical occasion did not escape the notice of the Viceroy's Press Attaché. Campbell-Johnson wrote approvingly of the effect of Gandhi's address to the All-India Congress Committee on the evening of 14 June.275

At the decisive moment Gandhi came down in favour of acceptance [of the Partition Plan], and the latent opposition ... could not take shape against the frail little man's massive authority.276

With 157 voting in favour and 15 voting against, on 15 June the All-India Congress Committee resolved to accept "the proposals embodied in the announcement of June 3", recognizing that "[t]he proposals ... are likely to lead to the secession of some parts of the country from India."277 On 18 June, Vallabhbhai Patel, the Congress leader who - more than any other - had helped shape the events bringing to pass this historic decision for the partition of India, wrote triumphantly about this achievement to an associate, K.C. Neogy - an associate soon to be appointed Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation (of refugees) in the Government of an independent partitioned India.

We are now free to develop about 80 per cent of our country in our own way. If we can consolidate our forces, have a strong Central Government and a strong army, we can, during the course of five years, make considerable progress.278

The willingness of Patel and his Congress establishment conferees to accept 80 per cent of the Indian nationalist claim lay at the very heart of the events which had put the independence-with-partition scheme at the top of the all-India

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275For an account of Gandhi's speech to the All-India Congress Committee, 14 June 1947, see Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 251-3.
political agenda - a scheme which promised the release of the British Government from Indian Imperial entanglements, and the removal of Jinnah and his men from the political action at the Centre.

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After mid-June 1947, with the political die cast, the consequences of the all-India parties acceptance of the Partition Plan followed on schedule.

During his meeting with Gandhi on 4 May, Mountbatten had played up the democratic aspects of his Partition Plan for Bengal and the Punjab, the Mahatma protesting in disagreement that the Viceroy was "imposing partition" on the two provinces.279 On 20 June, when the representatives of Bengal met to decide the fate of their province, the Mahatma's judgement was perhaps vindicated. The representatives of the Hindu majority districts of (western) Bengal voted 58 to 21 in favour of partition, the representatives of Bengal's Muslim majority districts voting separately 106 to 35 against the proposal. According to the Partition Plan's formula, Bengal had decided on partition, the continuing unity of the province being dependent on a majority vote against partition by both communal representative groups.280 On 23 June, this pattern of non-Muslim minorities deciding the fate of Muslim majority provinces was repeated in the Legislative Assembly at Lahore, the representatives from the eastern Punjab deciding in favour of partition by 50 votes to 22, the representatives of the western

279See Chapter Four, n. 231 above.
Punjab voting against partition 69 votes to 27.\textsuperscript{281}

Elsewhere, democratic principles prevailed. On 26 June the representatives of Sind voted to join Pakistan (33 votes to 20),\textsuperscript{282} with Baluchistan's representatives the following week unanimously deciding to do the same (54 in favour, 8 absent).\textsuperscript{283} On 7 July a referendum in Sylhet, Assam, recorded a majority (of 55,578) in favour of the district joining (East) Pakistan,\textsuperscript{284} and on 17 July the North-West Frontier Province decided likewise (289, 244 for Pakistan and 2, 874 for India),\textsuperscript{285} the Congress minimizing its loss of face on the Frontier by conducting a boycott of proceedings.

At the Centre, during June and July, the administrative problems attendant on putting the partition of India into effect were dealt with efficiently. Mountbatten and his team of military-minded personal staff skilfully orchestrated the division of the state machinery, being as much in their element in devising the mechanics of partition as Patel and his Congress establishment conferees had earlier been in shaping its politics.\textsuperscript{286}

\textsuperscript{281}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{282}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283}See Mountbatten's Personal Report, 4 July 1947; ibid., p. 896.
\textsuperscript{284}See Mountbatten's Personal Report, 18 July 1947; ibid., Vol. XII, p. 227.
\textsuperscript{285}Ibid., p. 333.
\textsuperscript{286}A steering committee of two top civil servants - H.M. Patel, the Cabinet Secretary, and Muhammad Ali, an adviser on military finance, nominated respectively by Congress and the League - set the timetable of partition, designating 15 August as the date by which the administrative separation would be complete. The division of the Indian Army was expected to take much longer: the Joint Defence Council, provisionally set up on 26 July, officially constituted on 11 August, and made up of Mountbatten, Aunchineck, Liaquat and Baldev Singh - with Jinnah and Prasad included in the provisional muster - was given responsibility for this task. It was a task which was expected to be completed by 31 March 1948. Other items of the partition machinery were the Partition Council (set up on 27 June, taking over from the Partition Committee constituted on 12 June to oversee the partition decisions by the Punjab, Bengal and Sind Assemblies) of Mountbatten, Jinnah, Liaquat, Patel and Prasad, and the appointment of Sir Cyril Radcliffe to chair the Boundary Commissions for both the Punjab and Bengal.
Gandhi continued to communicate with Mountbatten as partition was effected. From his letters to the Viceroy, it was clear that the Mahatma did not share Patel's feelings of triumph - as expressed on 18 June in the Sardar's letter to K.C. Neogy at India's progress towards partition. For Gandhi continued to echo his long-standing demand that the British should transfer power to an all-India Government formed by one or the other of the two main Indian parties. As late as 27/28 June in a letter to Mountbatten, the Mahatma was insisting that the Viceroy would "have to make ... [a] choice [between Congress and the League] at this very critical stage in the history of this country." Denying that the Muslims had any reason to fear being held under subjection by the Hindus and that partition for this reason was necessary before the granting of independence, Gandhi gave his analysis of how he perceived the communal balance of power.

The caste Hindus ... are ... a hopeless minority. Of these the armed Rajputs are not yet nationalists as a class. The Brahmins and the Banias are still untrained in the use of arms .... The Sudras count ... more a scheduled class than anything else. That such Hindu society ... can crush millions of Muslims is an astounding myth.

But Gandhi's letters, far from winning over Mountbatten, only irritated the Viceroy. The Viceroy's growing realization that Gandhi - if the opportunity arose to force a clear-cut decision between the claims of the Indian parties within a united India - was willing to countenance a much less tidy end to British rule than that envisaged by the Partition Plan aroused Mountbatten's hostility. By 4 July, the Viceroy was describing Gandhi as "an

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287See Chapter Four, n. 278 above.
289Ibid. For the Viceroy's reply, see Mountbatten to Gandhi, 28 June 1947; ibid., p. 727.
inveterate and dangerous Trotskyist," one who constantly misinterpreted the Viceroy's position, "either deliberate[ly] or otherwise."  

Gandhi expressed his regret with the way India was progressing towards independence also in messages directed at the Congress leaders. However, the Mahatma's unhappiness was not expressed in statements opposing partition. Pyarelal maintains that

Gandhiji was sick at heart. He did not like the way his Congress colleagues were going. At the same time he did not want openly to criticise them lest he should embarrass them.  

Instead, Gandhi's expressions of regret addressed to the Congress leaders were aimed to strike obliquely. For example, on 19 July Gandhi addressed a prayer meeting, expressing his "sorrow" that the Congress Working Committee had decided "that the Union Jack was not going to occupy a place on the [Indian] national flag." Not surprisingly, some Indian nationalists were soon describing Gandhi's speeches as having "a depressant effect on the people." More to the point of course, such indications of Gandhi's withdrawal of his ideological support on matters of symbolic importance to Indian nationalists would have cast gloom amongst the Congress leaders, alerting them to the Mahatma's more general distress. But the Mahatma — so to speak — was rattling the Gandhian sabre rather than making ready to use it. Gandhi reassured Patel that such was the case in a letter to the Sardar in late July, namely, that his expressed views "[did] not mean that you should alter your course, but I do not want it to be said

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290 Mountbatten's Personal Report, 4 July 1947; ibid., p. 896.
292 Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 19 July 1947; Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. 8, p. 56.
293 Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. 8, p. 56.
that I was associated with it." 294

The Congress leaders could proceed with partition and Gandhi would not seek to impede their progress. But the Mahatma intended to keep open his subsequent policy options.

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With independence looming, Gandhi decided to leave Delhi and take up residence in one or other of the provinces suffering the effect of communal strife - in fact, one of the designated Pakistani provinces.

On 30 July Gandhi left the capital for Kashmir. Arriving in Srinagar on 1 August, the Mahatma met with the Maharaja and his Prime Minister. Essentially, Gandhi's presence in Kashmir was a way of showing the flag for the Congress cause, the State being strategically located adjoining both India and Pakistan and its future uncertain - the Ruler being Hindu, the majority (78 per cent) of the population being Muslim.

On 4 August Gandhi drove to Rawalpindi, stopping en route to visit Wah refugee camp and the Sikh shrine at Panja Saheb. From Rawalpindi Gandhi took the train to Lahore from where on 6 August he wrote to Patel.

People ought not to be removed from [Wah] .... You ought to take up this matter with the [provisional] Pakistan Government. 295 Rawalpindi should again have Hindu - Sikh population. 296

295 On 19 July Mountbatten had established two separate provisional Governments, one for India and one for Pakistan, each controlling its own departments of state - both systems being based in New Delhi. See Executive Council (Transitional Provisions) Order, 19 July 1947; T.P., Vol. XII, pp. 257-9.
296 Gandhi to Patel, 6 August 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 357.
The division of the subcontinent along communal lines was in its final stages of implementation, but the Mahatma apparently did not intend that the communal division should be absolute or, perhaps, permanent.

From Lahore, Gandhi travelled to Patna - avoiding a stop at Delhi. Declaring his intention to be resident in East Bengal at the arrival of independence, from Patna Gandhi travelled to Calcutta, arriving at the ashram at Sodepur on 9 August. Back at the Centre, one week before independence, Mountbatten reacted unfavourably to the Mahatma's declaration. The Viceroy recorded on 8 August:

[Gandhi] is now off to Noakhali. I can only hope that his presence there will not result in disturbances.297

Since 3 July Bengal - having voted for partition - had three Governments: a West Bengal Cabinet, exercising political control over the Hindu majority districts, under the Congressman Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the Chief Minister designate; an East Bengal Cabinet, in control of the Muslim majority districts, under Khwaja Nazimuddin, also Chief Minister designate; and Suhrawardy's Ministry, exercising de jure administrative authority over the province as a whole. Suhrawardy had been abandoned by the power brokers of Bengal's Muslim League: on 15 August Bengal would cease to exist as a political entity, Ghosh and Nazimuddin taking over sole authority in their respective provinces, one in India the other in Pakistan. Suhrawardy was in Karachi when Gandhi arrived in Calcutta. Upon learning of Gandhi's presence in his capital, Suhrawardy cancelled arrangements for a stay in New

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Delhi and instead rushed back to Calcutta.

A large delegation of Muslims from Calcutta visited Gandhi at Sodepur on 10 August. They were led by Muhammad Usman, lately of Wavell's wartime Executive Council. They complained that with the transfer of Muslims in the services to Eastern Bengal, the Muslims of Calcutta were living in terror. Gandhi was asked to remain in Calcutta rather than to carry on to Noakhali, his proposed destination.

Suhrawardy arrived in Calcutta on 11 August and, hurrying to Sodepur, added his voice to those requesting the Mahatma's continued presence. Pushed aside by the main body of the Muslim League in Bengal, Suhrawardy was apparently seeking a new role in West Bengal politics, a role which would need to be based on his acceptability in Hindu perceptions. Reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal was no longer merely desirable in the Chief Minister's view, as - in the aftermath of the August 1946 Calcutta killings - he had calculated it to be: such reconciliation was now an essential prerequisite for Suhrawardy's political prospects. D.G. Dalton, in explaining Suhrawardy's approach to Gandhi at this time, holds that the previous year of communal conflict had "humbled" the Bengali politician.298 While this might well be true, Suhrawardy was probably looking to the future in seeking a close relationship with Gandhi: such a relationship could help him leave behind his Muslim separatist past.

In his reply to Suhrawardy, Gandhi repeated his offer of 12 May\textsuperscript{299}: "that they should both live together under the same roof in the disturbed parts [of Calcutta], unprotected by the police or the military, together meet the people ... and tell them that ... there was no longer any reason ... to quarrel."\textsuperscript{300} Gandhi's notion of how best to calm communal passions had not appealed to Suhrawardy in May. But the following day, on 12 August, Suhrawardy sent Usman to the Mahatma conveying his acceptance of Gandhi's proposal - the proposal being essentially a specific example of the solution to the communal problem Gandhi had put forward in November 1946 upon his arrival in Noakhali.\textsuperscript{301} On 13 August Gandhi and Suhrawardy took up their station in "Hydari Mansion", an abandoned Muslim house in Beliaghata, a Muslim locale in Calcutta which had been the target of Hindu communalist mobs. Patel wrote to Gandhi that day, commenting on this development.

So you have got detained in Calcutta and ... in what choice company too! It is a terrible risk .... Keep me posted about yourself.\textsuperscript{302}

At midnight on 14 August British rule in India ended, 15 August being celebrated across the country as Independence Day. Mountbatten accepted the request of the Indian Cabinet to take up the position of Governor-General of an independent Indian Dominion, Jinnah having reserved the equivalent Pakistani appointment for himself. Rajagopalachari assumed the office of Governor of West Bengal.

\textsuperscript{299}See Chapter Four, n. 243 above.
\textsuperscript{300}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 364.
\textsuperscript{301}See Chapter Four, n. 74 above, along with the preceding passage of the paragraph of which it is part.
\textsuperscript{302}Patel to Gandhi, 13 August 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 365.
It was the fifth anniversary of the death of Gandhi's private secretary, Mahadev Desai. As was the Mahatma's custom, he spent the day fasting and having a recitation of the whole of the Gita after morning prayer - in a partly wrecked mansion, in a slum area of Calcutta, in the company of Shaheed Suhrawardy. The imperatives of the Mahatma's search for Truth could hardly have given rise to a more curious way in which Gandhi could have observed the dawning of India's independence.

Independence Day passed in Calcutta without any communal incident. But as Gandhi mused in a letter to Amrit Kaur, "Who knows how long this will last!"\textsuperscript{303}

\textsuperscript{303}Gandhi to Amrit Kaur, 16 August 1947; ibid., p. 372.
CHAPTER FIVE

August 1947 - January 1948

[M]y devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation ... that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.¹

M.K. Gandhi, 1927.

Forty years ago ... [t]en million [Indians] woke up not to the 'life and freedom' sonorously promised by Nehru, but to the loss of their ancestral homes. Half a million were to lose their lives .... 'Our elders said, "We have seen many kingdoms change. But the way this kingdom changed, we have never heard about. People never had to leave their homes before"'.... 'We thought' ... [said] a Punjabi woman, a girl at the time, 'that the big people must be in the know.' So little did anyone know that her village thought for two and a half hours that it was going to be in Pakistan, not in India. By the time a phone call had corrected that, the Muslims had turned on the Hindus.²


The Calcutta 'Miracle'

For the first two weeks following independence, Calcutta not only remained free of communal conflict but was the scene of extraordinary demonstrations of communal harmony. In the streets of the city crowds of fraternizing Hindus and Muslims celebrated Independence Day, and on 18 August both communities participated together in the Id festivities. For the remainder of August communal friendliness reigned in Calcutta. By 28 August the Statesman - a paper which usually was inclined to adopt a rather

sceptical position on the subject of the efficacy of the Mahatma's essentially non-rational approach to mass politics—lauded "the miracle of communal harmony in India's largest city."³

But the atmosphere of extreme tension between the communities in Calcutta had not been eliminated; rather, it was given expression in the form of exaggerated courtesy in public intercourse between Hindus and Muslims, in place of the words and acts of violence which had set the tone of communal relations in Calcutta since the riots of August 1946. Independence had done away with uncertainty as to the form an independent India would take; the anxiety arising from this uncertainty had likewise been removed. On 15 August 1947 the inhabitants of Calcutta—a mainly Hindu city located in a former Muslim majority province—experienced an emotional catharsis. However, it must be said that Gandhi and Suhrawardy, by providing a public example of Hindu-Muslim amity at this critical psychological moment, probably significantly influenced the form in which the people of Calcutta expressed their relief at the dawning of independence. So the mass demonstration of Hindu-Muslim unity, which had eluded the Mahatma in Noakhali and Bihar despite months of sustained effort on his part, was finally displayed in the very capital of Bengal during the second half of August 1947. Paradoxically, Gandhi's apparent success in promoting communal unity in Calcutta coincided with the announcement (on 17 August) of the Radcliffe Award—the

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³Statesman, 28 August 1947, p.4. An example of the newspaper's earlier sceptical attitude to Gandhi's political mode of operation is to be found in a May 1947 editorial. The Statesman had then maintained that "with communal disputes ... there is no more possibility of subduing them by appeal to some nobler emotion than of curing a rabid dog of his madness by talking gently." See Statesman, 12 May 1947, p.6.
ruling on the partition lines between India and Pakistan.\(^4\) (Mountbatten had held back the Boundary Awards until after independence, showing them to the Indian and Pakistani leaders for the first time on 16 August.\(^5\))

Gandhi sensed the artificial nature of the apparent explosion of communal goodwill witnessed in Calcutta in mid-August. He also anticipated that such Hindu-Muslim harmony would prove ephemeral. On 18 August he expressed his scepticism in a letter to Madeleine Slade (otherwise known as Mirabehn), one of his English followers.

Hindu [-] Muslim unity seems to be too sudden to be true. They ascribe the transformation to me. I wonder! Probably things would have been like this even if I had not been on the scene. Time will show.\(^6\)

Gandhi was decidedly sceptical as to the real cause of the demonstrations of communal amity in Calcutta, but political India was less circumspect in its analysis: the Mahatma's "healing presence"\(^7\) was widely perceived to have brought communal peace to the city. With the press acclaiming his achievement throughout India,\(^8\) Gandhi was the object of glowing tributes from a wide range of political leaders. On 19 August the new Governor of West Bengal set the tone to the tributes: Rajagopalachari paid homage to Gandhi as "the magician" who had brought to pass the "Calcutta

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\(^4\)For the full Radcliffe Award, see Punjab Boundary Commission Award, 12 August 1947; Bengal Boundary Commission Award, 12 August 1947; and Bengal Boundary Commission Sylhet District Report, 13 August 1947; T.R., Vol. XII, pp.744-57.


\(^7\)Both Campbell-Johnson and Nehru used this phrase. See Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 16 August 1947, p.198. Also, see Nehru to Gandhi, 21 August 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.383.

\(^8\)For a sample of press references on this subject, see D.G. Dalton, op. cit., p.234, n.6.
miracle." On 21 August Nehru sent Gandhi his "respectful congratulations on the wonderful change in Calcutta." Even the remainder of the Muslim League leaders in India, left by Jinnah to their fate in the Indian Constituent Assembly, passed a resolution on 24 August expressing their "deep sense of appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. Gandhi to the cause of restoration of peace and goodwill between the communities in Calcutta." The Governor-General also sent his regards. On 26 August he wrote, in words that have often been quoted:

In the Punjab we have 55 thousand soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer ... may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force, not forgetting his Second in Command, Mr. Suhrawardy.

Gandhi sent a reply to Mountbatten on 30 August. On behalf of Suhrawardy and himself, the Mahatma declined to take the credit for having restored communal peace in Calcutta. Instead, Gandhi suggested an alternative explanation: that "suitable conditions were ready for us." Nevertheless, the Mahatma was apparently willing to risk the conclusion that "suitable conditions" might also be present in places of communal conflict other than Calcutta. In his reply to the Governor-General, Gandhi took up the challenge implicit in Mountbatten's letter of compliment.

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9 Ibid., p.233.
12 Mountbatten to Gandhi, 26 August 1947; D.G. Dalton, op. cit., p.234, n.5.
Am I right in gathering from your letter that you would like me to try the same thing for the Punjab?\textsuperscript{14}

Perhaps the latest news from Bihar had encouraged Gandhi to contemplate an attempt to arrest the communal holocaust which was taking place in the Punjab. A few days previously, he had received a telephone message from Bihar saying that the turn of events in Calcutta was having a "profound effect" in improving conditions in that province\textsuperscript{15} - yet more evidence of the interconnectedness of communal relations between different parts of India. More generally, the atmosphere in Calcutta might well have restored a great deal of the Mahatma's self-confidence in his ability to influence mass behaviour. (Gandhi's self-confidence, not surprisingly, had been rather depleted after the disappointments he had earlier experienced in Noakhali and Bihar.) For the crowds attending his prayer meetings in Calcutta (which had to be held in parks and sports grounds) were among the biggest the Mahatma had ever been able to attract, estimated at up to nearly seven hundred thousand people on 21 August (at the meeting held at Park Circus).\textsuperscript{16}

Gandhi was correct in thinking that Mountbatten wanted him to go to the Punjab. The communal slaughter in the Punjab was threatening, at the very least, to blemish an otherwise - in Mountbatten's perception - virtually perfect transfer of power. Under the looming shadow of this retrospective threat to his reputation, Mountbatten had undergone something of a change of attitude towards the Mahatma. When Gandhi had departed from Delhi

\textsuperscript{14}Tbid.
\textsuperscript{16}For an account of the estimated numbers in attendance at Gandhi's prayer meetings in Calcutta during August 1947, see ibid., pp.373-7.
at the end of July, Mountbatten had been glad to see him go - the Viceroy sensed, moreover, that the Congress High Command felt the same way. In early August, it will be remembered, Gandhi had been on his way to Noakhali when Muhammad Usman and Suhrawardy had asked him to remain in Calcutta. On 8 August, in his Personal Report, the Viceroy had commented on the Mahatma's intentions:

Gandhi has announced his decision to spend the rest of his life in Pakistan .... This will ... be a great relief to Congress for, as I have said before, his influence is largely negative or even destructive and directed against the only man who has his feet firmly on the ground, Vallabhbhai Patel.\(^{17}\)

Mountbatten had correctly sensed that Patel's guiding hand was behind the Partition Plan which promised such a relatively easy exit of the British Power from the subcontinent. Mountbatten had realized, furthermore, that Gandhi was the leader most likely to attempt to subvert an orderly British withdrawal. But with independence effected, Gandhi could no longer hope to queer Britannia's pitch: a Governor-General, unlike a Viceroy, operated from behind the shelter of (an Indian) Cabinet responsibility. As well, Mountbatten appears to have accepted uncritically the notion that the events in Calcutta had demonstrated that the Mahatma exercised considerable power over the "superstitious" Indian masses. So in late August Mountbatten was urging his Prime Minister to summon Gandhi to New Delhi to try his hand at restoring communal peace in the adjoining Punjab. Mountbatten's sudden enthusiasm for Gandhi to play a role - perhaps a personally perilous role - in the central issue confronting the Indian Government was not shared by Nehru. Possibly the Pandit's

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undoubted personal attachment to the Mahatma was mixed with anxiety at the prospect of having Gandhi back in, or near, New Delhi, influencing the power equation at the Centre. Neither of these considerations affected Mountbatten's approach to the issue. In any event, on 25 August Nehru wrote to Gandhi, trying to dissuade the Mahatma from acting too precipitately on the Governor-General's wishes.

This morning ... Mountbatten urged me to request you to go to the Punjab .... I told him that I was myself not clear about this. I feel you should go but not just yet.18

But the pressure on Gandhi to go to the Punjab continued to grow. Mountbatten's advice to Nehru on this matter was reinforced by requests received by the Mahatma from a number of Punjabi notables: they were, as Gandhi informed Nehru on 29 August, "pressing me to go."19 Meanwhile, Nehru had been touring the affected areas in the Punjab in the company of Liaquat Ali Khan. What the two Prime Ministers witnessed there was apparently enough to convince Nehru that all possible measures to alleviate the carnage had at least to be tried. The Pandit wired Gandhi on 31 August:

Punjab problem overwhelming in extent and intensity. I feel now that your presence in Punjab is desirable.20

The way was now clear for Gandhi to proceed from Calcutta to the Punjab, and preparations were made for his departure on 2 September. One source (D.G. Dalton) implies that the Punjab was indeed Gandhi's intended destination,21 while another source

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19Gandhi to Nehru, 29 August 1947; ibid., p.393.
20Nehru to Gandhi, 31 August 1947; ibid., p.394.
21See D.G. Dalton, op. cit., p.235.
(Pyarelal, who had rejoined Gandhi in Calcutta) says that "on the evening of the 31st August, Gandhiji announced that he would be leaving for Noakhali on the 2nd September."22

In fact, irrespective of the question of his intended destination, Gandhi did not leave Calcutta on 2 September. By that date, the Mahatma did not need to travel in order to be in the midst of communal strife. For during the late evening of 31 August, communal violence returned to the streets of Calcutta.

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The recrudescence of communal violence in Calcutta late in the evening of 31 August began outside Gandhi's residence in Beliaghatta. Nothing could have demonstrated more dramatically the symbiotic relationship which had developed between the Mahatma's presence in Calcutta and the communal tensions underlying the carnival of exaggerated communal amity to which the city had been witness since independence. In pricking the bubble of communal harmony, the communalist elements sought to do so in the proximity of the Mahatma.

Around 10 p.m. on 31 August a crowd of young men converged on Hydari Mansion, bearing in their midst a heavily bandaged Hindu, allegedly stabbed by a Muslim. They insisted loudly that Gandhi issue a call for retaliation. Woken by the tumult outside, the Mahatma appeared before the crowd and — breaking his customary day of silence (7 p.m. Sunday to 7 p.m. Monday) — attempted to pacify them. Not only did Gandhi's pleas fail to quiet the crowd, but he

also came close to serious injury when the newcomers stormed the mansion and attacked his entourage. The police arrived and broke up the mêlée, using tear-gas to disperse the crowd. A severely shaken Gandhi retired to his bed. The following morning, rumours of the disturbance at Gandhi's residence spread throughout Calcutta, triggering further outbreaks of violence. By the afternoon of 1 September uncontrollable rioting had broken out in several parts of Calcutta; by evening, fifty people had been killed and over three hundred injured. Amongst the dead were two Muslim labourers killed in a hand-grenade attack in a street near Gandhi's residence. After viewing the two bodies, Gandhi wrote to Patel.

Preparations for a fight are today in evidence everywhere .... I hear that conflagration has burst out at many places. What was regarded as the "Calcutta miracle" has proved to be a nine days' wonder. I am pondering what my duty is in the circumstances.23

That day, Gandhi resolved on a fast. When Rajagopalachari visited Gandhi that evening he was informed of the decision. The Governor queried "Can one fast against the goondas?"24 Gandhi replied that his proposed action was directed at "those who are behind the goondas ... society at large."25 When Rajagopalachari returned to Government House he carried with him a statement by Gandhi which was released to the press the same night. Gandhi's statement outlined the rationale of his decision to fast.

Now that the Calcutta bubble seems to have burst, with what face can I go to the Punjab? The weapon which has hitherto proved infallible for me is fasting. To put an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work. It certainly did not

23Gandhi to Patel, 1 September 1947; ibid., p.406.
25Ibid.
last night. What my word in person cannot do, my fast may .... I, therefore, begin fasting from 8.15 tonight to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta.26

Just as the Calcutta "miracle" had been acclaimed in the press throughout India, likewise the recrudescence of violence in the city and Gandhi's resort to a fast in response provided the focus of nationwide interest. Upon first learning of the Mahatma's intention to fast, Rajagopalachari had warned Gandhi "But supposing you die, the conflagration would be worse."27 This theme was given emphasis in the press. Typically, the Times of India echoed Rajagopalachari's anxiety on 3 September.

More than his life - the peace of India - is at stake.28 More generally, as D.G. Dalton pointed out, "Indian political leaders responded with alarm and exhortation."29

However, it is significant that in the lower reaches of Indian society Gandhi's move had rather less impact - at least, in the initial stage of the Mahatma's fast. On 2 September, rioting and looting continued unabated in Calcutta and the casualties continued to mount. But this lack of response at the social base did not noticeably disturb the Mahatma: apparently his understanding of how Indian "society at large"30 functioned led him to judge the success or failure of his fast according to its effect on the social elite. In any case, Gandhi indicated in a letter to Patel on 2 September that this was the way his mind was working.

26Gandhi's Statement to the Press, 1 September 1947; ibid., p.409.
28Times of India, 3 September 1947, p.4; cited, D.G. Dalton, op. cit., p.236.
29P.G. Dalton, op, cit., p.236.
30See Chapter Five, n.25 above.
If the leaders are sincere, the killing will stop and the fast end.\textsuperscript{31}

The events of the following two days provided evidence of the accuracy of Gandhi's understanding of the nature of the bonds holding together Indian society. The representatives of the various interest groups of Calcutta came to Gandhi's bedside, increasingly alarmed at the prospect of the Mahatma's death and the conceivably catastrophic impact the anticipated upsurge in communal conflict following his demise might have on an already weakened social fabric. As a condition for ending his fast, Gandhi insisted that the various leaders assume responsibility for the peace of the city. One by one, the party and community leaders committed themselves to do the Mahatma's bidding - as Gandhi urged Sarat Bose on 2 September - to "first declare in unequivocal terms what you stand for and then back it by appropriate personal example."\textsuperscript{32} The leaders of the Forward Bloc (Sarat Bose), the Bengal Mahasabha (N.C. Chatterjee and Debendranath Mukherjee), the Bengal Muslim League (Suhrawardy and Dr. G. Jilani), the Pakistan Seaman's Union (Dr. A.R. Choudhury and M. Rahaman) and other notables in Calcutta joined with the Congress leaders (Rajagopalachari, Kripalani and P.C. Ghosh) in guaranteeing their compliance to Gandhi's wishes. With groups of political activists of the contracting parties patrolling the troubled areas, communal rioting ceased on 3 September. On the evening of 4 September, the principal leaders assembled at Gandhi's residence and signed a pledge.

\textsuperscript{31}Gandhi to Patel, 2 September 1947; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.410.
\textsuperscript{32}See Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.413.
We ... promise ... we shall never allow communal strife in the city and shall strive unto death to prevent it.\textsuperscript{33}

The same evening, Gandhi declared his conditions met and broke his fast.

Gandhi's triumph in the use of satyagraha in Calcutta in early September 1947 was not to be undone: communal peace endured in the city for the remainder of his life. Guns, swords, daggers, ammunition and grenades - much of the ordnance being of local workshop manufacture - were surrendered to the authorities by the truckload, many of the groups of communalists going to Beliaghata to give up their weapons personally to Gandhi. After a prayer meeting held on the Calcutta Maidan, thousands of Hindus and Muslims mingled and embraced. Campbell-Johnson noted on 6 September that "hardened Press correspondents report that they have seen nothing comparable with this demonstration of mass influence."\textsuperscript{34}

The object of praise from all political sides, Gandhi nevertheless held court in Hydari Mansion for only a few days. On 7 September, in answer to the call from the Punjab, Gandhi left Calcutta bound for Delhi.

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The Threat to the Centre; An All-India Response?

Gandhi arrived in Delhi on 6 September - there to stay until his death nearly five months later. Patel met him at the railway station and escorted the Mahatma to Birla House. As Home

\textsuperscript{33}Pledge by the Calcutta Leaders, 4 September 1947; ibid., p.423.
\textsuperscript{34}Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 6 September 1947, p.211.
Minister, Patel was responsible for public safety. The Sardar clearly preferred that Gandhi reside in a secured area in New Delhi; probably Patel was not in a mood to take no for an answer. So Gandhi never returned to live in the Bhangi Colony. An explanation for the Mahatma's change of residence in Delhi lay readily at hand - a development, that is, explanatory of the Sardar's likely fears for Gandhi's security. At the same time, in giving the explanation, Pyarelal provided evidence of his knowledge of the disruptive effect on a community in whose midst was erected the Gandhian organizational trellis considered necessary to support the Mahatma's expected lifestyle. In Pyarelal's words:

The sweepers' colony was occupied by the refugees from the West Punjab. They would have to be displaced if Gandhiji stayed there.

When the Mahatma first arrived, Delhi was under a twenty-four hour curfew. On 4 September communal riots had broken out in the capital, many of the miscreants being Hindu and Sikh refugees from the West Punjab. (By the later months of 1947, refugees were to constitute about a quarter of the city's population.) The bulk of Delhi's police were Muslim, many of whom - along with their arms - had deserted. The situation had rapidly deteriorated. Nehru and Patel had responded by seeking to enlist Mountbatten's "active and overriding authority to deal with the emergency." In response to his Ministers' appeal, Mountbatten had returned to Delhi from Simla on 5 September and had set up an Emergency Committee of the Cabinet (to function, basically, as a Government General Staff)

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35For Woodrow Wyatt's account of how the Gandhian camp was set up in Delhi's Bhangi Colony in late March 1946, see Chapter Three, n.10 above.
with himself in the chair. Mountbatten had also converted Government House in New Delhi (the former Viceregal Lodge) into the Emergency headquarters. The crisis was real: the communal killing in the Punjab and the uncontrollable migration of millions of people the carnage had induced had the potential to paralyze the Government of India. In Campbell-Johnson's view at the time:

[T]he scale of the killings and the movement of refugees ... create conditions which many can exploit but none can command. The fact that Delhi itself is in the epicentre ... converts a provincial into a national crisis. In this respect the Punjab catastrophe is perhaps even more deadly for India than for Pakistan, whose capital, Karachi, is at a safe distance from the disturbances.38

On the day of Gandhi's arrival in Delhi, Nehru, Patel and other Congress leaders went to Birla House to confer with the Mahatma. The leaders impressed upon Gandhi what Mountbatten - at an Emergency Committee meeting on 7 September - had impressed upon them: that, "If we go down in Delhi we are finished."39 The Ministers were hoping Gandhi would be both able and willing to help significantly in shoring up the internal security situation in the capital, that the Mahatma would "repeat in Delhi the miracle he had wrought in Calcutta."40

On past occasions - with the prospect of confrontation with the Raj - it had been the Mahatma the Congress leaders had turned to, to make mass contact on their behalf with the lower reaches of Indian society. In the disturbed conditions of the aftermath of the transfer of power, with the political activists within the Indian confessional communities acting on their own macabre

38Ibid., p.207.
39Mountbatten's Address to Emergency Committee, 7 September 1947; ibid., 7 September 1947, p.211.
imperatives, the Mahatma's services were again in demand - albeit, on this occasion, with a view to discouraging rather than arousing native Indian enthusiasms.

Gandhi was willing to respond favourably to the Congress leaders' desire that he stay in Delhi and address the communal problems that afflicted the city: he promised them he would not leave "until Delhi is peaceful again." But he expressed his doubts as to whether he would be likely to be able to influence significantly the behaviour of the communal activists in Delhi. Gandhi pointed out to the Congress leaders that "Delhi was not Calcutta." More specifically, there was not in Delhi a figure equivalent to Suhrawardy, someone - as Gandhi put it - "who can accompany me and control the Muslims." And, for that matter, there was "no such person amongst the Sikhs or among the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh either." With its communal activists drawn partly from the masses of refugees, and with its political establishment formed from national rather than from local political elements, the social mix in Delhi lacked organic bonds developed in the passage of time which in Calcutta linked the political elite with the main body social.

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41 Gandhi's Address to Congress Leaders, 9 September 1947; ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid. The Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (R.S.S.) was the most organized and best disciplined of the Hindu communalist bodies. The R.S.S. activists were usually high caste Indians, with Brahmans from Maharashtra especially well represented in their ranks. During 1947, in the Delhi area (as well as in many other areas of northern India), the R.S.S. men often fomented communal agitation and conducted assaults on Muslims.
Following his arrival in Delhi, Gandhi spent two weeks touring the refugee camps and the troubled areas of the city. He had little to offer except solace to the victims of what was becoming, in Pyarelal's words, the "biggest migration of population in recorded history"\textsuperscript{45} - solace, and the warning that "Retaliation is no remedy."\textsuperscript{46}

Gandhi was not always well received at the refugee camps: apparently, retaliation was very much in the minds of many of the refugees. On 12 September, at a prayer meeting held in the Kingsway refugee camp, prayer had to be abandoned when objections were raised by some of the Hindu and Sikh refugees to readings from the Koran, and disorder subsequently broke out. The cry "Gandhi Murdabad" (death to Gandhi) was heard and the Mahatma's car was stoned as he left the camp. The following day, the Mahatma received a hostile reception when he visited a Muslim refugee camp near the Red Fort. However, on that occasion, Gandhi was able eventually to pacify the Muslim refugees: they listened to his address and narrated to the Mahatma their tale of hardships and sufferings. The two episodes considered in conjunction perhaps provided an indication as to the changing perception of the Mahatma's role. The Muslim refugees at the Red Fort - awaiting their evacuation to Pakistan - had proven relatively more receptive to Gandhi's appeal for communal reconciliation than the Hindu and Sikh refugees at the Kingsway camp, whose migration to India from the West Punjab had at least relieved them of their personal security anxieties. The perception of the Mahatma as the protector of India's Muslim minority - a perception to be of great

\textsuperscript{45}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.432.
\textsuperscript{46}Gandhi's Statement to the Press, 9 September 1947; ibid., p.434.
importance in the future - was beginning to take root in the popular imagination.

At his prayer meeting on the evening of 13 September, Gandhi gave his view of the crux of the problem afflicting the newly independent Dominions of the subcontinent: "transfer of population," he said, "was a fatal snare." Gandhi held that the "misdeeds" of India's and Pakistan's "majority communities" had brought about the calamity, and that responsibility to put things right lay with the two Dominions respective Government's.

The solution lay in both [Hindus and Muslims] living in peace and friendship in their own original homes. It would be madness to make the present estrangement into permanent enmity. It was the bounden duty of each Dominion to guarantee full protection to their minorities. Let the two [Dominions] thrash the question out among themselves or, if need be, fight it out and make of themselves the laughing stock of the world. It was, of course, a familiar Gandhian viewpoint: issues had to be resolved, never left in abeyance: if those responsible for working out a solution could not do so by non-violent means, "open fight" was the next best way to settle the matter, infinitely to be preferred to a cowardly refusal to face the issue.

Gandhi returned to the theme of agreement or war between India and Pakistan in an address on 17 September to a gathering of workers from the Delhi Cloth Mills. Many of the members of his audience were Hindus and Sikhs from the West Punjab. In advising the workers on how to conduct themselves in obtaining recompense

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48 Ibid., p.12.
49 Ibid., pp.11-2.
50 Compare Gandhi's speech at the prayer meeting on 13 September 1947 with his advice to a delegation of Hindu relief workers in Noakhali on 7 November 1946; see Chapter Four, n.71 above. Also, see Chapter Four, n.69 above.
for their losses he urged them to "let the State secure justice ... [that] if they permitted the State to do its duty ... every Hindu and every Sikh refugee would return to his home with honour and dignity."\textsuperscript{51} Gandhi further elaborated as to how, in his opinion, India and Pakistan should go about the task of securing justice for the refugees.

The universal way to have proper adjustment was for both the States to ... come to terms, failing agreement to resort to arbitration in the usual manner. The other and rude way was that of war. The thought repelled him. But there was no escape from it if there was neither agreement nor arbitration.\textsuperscript{52}

There was, however, another way - a quite obvious way - by which the Indian and Pakistani Governments could bring the situation created by partition under control, an option other than agreement, arbitration or war: that the estrangement between Congress and the Muslim League might so inform the respective political consolidation of the two Dominions that Hindu-Muslim conflict would be established as a permanent feature of Indian-Pakistani relations. In other words, as part of the legacy of the ending of the British Raj, the problem of Indian communal enmity could be transformed into a feature of international politics as given expression by the respective foreign policy positions of the Raj's two successor-states. Of course, that was not the gift Gandhi had hoped India would bring to the community of nations. Yet, the independence settlement made likely such a development, the Partition Plan having virtually eliminated the prospect of retaining an all-India Centre, however constituted. By September

\textsuperscript{51} Gandhi's Address to Delhi Cloth Mill Workers, 17 September 1947; \textit{D.D.}, pp.17-8.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p.18.
1947, with independence achieved, the Partition Plan formed the basis of the political status quo in the subcontinent. And during September, with Mountbatten's Emergency Committee measures beginning to be felt, the crisis facing the Indian state began to recede and Indian society increasingly settled down under the new political order. By late September, it was increasingly apparent that the Gandhian "untruth" of Hindu-Muslim separatism would indeed provide the spirit informing the legacy of the independence settlement. In this context, with proposals for agreement and arbitration failing to appear on the Indian-Pakistani agenda, Gandhi's voice was raised more stridently for war. On 26 September he expressed his views at a prayer meeting.

He had been an opponent of all warfare. But if there was no other way of securing justice from Pakistan ... the Indian Union Government would have to go to war against it. War was not a joke. No one wanted war. That way lay destruction. But he could never advise anyone to put up with injustice.53

By late September 1947, in the novel political conditions attendant on independence, the imperatives of Gandhianism had seemingly led the Mahatma to adopt a new role: that of the warmonger. It was a strange note for Gandhi to sound at the end of his career - at least, it would have sounded strange to those Westerners who had categorized satyagraha as a form of pacifism, at one in spirit with the Western normative type of pacifism.

Gandhi's remarks about the prospects of war - as his secretary recalled - "raised quite a storm."54 Campbell-Johnson recorded at the time that Gandhi's speech "touched a raw nerve, and ...
aroused intense and almost scared speculation among the Press." At a prayer meeting on 27 September, Gandhi brought to the attention of his audience "an enquiry from Calcutta whether he had really begun to advocate war." He replied that he had not: he had "merely pointed out the various possibilities." Two days later Gandhi elaborated on his disclaimer, as his remarks about war had apparently produced "a scare in the West."

I claim that I rendered a service to both the sister States by ... definitely stating when the cause of war could arise .... This was done not to promote war but to avoid it as far as possible. I endeavoured, too, to show that if the insensate murders, loot and arson by people continued, they would force the hands of their Governments. Was it wrong to draw public attention to the logical steps that inevitably followed one after another?

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By the end of September, the security measures adopted by the Government of India had brought large-scale lawlessness in Delhi under control. But it was not a Gandhian peace which had been brought to the capital: covert acts of communal violence continued, as did, from time to time, stray incidents of murder and other forms of overt communal outrage.

The assertion of the authority of the new state of independent India coincided with a period of relative inactivity by Gandhi, as brought about by a deterioration in his health. In the last week of September an attack of whooping cough and flu forced the

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56 Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 27 September 1947; D.D., p.43.
57 Ibid.
58 Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 29 September 1947; ibid., p.47.
59 Ibid., p.48.
Mahatma to curtail his activities somewhat. It was in this weakened condition that, on 2 October, he celebrated his seventy-eighth birthday. A stream of visitors came to Birla House to offer their congratulations, and Gandhi received scores of telegrams from both India and abroad. His visitors found the Mahatma saddened and depressed. When Patel called on Gandhi, the Sardar was accompanied by Manibehn, his daughter. That evening, Manibehn recorded in her diary her impression of Gandhi.

His anguish was unbearable. We had gone to him in elation; we returned home with a heavy heart.60

During October Gandhi largely remained confined to Birla House. The problem of the ongoing population exchange between India and Pakistan - which was beginning to affect Sind and East Bengal61 - continued to elicit commentary from him at his prayer meetings, but other issues also attracted Gandhi's attention. Early in October, with winter approaching, the Mahatma launched an appeal for blankets for the refugees.62 Gandhi also addressed problems of sanitation at the refugee camps.63 He criticized a decision of the United Provinces Government to make Hindi the

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61 Pyarelal links the Sindhi Hindu community's "stampede to get away before the mousetrap closed upon them" with the arrival in Sind in late 1947 of Muslim refugees from "East Punjab and other parts of India." Yet the Sind Government at first wanted the Hindu community in their province to stay: "they provided the bulk of the business talent." But after the exodus of Muslim merchants from Junagadh and other parts of Kathiawad in late 1947 and their arrival in Sind, the incentive to retain the services of the Hindu merchant community was removed, which in turn "hastened the tempo of evacuation of the minorities from that Province." See Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.475 and 488.
V.P. Menon recalled that the "communal exodus from East Bengal in the early stages after partition was but a trickle. It assumed critical proportions much later ... when the West Pakistan officials had established themselves in East Bengal." See V.P. Menon, op. cit., p.435.
62 See D.D., 4 October 1947, pp.59-60; also 7, 8, 9 and 17 October 1947, pp.67, 70, 73 and 90.
63 See ibid., 3 October 1947, pp.57-8.
official language of the province. Gandhi favoured Hindustani, a composite language bringing together words from Hindi, Persian and Arabic and written in an Arabic script. Even events in South Africa, concerning the assertion there of the Indian community's political rights, were not too distant to escape the Mahatma's attention.

Nevertheless, an underlying political purpose probably informed the Mahatma's behaviour. It could be claimed that Gandhi's wide - and seemingly disparate - range of interests during October 1947 was intended by the Mahatma to demonstrate India's greater solicitude for the welfare of the refugees and for the interests of Indian minorities - relative, that is, to Pakistan's performance in such matters. The requisite for a Gandhian political campaign - as aspect of the satyagraha technique - was to first establish the basis from which to assert the moral superiority of the Gandhian political position. For, during October, the Mahatma did attempt an initiative at the all-India political level. Suhrawardy had joined Gandhi in Delhi around mid-September. But the Bengali ex-Premier had not been able to exercise any noticeable influence over the Muslims of Delhi: as Pyarelal rather quaintly put it, Suhrawardy's arrival "had not brought to Ghandiji's elbow the strength that many had expected." Instead, the Mahatma decided to use the Bengali politician as his emissary on the all-India political stage. As Pyarelal recalled, Gandhi encouraged Suhrawardy to go to Pakistan, there to "get his old colleague [Jinnah] ... to face up to his own

64See ibid., 15 October 1947, pp.85-6.
65See ibid., 11 and 17 October 1947, pp. 78-9 and 91.
declarations respecting the minorities which were being honoured more in the breach than the observance."\(^{67}\) Evidently, Gandhi's mind - at least, in part - was still focused on all-India political objectives.

But nothing came of Suhrawardy's mission. Upon independence, Campbell-Johnson wrote at the time, Jinnah had made

only the most superficial attempt to disguise himself as a constitutional Governor-General, and one of his first acts ... was to apply for ... dictatorial powers unknown to any constitutional Governor-General representing the King. Here indeed is Pakistan's King Emperor, Archbishop of Canterbury, Speaker and Prime Minister concentrated into one formidable Quaid-e-Azam.\(^{68}\)

In possession of practically absolute state power, Jinnah no longer needed to bargain with Muslim provincial political bosses - particularly one who was an unemployed advocate of Greater Bengal. In the course of his many visits to Karachi, Suhrawardy made no progress towards achieving Gandhi's objective: "that both Governments should make a clean breast of their mistakes and failures ... [and] should ... bring about conditions ... that would enable all the refugees to go back to their original homes."\(^{69}\) By 11 October a disillusioned Gandhi wrote to Jinnah:

Shaheed [Suhrawardy] Saheb has reported to me your reactions to my endorsement on the suggestions drafted by him. I am sorry to learn about it.\(^{70}\)

But the days when Jinnah regarded a letter from Gandhi as a triumph were long gone: the Mahatma received no reply to his missive.\(^{71}\)

\(^{67}\)ibid., pp.478-9.
\(^{68}\)Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 14-15 August 1947, p.182.
\(^{70}\)Gandhi to Jinnah, 11 October 1947; ibid., p.480.
\(^{71}\)Compare this incident with Jinnah's triumphant reception of Gandhi's letter of 17 July 1944; see Chapter One, pp.33-4 above.
As October advanced, the Gandhian all-India political initiative diminished into an exchange between Gandhi and Suhrawardy. By late October Gandhi felt the need to reprimand Suhrawardy: "Please remember that to the minorities this is a life and death question." And on 27 October Gandhi wrote somewhat irritably to his former partner in satyagraha: "I would like you, if you can, to remove your angularity." By January 1948 political purpose had all but vanished from the two men's relationship. On 21 January Gandhi wrote his last ever letter to Suhrawardy.

I was much concerned about your financial obligations .... I have seen many Muslim friends go under because of their extravagant habits .... The remedies you suggest are worse than the disease .... Honourable insolvency is the straight line.

The millions of displaced people huddled together at subsistence level in the subcontinent's refugee camps were not fated to find relief through the working of the Gandhi-Suhrawardy political partnership. For Gandhi's efforts to revive the all-India political debate proved futile. During the last months of his life the Mahatma had to come to terms with the ramifications of an accomplished Independence-with-Partition: especially, that international relations provided the only avenue of political discourse in dealing with issues of subcontinental import.

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72 Gandhi's Note to Suhrawardy (written during an interview on the Mahatma's day of silence), last week of October 1947; Fyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.483.

73 Gandhi to Suhrawardy, 27 October 1947; ibid., p.484.

74 Gandhi to Suhrawardy, 21 January 1948; ibid., p.485.
The Kathiawad 'Tangle'

Gandhi was not able to influence the way India-Pakistan relations developed in the period from mid-August to mid-October 1947. It seems that, had he been able to influence events, the Mahatma would have endeavoured to bring about a confrontation between India and Pakistan in order to resolve - by agreement, arbitration or war - the issue of communal conflict and the population transfer to which it had given rise. As it turned out, both the Indian and Pakistani Government's preferred to avoid an international confrontation over the issue.

But another issue presented itself in the aftermath of the transfer of power which did bring India and Pakistan into confrontation: the question of the choice of accession by the three princely states of Junagadh, Kashmir and Hyderabad. At the time of independence, the rulers of the three states had not yet signed their respective Instruments of Accession. So, unlike the 550 odd princely states which were integrated into one or the other of the nascent Dominions through viceregal mediation, the accession of the three recalcitrant states took place on the international - not on the Imperial - stage. By the end of 1947, the developing confrontation arising from this issue had brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war. As the situation developed, the Mahatma was provided with the opportunity to enlighten his public further on the nature of the Gandhian position in regard to the prospects of war. The issue of Hyderabad's accession did not come to a head until after Gandhi's death - more to the point, perhaps, until after Mountbatten's
departure from India in late June 1948. But the situation in both Junagadh and Kashmir became critical in the closing months of 1947, during Gandhi's lifetime.

Junagadh was a princely state in Gandhi's home region: Kathiawad. A coastal state, Junagadh was accessible to Karachi by sea, yet was also enmeshed in the mosaic of princely Kathiawad, with fragments of its territory embedded in other princely states and fragments of other states embedded in Junagadh. Two neighbouring states, Mangrol and Babariawad - both of which separately acceded to India - were subject to Junagadh's suzerainty. The Muslim Nawab of Junagadh's seven hundred thousand subjects were 82 per cent Hindu. On Independence Day the Junagadh Government announced that it had decided to accede to Pakistan - though it was not until 17 August that the Government of India learnt of this development. With more pressing matters to attend to, the Indian Cabinet asked the Government of Pakistan for clarification on its attitude to the issue. The situation developed into a crisis on 13 September when Pakistan accepted Junagadh's accession.

Junagadh's accession to Pakistan placed the Indian Government in an acute dilemma. If India acquiesced, accepting the right of

75To the discomfort of both Nehru and Patel, the first Governor-General of independent India continued to exhibit a distaste for the use of force in political relations between Indians similar to that shown by Wavell in the course of his many attempts to secure agreement between the Indian parties. In any event, land-locked Hyderabad's fate had been largely sealed by the terms of the partition settlement: it was located in the interior of peninsular South India, strategically beyond the reach of any Power other than India. There was also the problem of a communist - inspired rural rebellion dating from 1942 that was spilling over into the territory of the Indian Dominion. On 13 September 1948 (after the finish of the monsoon) the Indian Army invaded Hyderabad, defeated the Nizam's troops (in a week of fighting which witnessed about 800 battle deaths) and incorporated the state in India. In their advice to the Government, the Indian Chiefs of Staff had argued against the operation: within the Cabinet, Patel had pressed for the invasion. See H.V. Hodson, op. cit., pp.475-93.
the Nawab to decide which Dominion to join, the precedent of a Muslim ruler taking a Hindu-majority state into Pakistan would enhance the prospects of the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir bringing his Muslim-majority state into India. (This was a matter which weighed heavily with Nehru. The Pandit's personal emotions were deeply engaged over the question of Kashmir: it was the home of his ancestors.) But if Junagadh's mode of accession was accepted, there was the danger that the precedent would strengthen the claim of the Muslim Nizam of Hyderabad to the right to decide the fate of his Hindu-majority state. (The Nizam was thinking probably more in terms of securing sovereign independence for Hyderabad rather than the accession of his state to Pakistan.) Alternatively, if India intervened with military force in Junagadh, or demanded a plebiscite to determine the desires of the Nawab's subjects, the communal and geographical arguments providing the rationale for such actions would, in turn, work against the prospects that Kashmir might accede to India: communal and geographical links provided Pakistan with the stronger claim to Kashmir.

Not surprisingly, the Indian Government proceeded circumspectly in its dealings with Pakistan over the question of Junagadh. But pressure from outside Government circles quickly mounted, demanding intervention by the Indian Army to incorporate Junagadh in India by force of arms. The Nawab's brother princes of Kathiawad - who intended to construct an association of Kathiawadi states to function as a unit within the Indian Union structure - provided one source of such pressure; another source was an aroused anti-Pakistan sentiment emanating from a section of
the Indian public. There was evidence of a Gandhian involvement in stimulating the latter movement.

On 25 September a "Provisional Government" of Junagadh was proclaimed in Bombay, under the presidency of Samaldas Gandhi, a nephew of the Mahatma. The "Provisional Government" set up its headquarters in Rajkot, in central Kathiawad. It became the focus of popular agitation within Junagadh. The merchant castes of Kathiawad - the Mahatma's own caste, the Modh Banias, presumably included - led the way by organizing a boycott of the state. The boycott was effective in creating severe shortages of provisions and brought about a significant reduction in state revenue in Junagadh. Providing their own macabre counterpoint to the merchants' efforts, militant Hindu communalist groups such as the Rashtriya Swayam - sevak Sangh (R.S.S.) engaged in sporadic acts of murder, arson and looting directed at Junagadh's Muslim minority community. In late October, with the situation becoming critical, the Nawab fled to Karachi. His Diwan (First Minister), Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto (a Muslim Leaguer from Sind who had engineered Junagadh's accession to Pakistan), wrote mournfully to Jinnah on 27 October, informing the Governor-General of the combined effect of the boycott and the violence on the Muslims of Junagadh.

Today ... [the] Muslims of Kathiawar seem to have lost all enthusiasm for Pakistan .... Responsible Muslims and others have come to press me to seek a solution .... I should therefore suggest that you immediately arrange for a conference of the representatives of the two Dominions to decide the Junagadh issue.76

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76 Bhutto to Jinnah, 27 October 1947; H.V. Hodson, op. cit., p.438.
But Jinnah made no move to resolve the Junagadh issue. The lack of response by Pakistan to Bhutto's appeal would not have surprised Ismay. On 29 September, Mountbatten's "Chief of Staff" had indicated to Campbell-Johnson how he thought the Government of Pakistan would integrate the Junagadh issue into its overall policy.

Ismay, from the conversations he had with Liaquat ... is quite convinced that Pakistan's strategy is to use the whole Junagadh contest as a bargaining counter for Kashmir.77 With the Government of Pakistan keeping its own counsel on the issue, Bhutto and his executive colleagues eventually had to turn to India to restore order in Junagadh. On 5 November the Junagadh State Council decided to have "a complete reorientation of ... policy ... even if it involves a reversal of the earlier decision to accede to Pakistan."78 On 8 November Bhutto requested the Government of India to take over the administration of Junagadh79 and early the following morning Indian troops occupied the state without meeting with resistance.

In New Delhi, Gandhi occasionally commented on developments in Junagadh. In late September, the Mahatma was apparently under no illusion that Samaldas Gandhi ("His Provisional Highness") and his "Provisional Government" would be likely to adopt a non-violent mode of political action for the liberation of the people of Junagadh. As Pyarelal recalled, Gandhi held at the time that "A single look at ... [Samaldas] with a sword dangling from his waist

77Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 29 September 1947, p.244.
79See Bhutto to Buch (the Indian Regional Commissioner at Rajkot), 8 November 1947; cited ibid., pp.438-9.
was enough to belie any such expectation." But the Mahatma was, perhaps, rather restrained in his criticism of those activists readying themselves for the agitational campaign against Junagadh. In an interview with a Gandhian worker from Kathiawad who expressed his doubts that "non-violence ... would prove effective in the prevailing circumstances" in Junagadh, Gandhi told his visitor there was no need to be apologetic. As Pyarelal remembered Gandhi's words:

In democracy everybody was free to act as he felt prompted; non-violence was not a thing that could be imposed on anyone. In the context of the period - from the Indian nationalist point of view - by "democracy" Gandhi meant a sovereign India. Apparently, the arrival of independence - in itself, a transformation of Indian political conditions - called for a reconsideration of fundamental Gandhian rules of conduct. The Gandhian value system, which had given rise to such precepts, was itself determined - so it seems - by political calculations.

Two days after the occupation of Junagadh by the Indian Army, Gandhi raised the subject in an address to a prayer meeting. The Mahatma expressed his "joy" at the "happy ending of the struggle of, and on behalf of, the Junagadh people." At the same time, Gandhi referred to the reported claims of the Nawab (who had been joined in exile by Bhutto) in Karachi that "people from the Indian Union" had coerced the Junagadh authorities into requesting the assistance of the Government of India. Gandhi informed his

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81 Ibid., p.487.
82 Ibid.
83 Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 11 November 1947; D.D., p.158.
84 Ibid.
audience that he had been "painfully surprised" to learn that the Pakistan Government supported the Nawab's position, that it "resented this occupation of Junagadh by the Provisional Government," and had described the action of the Indian Army as "a breach of international law."85 In Gandhi's view, this was not the case.

So far as he could see there was no unlawfulness about the whole of the movement of the Provisional Government ... [or] the use of ... [Indian] troops at the request of the Kathiawad princes for the safety of Kathiawad as a whole .... [T]he Nawabsaheb of Junagadh had no authority to accede to Pakistan without the consent of his people, of whom 85 [per cent] ... were Hindus .... [N]either Dominion could ... justify accession by a prince in his individual capacity .... Who was to decide upon the right or the wrong of the case for Pakistan and the Union Government? Appeal to the sword was not to be thought of. The only honourable way out was ... arbitration ... by Indians ... [or] any impartial person from any part of the world.86

In the aftermath of the occupation of Junagadh, the exodus - "on a fair scale,"87 as Pyarelal recalled - of the Muslim merchant community from the Kathiawad region took place. Sind was the destination of many of the refugees - a development which, as already recounted, had unfortunate consequences for the Hindu merchant community of the province.88 In the light of this development, Gandhi abandoned his relatively quiescent attitude towards the manner in which Hindu activists were conducting the political affairs of Kathiawad. The Mahatma's pattern of behaviour arguably provided an illustration of Gandhian priorities as shaped by the novel political circumstances attendant upon

85Ibid.
86Ibid., pp.159-60.
88See Chapter Five, n.61 above.
independence. For, once the control of Junagadh had been secured for India, the Mahatma employed both public pronouncements and private communications in an attempt to persuade the activists to adopt an approach which would promote Hindu-Muslim reconciliation in Kathiawad. It seems that Gandhi was insistent that, in the exercise of power - but not, apparently, in the pursuit of power - at the very least an ostensible commitment to non-violence should provide the facade - if not inform the spirit - of Indian politicians' behaviour.

In any event, beginning in an address to a prayer meeting on 27 November, for a period of several weeks Gandhi repeatedly expressed his concern at reports of harassment of Muslims in Kathiawad - reports of "arson, loot, murders and abduction [of women]." And on 3 December the Mahatma wrote to his nephew, "His Provisional Highness" of Junagadh (who was apparently providing "provisional government" for Junagadh from Bombay) conditionally upbraiding him for the reported persecution of Muslims in Junagadh.

I am sending you herewith a wire about Junagadh that I have received. If the facts stated in it are true, you have been guilty of a very serious lapse .... I have received numerous letters from Hindus to the effect that you talk nothing but the sword. The Kathiawad tangle is not so simple as you think .... It was easy to win Swaraj, it is far more difficult to sustain it.

In tandem with his efforts to discourage the high level of communal disorder in Kathiawad, Gandhi also warned the Muslims of Kathiawad not to propagate "exaggerated" reports in foreign countries, reports that their community was "being subjected to

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89 Gandhi's Address to Prayer Meeting, 27 November 1947; R.R., p.209.
terrible atrocities."91 It seems that Gandhi had received telegrams from Iran, America and London which had referred to such reports. At a prayer meeting on 4 December, Gandhi commented on this development and issued a warning.

These foreign wires hurt him. He said this as a friend of the Muslims. It was well with them only so long as they adhered to truth. What would be the meaning of sending alarming news to foreign countries except to discredit the Union? It was wrong for them ... to carry on propaganda in foreign countries based on exaggerations. He must warn his friends against such practice.92

However, it must be said that Gandhi was acting rather belatedly in his endeavours to protect India's reputation abroad from the supposed calumnies of Kathiawad Muslims. Gandhi's remonstrances to the participants in the Kathiawad tragedy addressed the social effects rather than the political causes of the breakdown in communal relations in his home region. Indeed, the Junagadh incident perhaps demonstrated in microcosm the fact that political activists, raised on Gandhi's own nationalist prescriptions, once freed from the British, had broken the traditional social crust, thereby liberating the communal animus latent in Indian society. With the communalist hydra released, Gandhi's pious exhortations directed at its malevolent effects were, arguably, little more than salve for the lacerated Indian body social. Nevertheless, Gandhi's pattern of behaviour probably did not transgress the moral boundaries of the Gandhian value system. Delivered, as they were, subsequent to the nationalist political triumph in Junagadh, the Mahatma's exhortations were without political cost.

92Ibid.
The Kashmir Crisis

In late October 1947, during the later stages of the Junagadh episode, the situation in Kashmir suddenly became critical.

In the aftermath of independence, Hari Singh, the Maharaja of Kashmir, had declined to accede to either India or Pakistan. He was hoping for a sovereign Kashmir. As late as 26 October, the Maharaja wrote to Mountbatten querying whether it was "not in the best interest of both Dominions and of my State to stand independent." Hari Singh's reluctance to accede either way was understandable: as a Hindu monarch, Muslim Pakistan presented a forbidding fate; as a monarch, democratic India's political mode of operation boded ill for his dynasty's survival. There was also the prospect of a general revolt by Kashmir's Muslims if the Maharaja decided for India. Indeed, during September and early October, local uprisings of Muslims (especially in Poonch) and armed raids by small bands of Pathans and other tribesmen from across the Pakistan border increasingly tied down units of the Maharaja's army, stretching the internal security capabilities of the state.

In the face of this mounting threat, the Maharaja had attempted to broaden his regime's support base. He had ordered the release of Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the Kashmir National Conference - a political party which had long been agitating for the introduction of representative government in Kashmir. Upon

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his release, Sheikh Abdullah had made clear his opposition to Jinnah and the Muslim League. The Sheikh was a regional political boss of a type similar to the Khan brothers in the North-West Frontier Province, and as such was willing to co-operate with Congress - and Gandhi - at the all-India level in return for Congress support for his party's exercise of power at the regional level in Kashmir. On 3 October, in a speech to his followers, Sheikh Abdullah took a non-communal line to the issue of accession - in effect, indicating his preference for India.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is my best friend and I hold Gandhiji in real reverence .... Congress has greatly helped our movement .... Our choice of joining India or Pakistan would be based on the welfare ... of people living in Jammu and Kashmir. And even if we join Pakistan, we shall not believe in the two-nation theory which has spread so much poison.94

In late October the Maharaja's problems of internal stability were overshadowed: beginning on 20 October, a large-scale invasion of Kashmir took place by a mixed force of tribesmen and Muslim National Guards (the Muslim League's armed wing) along the main Rawalpindi-Srinagar road.

There were many similarities between the respective political developments in Junagadh and Kashmir. As was the case in respect to the Indian Government's intentions towards Junagadh, the Pakistan Government wanted to incorporate Kashmir in Pakistan. Both Dominions could base their respective intentions on the same communal principle which had determined the partition of British India. Furthermore, the initial Pakistani efforts to effect their purpose towards Kashmir had taken a similar form - albeit on a

94Sheikh Abdullah's Speech at Hazoribagh (Kashmir), 3 October 1947; Hindustan Standard, 6 October 1947; ibid., p.492.
larger scale - to the activities of Samaldas Gandhi and his fellow Indian nationalists in regard to Junagadh: boycott, and the incursion of political activists to destabilize the princely regime.\(^{95}\) There was another parallel between the Junagadh and Kashmir episodes. Like the Nawab and Bhutto, the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah decided to ignore the communal criterion in choosing to which Dominion Kashmir would accede: in late October, with the invading column of Pakistani irregulars advancing towards Srinagar, Kashmir acceded to India.\(^{96}\) The Indian Government accepted the Maharaja's accession (on 26 October) and airlifted the 1st. Battalion the Sikh Regiment from Delhi to Srinagar on 27 October. The Indian troops established a security line seventeen miles to the west of Srinagar and held the Pakistani irregulars there. By the end of October reinforcements arrived in Srinagar sufficient to stabilize the Indian military position in central Kashmir.

The events in Kashmir attracted the attention of the Mahatma. However, it was not until 11 November - two days after the Indian Army's occupation of Junagadh - that Gandhi publicly expressed his view of the Maharaja of Kashmir's accession to India. In defence of the Indian occupation of Junagadh, Gandhi maintained, in an

\(^{95}\) In a letter of protest addressed to Jinnah on 15 October, M.C. Mahajan, the Maharaja of Kashmir's Prime Minister, had listed the pressures being applied by Pakistan to his state. He wrote: "Ever since August 15 ... difficulties have been felt not only with regard to supplies from West Punjab of [provisions] ... but also with the working of the postal system. Savings bank accounts were refused to be operated. Postal certificates ... cheques ... were not honoured .... Motor vehicles ... held up .... Railway traffic ... discontinued .... The Radio of Pakistan appears to have been licensed to pour volumes of malicious, libellous and false propaganda. Smaller Feudatory States are prompted to ... intervene with armed interference into ... Kashmir." See Mahajan to Jinnah, 15 October 1947; ibid.

\(^{96}\) Mountbatten insisted on Kashmir's accession to India as a condition for Indian military assistance to the Maharaja. See H.V. Hodson, op. cit., pp.445-55; also, see Collins and Lapierre, *Mountbatten*, pp.39-43.
address to a prayer meeting, that the accession by a ruler in his "individual capacity" could not be justified, that rulers did not have the authority to accede "without the known consent of their people."\textsuperscript{97} Yet Gandhi upheld the validity of the Maharaja of Kashmir's act of accession. In the Mahatma's view, the consent of the people of Kashmir had been "made clear."\textsuperscript{98}

If the Maharaja alone had wanted to accede, Gandhiji could not defend such accession. The accession was provisionally agreed to by the Union Government because both the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdulla, speaking for the people of Kashmir and Jammu, wanted it. Sheikh Abdulla ... claimed to represent the people of Kashmir and Jammu ... the whole of the people.\textsuperscript{99}

Sheikh Abdullah's political representative claims had provided Gandhi with a convenient means of obscuring the inconsistencies in his political position over the issues raised by princely accession - inconsistencies determined by the different effects of developments in Junagadh and Kashmir on Indian state interests. But there was no ambiguity in the Mahatma's reaction to the prospect that the situation in Kashmir might lead to war. Indeed, over the issue of Kashmir - as Mountbatten's Press Attaché recorded at the time - "the Mahatma struck an almost Churchillian note."\textsuperscript{100} Campbell-Johnson's adjectival use of the British war leader's name provided an illustration of the extent to which the situation in Kashmir in 1947 - in the context of a sovereign India - had brought about a transformation of the Gandhian ethos. Just seven years prior to the fighting in Kashmir, Gandhi had expressed his strong disapproval of Churchill's policy of armed resistance

\textsuperscript{97} Gandhi's Speech to Prayer Meeting, 11 November 1947; \textit{R.R.}, p.160.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., pp.160-1.
\textsuperscript{100} Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 29 October 1947, p.266.
to the military expansion of Nazi Germany. In July 1940 Gandhi had published an article, "An Appeal to Every Briton," advising the British on how to proceed against the Nazi threat in the alternative, Gandhian mode.

[W]ar is bad in essence .... I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless .... You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of your beautiful island .... If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourselves man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them.\(^\text{101}\)

But on 29 October 1947, in an address to a prayer meeting, Gandhi expressed rather different views on the rectitude of the political decision of sending Indian troops into action in Kashmir to hold a security perimeter on the western outskirts of Srinagar.

[I]t was right for the Union Government to rush troops ... to Srinagar. That might save the situation to the extent of giving confidence to the Kashmiris .... The result was in the hands of God. Men could but do or die. He would not shed a tear if the little Union force was wiped out, like the Spartans, bravely defending Kashmir nor would he mind the Sheikhsaheb and his Muslim, Hindu and Sikh comrades, men and women, dying at their post in defence of Kashmir. That would be a glorious example to the rest of India. Such heroic defence would infect the whole of India.\(^\text{102}\)

The disturbed conditions in Kashmir produced a crop of refugees. Consistent with the position he had taken the previous year with regard to the situation in Noakhali,\(^\text{103}\) Gandhi's abhorrence of what he saw as cowardice far outweighed his reputed opposition to participation in undoubted violence. At a prayer

\(^\text{103}\)See Chapter Four, n.70 above.
meeting on 1 November, Gandhi admonished those Kashmiris who sought safety in flight.

[T]hose who were fleeing from Kashmir ... should learn to be brave and fearless and should be prepared to lay down their lives in defence of their homes. This applied equally to all .... He would not mind if the whole of the military and the people of Kashmir died at their post in defence of fair Kashmir.\(^{104}\)

The military confrontation in Kashmir between the Pakistani irregulars and the Indian Army brought the two Dominions to the brink of war. Upon learning of the despatch of Indian troops to Srinagar, Jinnah gave orders for Pakistani troops to be sent into Kashmir to cut the road connections between Srinagar and East Punjab. General Gracey, acting Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army (in the absence of General Messervy), refused to comply; instead, he summoned Field Marshal Auchinleck from New Delhi. On 28 October Auchinleck met Jinnah at Lahore, emphasized that the Pakistan Army's British officers would be withdrawn from service in the event of hostilities between the two Dominions, and convinced Jinnah that he should countermand the orders.\(^{105}\) Mountbatten exercised restraint on the war party within the Indian Government: the Governor-General persuaded Nehru not to proceed with the plans which the Indian Chiefs of Staff were ordered to prepare for the invasion of West Punjab.\(^{106}\)

Instead of war, eventually, in December 1947, the two Dominions took the issue of Kashmir to the United Nations. Over the issue of the mass population exchange, Gandhi had earlier

\(^{104}\) Gandhi's Speech to Prayer Meeting, 1 November 1947; D.D., p.125.
\(^{105}\) For an account of this incident, see H.V. Hodson, op. cit., p.457.
\(^{106}\) For an account of Mountbatten's role in this respect, see ibid., pp.467-9.
advised arbitration in preference to war.107 But, as Pyarelal recalled, when the Indian Government decided to accept arbitration over the Kashmir issue "Gandhiji was not enamoured" with the development: "It would only get then 'monkey justice', he warned."108 On 25 December, at a prayer meeting, Gandhi elaborated.

Were the Union and Pakistan always to depend on a third party to settle their disputes?... There was some talk about the division of Kashmir. It was fantastic. It was more than enough that India had been divided into two .... Where would this process end?109

In the last week of January 1948 Gandhi was interviewed by Kingsley Martin, veteran editor of the New Statesman and Nation. Martin suggested to the Mahatma that the partition of Kashmir would best serve the interests of peace — in particular, that the Poonch area (where advancing Indian troops had met with widespread local resistance) be given to Pakistan. Gandhi replied with "a very firm 'no' to the idea of partition of Kashmir."110 Instead, the Mahatma maintained he was working for a "heart-union" between Hindus and Muslims.111 Apparently, Martin had assumed — as so many Westerners were wont to do — that Gandhi's creed of non-violence was a faithful reflection of Western pacifist ideas. Martin was disappointed by the Mahatma's militant stand. Fifteen months

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107See Chapter Five, n.52 above. Gandhi had also advised arbitration "by ... any impartial person from any part of the world" over the Junagadh issue; see Chapter Five, n.86 above. Of course, geographical and communal considerations provided India with a much stronger claim to Junagadh than to Kashmir: an arbitration decision on the Junagadh dispute would have likely favoured India, whereas, in fact, the United Nation's ruling on the Kashmir issue favoured the Pakistani position more than the Indian.


111Ibid.
after Gandhi's death, Martin's reminiscences of the interview with the Mahatma were published in the *New Statesman and Nation*.

My affection for Gandhi and my knowledge that he was a great man were not impaired by the discovery that he was still a Hindu nationalist and an imperfect disciple of the Mahatma.\(^{112}\)

As seen from the Western point of view, Martin's comment was perhaps a fitting epitaph for the "Father of the Indian Nation."

But it would not be appropriate to close this account of Gandhi's later career by reference to a Western evaluation. Western values, religious or secular, take a form derived from a traditional pattern of belief in an Absolute; in the Hindu tradition, values are shaped by more contingent considerations. In his recollection of Gandhi's development during this period, Pyarelal addressed the issues arising from the apparent transformation in the Gandhian ethos as crystallized by the Mahatma's attitude to the fighting in Kashmir. Unlike Martin, Pyarelal was raised in the Hindu tradition and, moreover, he approached the question from the Gandhian devotional angle. The gist of Pyarelal's rationale was that — with independence — political conditions had changed: that, in view of the changed conditions, the Gandhian perception of Truth needed to be refocused.

\[\text{[Gandhiji] was not reconciled to war in Kashmir or for that matter anywhere. He knew non-violence was more effective than armed force. He was engaged in perfecting his weapon — which, though it had demonstrated its efficacy in the struggle for independence, needed to be refurbished and overhauled — perhaps redesigned for the duty which now awaited it .... He had ... an outline of a plan forming in his mind in this regard. But what, in the meantime ... to do in the face of the}\]

\(^{112}\) *New Statesman and Nation*, 30 April 1949; cited ibid.
aggression [in Kashmir] that bade fair to overwhelm them? His philosophy of non-violence provided no escape from the duty to resist evil with all one's strength .... [India] had to act.\textsuperscript{113}

Apparently, the peculiar Gandhian mode of behaviour was shaped by its demonstrated political efficacy. The Gandhian search for Truth - the quest for God - had thus, arguably, been reduced to a search for a formula for effective political action. It could even be asserted that if the search was successful and a proven, efficient formula arrived at, the Gandhian Holy Grail that lay at the end of the quest was the same objective as in the case of other forms of effective political action: political power. If so, Gandhian morality - at least, at this time - was itself the product of the politically contingent, the right and wrong of the Gandhian political stance being measured by observing the success or failure of the Mahatma's political moves. In his assessment of Gandhi as "an imperfect disciple of the Mahatma," Kingsley Martin probably failed to take account of Gandhian moral flexibility.

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Towards Panchayati Raj?

By late 1947, Gandhi's efforts - with Suhrawardy acting as his emissary - to revive the all-India political debate had ended in failure. Even international politics had failed to provide the arena - a negotiating room, or a battlefield - where, in direct dealings, the representatives of the people of the subcontinent would have needed to resolve their differences: neither Dominion had made an international issue of the ongoing population

\textsuperscript{113}Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.504-5.
transfer, and the Kashmir issue had been referred to the United Nations. It seemed that political events had conspired to confirm the August 1947 decision against Indian unity.

But, by the close of 1947, Gandhi had not admitted defeat and retired from the field. Rather, it can be said, he was engaged in a reassessment of his political approach; he was endeavouring to shape a new mode of political operation appropriate to post-independence Indian political conditions. His time was cut short by an assassin while he was in this transitional stage. The nature of the reformulated Gandhian platform which might have emerged from the process can, therefore, only be speculated upon. It might well have involved as radical a change of objectives and methods as his earlier transition in the period from late 1918 to late 1920: on that occasion, there was a change from Imperial army recruiting agent to nationalist organizer of a non-co-operation campaign.

In the final three months of his life, Gandhi provided indications as to the way his new approach was taking shape. It was increasingly evident that the new Gandhian message contained a central adversarial theme: opposition to the continuing existence of Congress - at least, of Congress in its post-independence statist form. Ever since the reports in early November 1946 of the outbreak of communal mayhem in Congress-dominated Bihar, privately-communicated straws in the wind had emanated from Gandhi which suggested a growing disenchantment on the Mahatma's part with the way that Congress-in-power had turned out. By November 1947, Gandhi's disillusionment with Congress was being expressed from the public rostrum. On 2 November, writing in *Harijan,*
Gandhi - as Pyarelaal put it - "cast ... aside his habitual reserve on the subject."\textsuperscript{114}

I have neither part nor say in many things that are going on in the country today. It is no secret that Congress willingly said good-bye to non-violence when it accepted power.\textsuperscript{115}

Six days later, in his last ever address to the All-India Congress Committee, Gandhi appealed to the assembled delegates to resist the trend whereby the party was becoming synonymous with a statist elite.

You represent the vast ocean of Indian humanity. You will not allow it to be said that the Congress consists of a handful of people who rule the country. At least I will not allow it.\textsuperscript{116}

Apparently, Gandhi was not optimistic that Congress would rise to the occasion and reverse the downward trend. At the close of the All-India Congress Committee meeting, Gandhi confided to his close associates:

I am convinced that no patch-work treatment can save the Congress. It will only prolong the agony. The best thing for the Congress would be to dissolve itself before the rot sets in further. Its voluntary liquidation will brace up and purify the political climate of the country.\textsuperscript{117}

During December 1947, Gandhi's opposition to the new Congress order intensified. In the second week of December Gandhi received a letter from Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya Garu, a veteran Congress leader from Andhra, a letter which complained of "the moral degradation into which the men in Congress circles have

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., p.652.
\textsuperscript{115}\textit{Harijan}, 2 November 1947.
\textsuperscript{116}Gandhi's Address to the All-India Congress Committee, 8 November 1947; Pyarelaal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.517.
\textsuperscript{117}Gandhi's Advice to his Entourage, November 1947; ibid., pp.675-6.
fallen." According to the old Andhra satyagrahi, Congress rule had introduced widespread corruption into the administration in South India.

Several ... [Congressmen] are ... making money by the use of influence even to the extent of obstructing the administration of justice in the criminal courts .... [R]evenue officials do not feel free in the discharge of their duties .... A strict and honest officer cannot hold his position .... The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better.119

In receipt of the letter from Andhra, Gandhi commented that it was "a sure sign of the decay and decline of the Congress .... [D]oes it not show that we are fit only to be slaves?"120

In January 1948 Gandhi resolved to refashion Congress on the principle that its membership "be co-extensive with all the men and women in the voters' rolls in the country."121 By such a means, the Congress organization - so the Mahatma expressly intended - would be "disband[ed]", to "flower" instead into a "Lok Sevak Sangh"122 (an association for the service of humanity). On 29 January Gandhi prepared a draft plan which outlined his ideas on how to go about the task - a plan in the form of a proposed All-India Congress Committee resolution.

[T]he Indian National Congress ... has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages .... [T]he A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation.123

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118 Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya Garu to Gandhi, second week of December 1947; ibid., p.676.
119 ibid.
120 Gandhi's Comment to his Entourage, mid-December 1947; ibid.
121 Harijan, 1 February 1948; Pyarelal, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.678.
123 ibid.
Gandhi's plan provided for the formation of a pyramid structure based on representatives of panchayats (village councils) by which "the whole of India" would eventually be covered - in effect, a model for a self-governing Indian society sans state structure. For some years after the Mahatma's death, panchayati raj was an aspect of Gandhianism - or, rather, of late Gandhianism - which continued to provide inspiration in some political circles in India. Perhaps this was partly because the timing of its publication fated the plan to be identified for posterity as Gandhi's "Last Will and Testament": the day after drafting the plan, on 30 January 1948, Gandhi was killed.

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Towards Assassination

It was against the background of his developing opposition to the Congress political order that Gandhi conducted his last ever exercise in satyagraha. It came about as a result of the

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124 Gandhi's "Last Will and Testament", 29 January 1948; ibid.
125 Gandhi's proposed pyramid structure for a self-governing Indian society was a simple, unitary model. The basic unit was the village council (panchayat) of "five [elected] adult men or women ... villagers or village-minded." Each village council would pair with the council of a "contiguous" village to elect a leader "from among themselves". Fifty such first level leaders (of one hundred grouped villages) would then elect from their own numbers a second level leader. Eventually, seven thousand second level leaders would emerge from India's seven hundred thousand villages; these second level leaders would "serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas." If the second level leaders deemed it necessary, they were authorized to elect from among themselves "a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups." The resulting polity would have at hand the specialist services of Gandhian organizations (of Spinners, Harijans, Hindustani - speakers and the like) which were to be "affiliate[d]" as "autonomous bodies". Gandhi made no provision for defence or internal security; he did, however, make provision for finance: "The [Lok Sevak] Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfillment of its mission from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of poor man's pice." Gandhi did not mention what would serve as currency.
Mahatma's decision on 12 January 1948 to undertake a fast unto death. He announced the decision at a prayer meeting that evening.

The fast begins ... tomorrow. The period is indefinite .... It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities .... The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige .... Just contemplate the rot that has set in in beloved India.\textsuperscript{126}

Campbell-Johnson heard the news of Gandhi's proposed fast that evening at the Gymkhana Club. He recorded in his journal the reaction of his fellow pressmen.

The general impression was that the fast was well-timed and that nothing less drastic would regain for the Mahatma the psychological ascendancy achieved in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{127}

Gandhi's fast began on the late morning of 13 January and ended a little over five days later in the early afternoon of 18 January. The Mahatma had only vaguely identified the objective: in announcing the fast Gandhi maintained that

[a] pure fast ... is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must.\textsuperscript{128}

The Mahatma had gone on to imply that the purpose of the fast was to prevent "the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam."\textsuperscript{129} Such a broad approach had its advantages: in effect, Gandhi had reserved the freedom to decide on the fast's duration. The onus was on others to induce the Mahatma to end the fast by providing him with evidence of their willingness to conform to Gandhian dictation.

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{126} Gandhi's Address to Prayer Meeting, 12 January 1948; \textit{D.D.F.}, pp.327-8.
\item\textsuperscript{127} Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 12 January 1948, p.307.
\item\textsuperscript{128} Gandhi's Address to Prayer Meeting, 12 January 1948; \textit{D.D.F.}, p.328.
\item\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Gandhi's fast elicited a considerable response. Campbell-Johnson recorded at the time his impressions of the psychology of the occasion.

You have to live in the vicinity of a Gandhi fast to understand its pulling power .... There is the unmistakable sense of everyone being drawn out of his preoccupations to share in a painful responsibility which no man can wholly ignore.\(^{130}\)

The Indian Government responded the most readily. Within twenty-four hours of the commencement of the fast the Indian Cabinet met on the lawn of Birla House - round Gandhi's bed, complete with its abstinent occupant. The current issue between the Mahatma and the Cabinet was over Pakistan's share of the cash balances included as part of the legacy of the Raj; the British had left 375 crores (375,00,00,000) rupees in the state coffers of which Pakistan had received 20 crores on 14 August 1947 as an interim payment, and - subsequent to the final allocation being determined - was owed another 55 crores. However, in response to the deterioration in Indo-Pakistani relations over Kashmir, the Indian Ministers had deferred payment; "they were not prepared" - as Pyarelal recalled - "to provide Pakistan with the sinews of war to be used in its undeclared war against the Indian Union on the Kashmir soil."\(^{131}\) On 6 January, in an interview with Gandhi, Mountbatten had described the Indian action as "dishonourable."\(^{132}\) Nehru was willing to honour the agreement, but - with a view to the settlement of the Kashmir issue and various financial adjustments between the two Dominions - was holding out for an

\(^{130}\)Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 12 January 1948, p.308.
\(^{132}\)See ibid.
"overall settlement."

Patel provided the main focus of the opposition within the Cabinet to transferring the funds to Pakistan. So, in a sense, Gandhi's fast was "directed at Patel": this was "undoubtedly" the case, at least in the opinion of K.M. Panikkar, the Maharaja of Bikaner's First Minister, as communicated on 16 January to Campbell-Johnson. In any event, on 16 January the Indian Cabinet decided to release the 55 crores of rupees to Pakistan, as a means - so a Government communique read - of making a "tangible and striking contribution" towards improving Indo-Pakistani relations.

At the popular level, the response to Gandhi's fast was more patchy. True, by 18 January the party and community leaders of Delhi had signed a pledge to "live ... like brothers and in perfect amity."

There were also well-attended processions and rallies for communal peace. Some people even joined Gandhi in his fast: these ranged from Pandit Nehru (who privately resolved to do so, beginning on 17 January) to groups of refugees in some of the refugee camps. Even Arthur Moore, the former editor of the Statesman of Calcutta, began fasting in sympathy when Gandhi began his fast. (Moore also broke his fast when Gandhi did, with a decidedly un-Gandhian cup of coffee and cigar.) But Gandhi's fast also attracted hostility, both overt and covert. The former

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133 Nehru's Statement at Press Conference, 2 January 1948; ibid.
134 See Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 16 January 1948, pp.308-9. K.M. Panikkar was appointed as India's first Ambassador to China, initially (in 1948) to the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai Shek, subsequently (in 1949) to Mao Tse Tung's Peoples' Republic. During the Korean crisis, Panikkar provided an important diplomatic link between China and the West.
136 Delhi Community Leaders' Peace Committee Pledge, 18 January 1948; ibid., p.728.
137 For an account of Gandhi's belated efforts to send "instructions" to Moore "as to the proper way of breaking a fast", see ibid., p.731.
was given expression in the late evening of 13 January by a crowd of Sikhs from the West Punjab, who demonstrated outside Birla House shouting for Gandhi's death. The latter took a more deadly form: the resolve of a group of Hindu communalist conspirators - chiefly connected with the R.S.S. - to effect Gandhi's assassination.

Gandhi ended his fast on 18 January during the hour following midday. There was not any one outstanding cause why he did so. Perhaps he felt sufficient had been achieved to secure communal peace. There was, as well, strong pressure from the Congress leadership for him to break his fast. Also, his health had been significantly affected: there was evidence of kidney failure and damage to his liver. Vincent Sheean, an American author, who was in Delhi at the time scheduled to be interviewed by Gandhi, had his own ideas on the timing of Gandhi's decision to end the fast. On 19 January Sheean confided his theory to Campbell-Johnson.

Vincent Sheean ... thinks Gandhi gave it up ... because of the change in the weather. The sun did not shine, and Gandhi had been going out and sunbathing. This would be God's way of telling his inner voice to relent and break fast. There has always been a close relationship between mystics and meteorology.\(^ {138} \)

Gandhi's first scheduled public appearance after ending his fast was at a prayer meeting on 20 January. The group of Hindu communalist conspirators who had resolved on taking the Mahatma's life used this occasion for their first attempt. They intended that one of their number - Madanlal Pahwa, a Hindu refugee from West Punjab - would explode a bomb (a slab of guncotton) on the fringe of the crowd attending the prayer meeting; in the resulting confusion, another conspirator - Digamber D. Badge, the

\(^ {138} \)Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 19 January 1948, p.312.
owner of a Poona arms shop - was to get close enough to Gandhi's
dias to kill him with a hand-grenade. Madanlal performed his part
of the plot, but Badge's courage failed him. Nobody was hurt as
Madanlal had hidden the bomb behind a wall which took the force of
the explosion. Madanlal was arrested and taken into police
custody. Lady Mountbatten hurried to Birla House but found the
Mahatma undisturbed: he told her he thought that "military
manoeuvres must have been taking place somewhere in the
vicinity."139

During the second half of January 1948, the United Nations'
Security Council debated the Kashmir issue. Campbell-Johnson
recorded at the time that the United Nations' involvement "slowed
down the tempo of the political dispute almost as effectively as
the weather ... blanketed the military operations."140 But it was
soon apparent that Pakistan had the stronger political position
(if not the stronger military position) in Kashmir. This was
demonstrated in the simplicity of the Pakistani proposal: that
all military forces - regular and irregular - withdraw from
Kashmir, and that a neutral body take over the administration of
the territory. Jinnah was evidently content to rely on the
sentiment of the Muslim majority in Kashmir to ensure the state's
eventual inclusion in Pakistan. The Indian proposal - arguing the
Indian secular nationalist case - was a more complicated affair:
that Sheikh Abdullah's party take control of the existing
administration and organize an election for a (Kashmir) National
Assembly; the Assembly would then elect a Government which would
hold a plebiscite under United Nations' supervision. In the

139 Ibid., 20 January 1948, p.313.
140 Ibid., 26 January 1948, p.313.
politics of the subcontinent, the communalist brand apparently had the advantage of simplicity. Perhaps it came more naturally.

On 26 January India celebrated Independence Day (a ritual occasion observed by Indian nationalists since 1930). But Gandhi was not in a festive mood that evening at his prayer meeting. He addressed the gathering:

What are we celebrating today? Surely not our disillusionment.141

It could be said that Gandhi's address that evening - because of its fortuitous timing as well as in view of its theme - was the Mahatma's valediction to Indian politics. In a lifetime of public activity, in the interests of his political mission, Gandhi - so to speak - had constructed a version of Indian history along the lines of a nationalist morality play. In the upshot, the desired dénouement - the metamorphosis of the British Indian imperium into a sovereign national, albeit truncated, state - had quite failed to live up to Gandhian moral expectations: manifestly, independent India's political culture was not informed by Gandhian values. The Mahatma employed the occasion of his Independence Day prayer meeting to lecture the gathering on corruption - a problem, he maintained, which "has become much worse than before."142

On 30 January the conspirators made a second attempt on Gandhi's life. Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the editor of Hindu Rashtra of Poona, intercepted the Mahatma as he made his way towards the dias to conduct the evening prayer meeting. Godse shot Gandhi three times at point-blank range. By the time a doctor had arrived at his side, Gandhi was dead.

141Gandhi's Address to Prayer Meeting, 26 January 1948: D.R., p.376.
142Ibid., p.379.
In Memory

News of the assassination of Gandhi was proclaimed from the front pages of the press throughout most of the world. As Pyarelal recalled, "[m]essages of condolence, sympathy and appreciation poured in from all quarters of the globe." With the likes of Jawaharlal Nehru, Albert Einstein and George Bernard Shaw - to name but a few - employing their penmanship to mark the occasion, the passing of the Mahatma was recorded with unsurpassed eloquence.

A sense of bereavement informed virtually all of the eulogies; apparently, the aura of the politics of protest surrounding Gandhi struck a universal chord. Perhaps the comment of Leon Blum, the veteran French Socialist politician, best brought out the quality - and the indeterminate nature - of the sense of personal loss.

I never saw Gandhi .... I do not know his language. I never set foot in his country and yet I feel the same sorrow as if I had lost someone near and dear. The whole world has been plunged into mourning by the death of this extraordinary man.144

Some mourners in the West were less introspective than Blum in expressing their sorrow. In the United States especially, the many political leaders who declared their grief at the Mahatma's death often placed particular emphasis on the moral loss they claimed the world had consequentially incurred - along the lines

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of Justice Felix Frankfurter of the Supreme Court who described
the assassination as "a cruel blow against the forces of good in
the world." Furthermore, in the American political culture, the
desire to line up with the "forces of good" was evidently widely
felt. From Japan, General Douglas MacArthur - himself between
wars (the Second World War and the Korean War) and no doubt
unaware of Gandhi's recent pronouncements on the rectitude of
employing Indian troops in Kashmir - declared:

[I]f ... [civilization] is to survive, all men
cannot fail eventually to adopt Gandhi's belief
that the process of mass application of force to
resolve contentious issues is fundamentally ... wrong.146

But, even in America - at less exalted levels, anyway - a note of
uncertainty occasionally informed the expressions of sorrow. In
California, a girl of thirteen wrote:

I was really terribly sad to hear about Gandhi's
death. I never knew I was that interested in him
but I found myself quite unhappy about the great
man's death.147

Albert Deutsch, writing in the New York newspaper P.M., offered an
explanation for the world's sorrowful reaction.

The shock and sorrow that followed the ... tragedy
shows we still respect sainthood even when we
cannot fully understand it.148

For Campbell-Johnson, in proximity to the Indian corridors of
power since Mountbatten's arrival in India, the "volume" of the
global response to Gandhi's death - as he put it - "frankly

146 General Douglas MacArthur's Eulogy of Gandhi, after 30 January 1948; ibid.
148 Albert Deutsch's Eulogy of Gandhi, P.M. (after 30 January 1948); ibid., p.23.
exceeded my expectation."\textsuperscript{149} Gandhi's evident world-wide appeal puzzled the pressman. Campbell-Johnson had observed the Mahatma from March 1947 to January 1948 acting out his role on the Indian political stage: he apparently could not think of any obvious rational reason to account for the scale of the response to Gandhi's death. With rationality at a loss, Campbell-Johnson fell back on the mysterious. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
The full meaning of his life may not be clear to many, but the importance of its mystery is recognised.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

Kingsley Martin, an old hand at interpreting the politics of protest, was available to help out his less experienced colleague. Campbell-Johnson recorded Martin's comment.

\begin{quote}
As Kingsley Martin ... put it to me, the world is not doing so well with the techniques of materialism and power politics. It recognised that Gandhi stood for something different, and, in view of his emphasis on spiritual values, probably better.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

Probably. But Martin's explanation did not describe the mechanism by which the Mahatma could find a place in the affections of such a widely dispersed audience - an audience, moreover, representing diverse political attitudes. Perhaps Gandhi had supplied to the world a fetching ideal of protest and, furthermore, had provided in his appearance and lifestyle an arresting embodiment of that ideal. Received from afar, there were many blank spaces in the Mahatma's script: with the particulars of Indian nationalism and Hindu chauvinism removed, there was not much practical substance to the Gandhian message.

\textsuperscript{149} Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., 3 February 1948, p.325.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
Gandhi's foreign admirers - especially in the West - could fill in the blank spaces with material drawn from their own personal political convictions. If, upon learning of the Mahatma's death, Leon Blum and many others instinctively felt they had lost "someone near and dear," perhaps, in a sense, the "someone" was the adopted form of their own political mirror image. Perhaps the Gandhian ideal of protest - removed from its Indian context, with its Western adepts quite oblivious of its Indian political consequences - had for many foreigners provided a vehicle for putting forward their own diverse - though probably, in the main, Western - notions of racial equality, social equity and international peace. And of course the world would mourn the assassination of the prophet of equality, equity and peace. The degree to which - if at all - the delineations of such an idealized prophet corresponded to the historical Gandhi is, at the very least, open to debate.

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On 31 January Gandhi's body was consigned to the funeral pyre at the Rajghat cremation ground beside the Jumna outside Delhi. The Ministry of Defence conducted the arrangements for the funeral. A colossal crowd lined the route from Birla House to Rajghat. Campbell-Johnson was present in the Governor-General's party, which joined the cortège at the burning-ghats. That evening, the pressman recorded his impression of the Indian cultural attitude to death arising - at least in part, so he
maintained — from the Hindu belief in immortality, a belief "rather more robust than ours."\textsuperscript{152}

It would be idle to say that the mood of ... [the] vast assembly was particularly mournful. It left much more the impression of a demonstration arising from the desire to witness a memorable spectacle.\textsuperscript{153}

On 12 February Gandhi's ashes were consigned to the waters at the Sangam — the confluence of the Ganges, the Jumna and the Sarasvati — near Allahabad.

Nathuram Godse, Madanlal and seven other members of the group of Hindu communalist activists who had resolved to kill Gandhi were brought to trial together. The trial lasted more than six months. An entirely unrepentant Godse — a Chitpawan Brahmin from Maharashtra — testified that Gandhi's last fast, and the Indian Government's capitulation to the Mahatma over the matter of the payment of 55 crores rupees to Pakistan, acted as the catalyst leading to the group's resolution to kill Gandhi. At his trial, Godse described his feelings upon learning of the Government decision.

I sat brooding intensely on the atrocities perpetrated on Hinduism and its dark and deadly future if left to face Islam outside and Gandhi inside.\textsuperscript{154}

The broader motive for the assassination of Gandhi was Godse's opposition to the Gandhian political style. Godse's newspaper, Hindu Rashtra, was violently anti-Gandhian: the principal theme articulated in its pages was that the Mahatma's approach to politics was "emasculating" the Hindus. There might have been

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 31 January 1948, p.324.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Godse's Testimony at his Trial, late 1948; Louis Fischer, op. cit., p.540.
something of a misunderstanding by Godse as to the Gandhian purpose underlying Gandhian behaviour. Indeed, there existed a curious parallel between Godse's stance in this regard and the rationale advanced by Gandhi at his trial in 1922 for his part in "exciting or attempting to excite disaffection towards His Majesty's Government ... in British India"\textsuperscript{155} - the occasion of the Non-Co-operation Satyagraha of 1921-22. At his trial, Gandhi had read a statement explaining why he had turned against the Raj.

I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in armed conflict with him .... [T]he deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence ... have emasculated the people .... India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before.\textsuperscript{156}

In entering his final plea at his trial, Godse - in less accented English - voiced a similar belief - though directed at the Mahatma, not at the British.

I felt that the Indian politics in the absence of Gandhiji would surely be practical, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with the armed forces .... [T]he nation would be free to follow the course founded on reason which I consider to be necessary for sound nation-building.\textsuperscript{157}

At his trial, Godse went on to speak approvingly of the military assault on Hyderabad by the Indian Army - the operation having been undertaken only after the demise of the Mahatma.\textsuperscript{158} And,

\textsuperscript{155}Report of the Trial of Mahatma Gandhi, 18 March 1922; R. Duncan (editor), op. cit., p.142.
\textsuperscript{156}Gandhi's Statement at his Trial, 18 March 1922; ibid., pp.148-50.
\textsuperscript{157}Godse's Final Plea at his Trial, late 1948; cited in Justice Khosla, Nathuram Godse, p.242; Ashis Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.91. Khosla was one of the judges who tried Godse and his accomplices.
\textsuperscript{158}Godse was certainly mistaken in thinking Gandhi's presence inhibited the Indian Cabinet from using military force against Hyderabad. It was Mountbatten's departure from India in June 1948, not Gandhi's assassination,
evidently, the Government of India believed that Godse's line of thinking enjoyed considerable latent support in Indian society. Unlike Gandhi's statement at his trial in 1922 (which was made available to the press), the Government of India prevented the publication of Godse's last speech - in Ashis Nandy's words - "lest it arouse widespread sympathy for the killer of Gandhi." 159

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From August 1947 to January 1948, Gandhi had the novel experience of living in an independent India. For the Mahatma,

which cleared the way (monsoon permitting) for the invasion of Hyderabad by the Indian Army in September 1948. For the background to the invasion of Hyderabad, see Chapter Five, n.75 above. Gandhi had praised the Indian Cabinet for sending troops into Junagadh and Kashmir; he would have probably done the same again in respect to the use of troops against Hyderabad.

In a more speculative vein, the record of Gandhi's interviews and correspondence from 3 July to 13 October 1946, on the subject of Portuguese rule in Goa, could quite readily be employed with a view to extrapolate that the Indian Army's invasion and occupation of Portuguese India in 1961 would have also proceeded - if Gandhi had still been alive at the time - with the Mahatma's likely blessing. For example, on 3 July 1946, during an interview in Poona with two leaders of the Goan Youth League - an organization of anti-colonial political activists - Gandhi promised his visitors: "I will exert all my influence to see that the Indian National Congress is interested in Goa and that Goa comes on the map of India." Evidently, Gandhi believed that Goa's future incorporation into India would more likely be brought about by Indian - rather that Goan - action. On 23 July 1946 Gandhi wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel: "Goa's freedom is bound to follow India's freedom. There is little perhaps the people of Goa need do for that today." Furthermore, in a speech at a prayer meeting on 2 October 1946, Gandhi declared: "Goa ... is an integral part of India ... as much ... as Kashmir or any other [princely] State." See Gandhi's Interview with Joachim Dias and Chandrakant Kakodkar, 3 July 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 84, p.407. Also, see Gandhi to Patel, 23 July 1946 and Gandhi's Speech at Prayer Meeting, 2 October 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 85, pp.45 and 413. Prior to the formation of the Interim Government on 2 September 1946, Gandhi apparently delegated to Amrit Kaur the task of pressing the Government of India to issue the Portuguese Government with "a friendly remonstrance against harsh and unjust treatment" of anti-colonial political activists in Goa. The Viceroy's Private Secretary was the official who was required to field Amrit Kaur's petitions. See Amrit Kaur to Abell, 19 July, 13 August and 17 August 1946; C.W.M.G., Vol. 85, pp.22-3, 153-4 and 177.

159 Ashis Nandy, op. cit., p.91.
the form of independence (including, as it did, partition) was, of course, a disappointment. But the last five months of his life were more than merely disappointing: for Gandhi, it was a period of profound disillusionment.

Gandhi's disillusionment with independent India arose, not surprisingly, from his expectations: since 1920, at least, the Mahatma's hopes for independent India had never been modest. In this respect, Gandhi's political expectations were bound up with his religious world view. As its nearest doctrinal equivalent to the traditional Christian belief in Heaven (the spiritual abode of God and of the righteous after death), it was an aspect of Gandhi's religion to posit the prospect—even, occasionally, the imminence—of an ideal human order to be established on Earth: Ramraj, or the rule of Ram: the Kingdom of God. Gandhianism dealt mainly in human verities, not in transcendental truths. As a way of life focused on the objective of perfecting the human condition, Gandhianism placed a very great deal of its hopes in politics.

In the course of his long political career, Gandhi had placed very great hopes on independent India. During more than twenty seven years of striving for Indian self-government, the Mahatma—in his more exalted moments, anyway—had occasionally implied that he equated Indian independence with Ramraj. On all occasions after 1920 when the subject of Ramraj had arisen, Gandhi had indicated his belief that Indian independence, at the very least, would constitute progress towards that goal. In Gandhian terms, if the independence of India was to be regarded as a worthy objective, it could not have been otherwise. Gandhi expected that
- with independence - political conditions in India would change radically for the better.

Instead, Gandhi was profoundly disappointed with independent India. But Gandhi apparently did not consider withdrawal to one or other of his provincial scenes of village uplift - the tactic he often employed in the face of political set-back at the all-India level. Indeed, there is evidence that he intended to remain indefinitely at the Centre. During September 1947, after his arrival in New Delhi, Gandhi wrote to a friend:

There is no prospect of my ever returning to Sevagram. 160

Gandhi never did return to Sevagram. Instead, he remained for the rest of his life close at hand to the Indian Cabinet to offer a steady stream of advice on the conduct of state affairs. But the Mahatma's main item of advice - on the imperative of bringing to a head the crisis between India and Pakistan arising from the population exchange - did not appeal to the Indian Government. To Gandhi's disgust, the issue was not resolved by agreement, or arbitration, or war: the problem of Indian communal enmity between Hindus and Muslims was internationalized. Set free from Imperial restraint to act out their state imperatives on the world stage, the representatives of India and Pakistan hammered the last nail into the coffin of a central Gandhian thesis: that Hindu-Muslim enmity in India was a creation - and an ongoing dependent condition - of British Rule. The truth emerged that, in more than seven centuries of close contact, Hindu-Muslim hostility had worked its way into the very vitals of Bharat Mata (Mother India).

For Gandhi, the historical realization of this fact carried with it cultural humiliation as well as political disappointment.

But Gandhi himself could exhibit the spirit, as well as realize the fact, of the Indian social trait of Hindu-Muslim divisiveness. In this respect, in the face of the scramble between India and Pakistan for control of Junagadh and Kashmir, the Mahatma's Hindu priorities were made evident. Indeed, it could be said that Gandhian all-inclusive religious claims failed the test. The outcome of the Junagadh issue was never in much doubt; Gandhi left his nephew, Samaldas, and his nationalist activist associates to seal the fate of the Nawab's state, the Mahatma inhibiting their progress with the enunciation of Gandhian precepts only after the occupation of Junagadh by the Indian Army. But the situation in Kashmir was more closely balanced between India and Pakistan; the Hindu nationalist in Gandhi came to the fore as the issue became critical. As Indian troops were rushed to the battle zone, the Mahatma's militant pronouncements in support of the Indian Government's move buried another myth: the widely-held view that the Gandhian approach to war was at one in spirit with normative Western pacifist ideas. In the case of this burial, however, the coffin was probably empty: Western impressions rather than Gandhian values were the source of the myth: cowardice, not violence, provided the antonym of Gandhian non-violence.

Gandhi had often described the development of his ideas as a "search for Truth." The novel political conditions attendant on independence evoked a response from the Mahatma which promised further progress in the Gandhian quest. Gandhi's response was in keeping with the established pattern of his political development.
In 1893, the novel political conditions he found upon his arrival in Natal had impelled Gandhi to combine his profession as a lawyer with a career as a constitutional political activist. In 1906, in the face of repeated disappointment in effecting constitutional change, Gandhi had developed a new agitational political technique to parallel his constitutional political activities. In 1919-1920, disillusioned with the British Imperial system, Gandhi had abandoned constitutionalism in favour of a complete commitment to a more radical agitational approach. In 1947-48, with independence achieved, Gandhi was once again disillusioned, and provided evidence that he was rethinking his position and refashioning his political line of approach. His untimely death cut short this last period of reassessment before his new approach was fully developed. But one central aspect of the latest Gandhian approach was evident: in place of the British Imperial problem, Gandhi was beginning to focus on the Congress problem. There was a fundamental continuity informing this overall development: since his student days in London, Gandhi's voice had always been raised against the status quo. The politics of protest provided the common denominator rationalizing Gandhi's political progress.
CONCLUSION

In the period from 1944 to 1948 Britain ended its rule over India. The British progressively divested themselves of the power and impediment of Empire, by degrees delivering the reins of government to Indian hands.

But independence in India was accompanied by a parallel development: the partition of the erstwhile imperium into two sovereign states - India and Pakistan. For most Indian nationalists the achievement of independence was flawed by this division of the subcontinent.

The British did not insist on partition as a necessary condition attendant on their withdrawal from India. Indeed, they would have preferred a unitary succession. But the Indian parties could not be brought to agree on a power-sharing arrangement for an independent united India. The transfer of power by the British to two separate Dominions was a political requisite insisted upon by Indians.

Yet not all Indians wanted partition: indeed, had the question been decided by popular vote the decision would probably have been overwhelmingly for a united India. But the Indian public was not consulted: on this issue, the power of decision was reserved by the Indian political elite operating at the all-India level. It was, however, the dominant faction within the Indian political elite whose desires in this matter were met. The partition of India was decided upon by the Congress establishment. With virtually nothing original to contribute at the political level, but supported by an efficient technical staff, Mountbatten "discovered", and quickly put into effect, the scheme by which the
transfer of power could be most readily accomplished. In nearly all accounts — that is, in nearly all British and Congress accounts — it was a happy ending of Empire: the British withdrew painlessly from India — the last regiment sent on its way in March 1948 with the fond farewells of hundreds of thousands of moist-eyed Indians gathered at the Bombay docks — and Congress took sovereign receipt of nearly eighty per cent of the subcontinent.

Congress priorities determined the partition of India: in the final instance, the urge to exercise sovereign power over most of India was given precedence over the likelihood of exercising limited power over all of the subcontinent.

* * *

The causes of the partition of India are bound up with the earlier development of British rule in India and of the Indian nationalist movement.

The unity of India was a British Imperial achievement. Indeed, the British, perhaps assisted by their original view of the subcontinent from its maritime approaches, had virtually invented the all-India political category. But it was a category accepted by the Congress in its early years, and accepted by Gandhi from the time of his earliest links with the Congress.

From 1920, Gandhian political ideas often accounted for the appearance, not infrequently determined the substance, and increasingly informed the spirit of Congress politics. Thus ensconced in the ranks of the nationalist leadership, Gandhi set out to end the Raj. As the first step in this political programme, Gandhi inspired the main body of the nationalist
movement to reject the British form of political acculturation. Subsequently, applied Gandhianism inspired strong elements within the nationalist movement to form themselves into a tighter, more disciplined body - a process which, however, was culturally as well as politically informed. But not all Indians could comfortably move about in this milieu. This was particularly the case with Indian Muslims, few of whom made the transition.

The Muslim League and many lesser parties constructed their platforms largely in response to the Gandhian advent. During these formative years, Gandhianism to a considerable extent set the tone of Indian politics. A quarter of a century after the advent of Gandhi in all-India politics, 'Gandhianism', at a profound level, informed the Indian political culture - an increasingly polarized political culture - within which the independence debate took place.

At first sight, it might seem startlingly inappropriate to claim that Gandhi contributed significantly to the divisiveness informing Indian politics at the approach to independence: the appeal for human harmony was such a prominent plank of the Mahatma's platform. Nevertheless, the present writer holds this opinion. Gandhianism played an important part in shaping the political context which gave rise to Indian Muslim separatist demands. The ambiguity in Gandhianism arose because Gandhi's political enthusiasm was not primarily focused on the pragmatic - and, perhaps it could be said, culturally neutral - objective of achieving the independence of a united India; the Mahatma wanted united India to achieve a particular kind of independence. In pursuit of the Gandhian particular, the Mahatma contributed to the nationalist failure to secure the unity of a nascent independent
India. Gandhi's hopes - and, for that matter, the hopes of Jinnah - were not to be fulfilled. For, increasingly, H.M.G. resolved on a speedy withdrawal from the subcontinent, irrespective of the willingness or otherwise of the Indian parties to take receipt of an undivided Imperial legacy. The British refused to dictate an independence scheme - to insist on "the right thing" - for a united India: the Muslim League - and, in a sense, the Mahatma - was left to an Indian fate. In the end, the only compromise Jinnah could extract from Congress was one shaped by the ostensible logic of Indian Muslim separatist demands. In paying off Jinnah, the Congress establishment used a coin - partition - which minimized their loss of power. Better a "moth-eaten" India than a "maimed" Congress rule. Gandhi seemingly acquiesced.

* * *

But this thesis has argued that Gandhi the person, and not just 'Gandhianism', played a significant role in Indian politics in the last four years of his life. His personal role in those last years was not merely that of acquiescence.

In the traditional view, as India advanced towards independence and partition, Gandhi became an increasingly marginal political figure. On the surface, there is some truth in this traditional view. As we have seen, during the period the Indian political centre stage was occupied increasingly by other actors: Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Liaquat and others. With the arrival of independence, the Mahatma was perceived - and Gandhi often described himself - as having been relegated to the sidelines of
the political arena, there left to lament the "vivisection" of Mother India.

But there is only some truth in this traditional view: in fact, the Mahatma was never irrelevant to the course of Indian politics. In the last four years of his life, the rulers of India could never afford to ignore Gandhi. At the beginning of the period, Churchill - on 5 July 1944, D-Day plus 28 days - turned his attention from the progress of the battle of Caen long enough to send a direct communication to the Viceroy, querying the accuracy of the medical reports upon which permission for the release of Gandhi had been based. The Bengal famine, with its million odd deaths, never inspired the British Prime Minister to demonstrate a similar level of interest in Indian affairs. And towards the end of Gandhi's life, two weeks before his assassination, the Cabinet of a sovereign India judged it politic to hold its deliberations on the lawn of Birla House, around the bed of the fasting Mahatma.

In the last years of British rule it was, to begin with, the British who brought the Mahatma back on to the all-India centre stage, thus providing the prospect of all all-India Gandhian performance. It was the British who released Gandhi from state custody in May 1944 - more than a year before the release of the Congress High Command - giving the Mahatma a full year's grace in which he had, so to speak, the nationalist end of the all-India court to himself. In June 1945, when Wavell announced to the Indian public his intention of inviting the leaders of the Indian parties to confer with the Viceroy in Simla, Gandhi was the figure explicitly singled out by the highest authority in the land as the "recognised leader" of Congress. And again, in March 1946, with
the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in India, Gandhi was summoned
to the centre of the all-India political stage, there to remain
during three months of top-level constitutional negotiations. In
the intervals between the main rounds of negotiations, meetings
between the Mahatma and leading British officials — Wavell, Casey,
Mountbatten, Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps and others — provided for
the Indian public numerous reminders of the importance of Gandhi
in British perceptions. The activities of British and other
Western pressmen, and the public presence of a British following
of Gandhian devotees and associates — Madeleine Slade, Agatha
Harrison, Horace Alexander and the like — reinforced the effect.

So Gandhi's political credentials held him in good stead in
British perceptions during most of this period; perhaps it could
be said that the British found it easier to handle Gandhian
verities than Indian complexities. And to the very end of his
life the Mahatma remained indisputably the supreme symbol of
legitimacy in Indian nationalist perceptions. It has to be
recognized, however, that Gandhi's ability to influence the course
of Indian politics did diminish: a Gandhian genie was at large
informing the spirit of Indian political attitudes, but the genie
was not necessarily at the Mahatma's command. This was most
obviously the case in regard to Indian Muslim politics. In 1944
Gandhi was unable to reach a power-sharing agreement with Jinnah,
and from November 1946 to February 1947, in the rural beyond of
East Bengal, the Mahatma's efforts to mobilize politically the
Muslim masses of Noakhali were a dismal failure. The halcyon days
of the Mahatma's alliance with the Ali brothers, and of his
leadership of the Khilafat movement, were long gone.
Even within Congress, the Mahatma's ability to control events declined. During late 1945, the recently released Congress leaders were unwilling to accept the Gandhian line: they needed the Mahatma's presence in their deliberations, along with his endorsement of their policies - but they did not want his leadership. Of course, this had happened before: in times of confrontation with the Raj Gandhi had been summoned to the forefront of the party leadership, and in times of British-Congress co-operation he had retreated into the background. But during this period of the transfer of power, Congress co-operation with the British constitutional process was the only policy the Congress establishment were willing to entertain. Paradoxically, the Congress policy of co-operation with the British nevertheless brought Gandhi to the forefront of the Congress leadership - or, at least, ostensibly so: as we have seen, until mid-1946, the British - perhaps a little oddly - looked for a Gandhian involvement in the negotiating process. But with the Congress establishment's assumption of state power - first on 2 September 1946 in an Interim Government, later on 15 August 1947 in political control of a sovereign if truncated India - there was virtually no prospect that Congressmen would ever again require the Mahatma's leadership. Assisting this development in the interim period, the last Viceroy - highly susceptible to ministerial, that is Congress establishment, advice - was, from early April 1947, firmly discouraged from the usual British practice of bringing the Mahatma forward into the political spotlight.

Nevertheless, Gandhi managed to hold some ground in the ranks of the Congress leadership. In late 1945, in the Nature Cure
Clinic at Poona, Gandhi enjoyed three months of proximity to Patel during the period of the Sardar's deployment of Congress resources for the central and provincial election campaigns - regarding both the choice of candidates and the use of party finances. And in December 1945 the Congress leaders briefly summoned the Mahatma forward, not to arouse mass support for a confrontation with the Raj, but rather to quieten the rising crescendo of anti-Imperial enthusiasm which had threatened to get out of hand. It was an episode symptomatic of the continuing usefulness of the Mahatma to the Congress leaders, despite their unwillingness to follow Gandhi into any further mass confrontation with the British - a tactic never again adopted by Congress after 1942. Later, in 1947, when Indian mass enthusiasms of a different kind - more primordial than the nationalist type - set the communal scene ablaze, Gandhi's mass pacifying skills were to be an important Congress political resource. Gandhi's success in this respect reached its zenith in Calcutta in early September 1947 - too late to prevent the partition of the subcontinent, but of sufficient note to induce the Congress leaders to request Gandhi's presence in the capital, to try to arrest the communal carnage in the nearby Punjab.

* * *

Perhaps the most important conclusion to emerge from this study is that Gandhi's eventual preparedness to collaborate with the Congress leaders in effecting their independence-with-partition scheme did not betoken the Mahatma's willingness to accept the permanent exclusion of the Muslim majority regions of the subcontinent from his plans. It could be argued - and many
have argued - that, after 15 August 1947, Gandhi settled down readily enough as a dutiful citizen of the Dominion of India; on the surface, many of the Mahatma's activities seem to provide evidence to support such a view. The present writer, however, believes otherwise: that, in Gandhi's view, the formation in August 1947 of the Dominion of Pakistan was merely the regrettable consequence of the tactical concession of partition - something to be reversed, and the loss to be recovered, at the earliest opportunity. In the aftermath of independence, such an approach implied a willingness to rely on the superior strength of the Indian Army relative to the Pakistani Army in an eventual dénouement, rather than to rely on a Hindu voting majority in an all-India democratic polity. For his part, Gandhi made the transition to the new position without any noticeable moral strain. Democracy was an instrument (albeit an ethically informed instrument: in the Hindu tradition the sanction of large numbers of people could be taken as evidence of accord with cosmic principles), not an objective, of Gandhian purpose. And there was a considerable body of opinion within the Congress establishment which was open to persuasion in the matter of Pakistan. Accordingly, Gandhi took up residence in New Delhi, close to independent India's seat of power. There, Gandhi endeavoured - in the face of his and Suhrawardy's failure to reopen the all-India political dialogue with Jinnah - to fashion the rationale for a war policy based on the Indian state's evidently greater efforts to protect its minorities and the supposed need to reverse the ongoing population exchange.

However, the refugee problem did not lead to war between the new Dominions: the Government of India - at least, during
September 1947 - was more concerned in coping with the threat to the internal security of the Delhi region posed by the population influx from the West Punjab. It was towards the end of 1947, over the fortuitous issue of Kashmir, that war between India and Pakistan became a real prospect. In New Delhi, the Mahatma gave his moral support to the war party. But, once again, war did not eventuate - at least, not during Gandhi's lifetime. The residual British presence in the subcontinent - the British officers in the Pakistani Army and the British occupant of Government House in New Delhi - exercised sufficient restraint. Again, it could be argued, the British influence had prevented the resolution of the problem of Indian unity.

* * *

The summons to New Delhi in September 1947, as the Congress Government struggled to suppress the communal fury there and in the Punjab which threatened the very existence of the vulnerable young Dominion, set the scene for Gandhi's final performance on the Indian political stage. However, the Mahatma found the hordes of dispossessed, revengeful West Punjab refugees generally unresponsive to his pleas for communal goodwill. The despatch of Suhrawardy to Karachi was an attempt by Gandhi to provide himself with a link to Jinnah and the Government of Pakistan. But, with independence, all-India had ceased to be a functioning political reality. Gandhi's efforts to summon up the ghost of all-India politics failed to elicit a response: Jinnah ignored the Mahatma's messenger and his message. That, it could be said, was Gandhi's supreme political failure in our period. Perhaps
Gandhi's emissary was ill-chosen. In any event, after the Mahatma's death Suhrawardy made his last political statement on the all-India stage: he made a final journey to Pakistan - as a refugee.

In the end - but only in the end - Gandhi found that he was thwarted at both the level of mass politics and on the all-India political stage. Only one other avenue remained for Gandhi to explore in his efforts to keep alive the issue of subcontinental unity: international politics. So, in a supreme irony, the Mahatma was drawn to attempt to effect Indian unity - or, at least, to fashion a variant form of Indian unity - by focusing on the problems arising on the international frontiers vivisecting Mother India - perhaps to remould their contours, even to melt them altogether, in the crucible of war. Even if all-India unity should, in the final instance, prove elusive - Gandhi might have reasoned - an emphasis on a highly charged international issue might well have brought together for a common purpose the citizens of the Dominion of India. But, in the upshot, even international politics failed to provide the Mahatma with the desired political flashpoint at which the depressing spectacle of Indian communal divisiveness might have been transformed suddenly into an exhilarating display of Indian national unity: after 1945, the victorious Allied Powers had fashioned a new international order with a view to discouraging war. To the Mahatma's disgust, the Indian Government delivered up the critical frontier issue of the day - the Kashmir issue - for United Nations' mediation.

* * *


By January 1948, Gandhi had reached the end of his political career. But only with hindsight was it, in fact, the end. For the Mahatma himself, it was only the end of a period - the end of a chapter, so to speak - of his political life. In Gandhian terms, it could hardly have been otherwise. In the Hindu tradition, an ending is expected to entail a new beginning: death issues in rebirth.

In earlier periods of his life, Gandhi had experienced other endings: in 1906-7, the end of his activity as a purely constitutional politician; in 1919-20, the end of his political allegiance to the British Empire. Both these earlier endings had provided the occasion for new political departures: respectively, Gandhi's development in South Africa of satyagraha and the Mahatma's leadership of an all-India nationalist agitational campaign. Demonstrably, when faced with such endings, Gandhi had been willing to search for new truths even at the expense of the old.

In January 1948 Gandhi was searching for a new role in Indian politics. In order to pursue the Gandhian quest for Truth in a sovereign India, the Mahatma was in the process of shedding the political role he had adopted in 1919-20, while at the same time assigning himself a new function - a function relevant to the novel political conditions of independent India. One feature - possibly the salient feature - of the new Gandhian political stance had already emerged into view: the Mahatma's (at least, ostensible) resolve to do away with the Congress party/state structure in favour of the development of panchayati raj - the devolution of power to village councils. In late January 1948, during this transitional period, the contingent intervention of
Nathuram Godse brought the saga of Gandhi's involvement in India politics to an abrupt close.

The nature and purpose of the Mahatma's new political role - had he been given enough time to develop to the full his new approach - can only be speculated upon. As evidence of Gandhi's latest intentions for India, panchayati raj - in itself - poses more questions than it provides answers. But, it was in character that question marks should beset Gandhi's political epitaph. Ever the elusive politician, it was appropriate that the Mahatma's last move in Indian politics should accord with the spirit of the Gandhian enigma.
GLOSSARY

ahimsa: non-violence
Akali: literally a worshipper of the eternal one; a member of the extreme Sikh nationalist party
akhand: united
anna: the sixteenth part of a rupee
ashram: a retreat or home for community living
Azad Hind: Free India
Bania: Hindu trader or shopkeeper, usually also a moneylender
Bapu: literally Father; Gandhi was addressed in this way by many of his more intimate Indian associates
bazaar: market
Bhangi: a sweater or scavenger, considered the lowest of the Untouchables
brahmacharya: observance of celibacy
Brahmin: the highest, priestly caste among the Hindus
charkha: spinning-wheel
crore: ten million
dacoit: a brigand or robber
darshan: inner vision
dhoti: loin cloth
Diwan: Chief Minister of a Princely State
durbar: the court of a ruler, or a ceremonial assembly
fakir: a Muslim recluse
fatwa: a political opinion as enunciated by the leader of a Muslim religious congregation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>goonda</td>
<td>hooligan</td>
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<tr>
<td>gurdwara</td>
<td>Sikh temple</td>
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<td>guru</td>
<td>a religious teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harijan</td>
<td>literally the people of God; a term coined by Gandhi for the Untouchables; the title of Gandhi's weekly paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>hortal</td>
<td>a strike, especially a shopkeepers' strike</td>
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<td>himsa</td>
<td>violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Id</td>
<td>Muslim festival commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son (Ishmael)</td>
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<tr>
<td>jai</td>
<td>victory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jat</td>
<td>an agricultural tribe (caste) of north-west India, comprising people of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths</td>
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<td>Jihad</td>
<td>the religious duty of Muslims to strive to establish the sway of Islam; crusade</td>
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<tr>
<td>khadi</td>
<td>hand-loom cloth woven of hand-spun yarn</td>
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<td>Khilafat</td>
<td>the office of Caliph, the theocratic head of the Muslim world</td>
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<td>kirpan</td>
<td>a small dagger, a religious item of the Sikhs</td>
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<tr>
<td>lakh</td>
<td>one hundred thousand</td>
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<tr>
<td>lathi</td>
<td>a wooden stick, sometimes bound with iron rings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lok Sevak Sangh</td>
<td>association for the service of humanity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahatma</td>
<td>Great Soul; a Hindu title of great respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maulana</td>
<td>a learned Muslim</td>
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<tr>
<td>mohalla</td>
<td>a residential quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Momin</td>
<td>a Muslim weaver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nawab</td>
<td>a Muslim title of rank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nawabzada</td>
<td>son of a Nawab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netaji</td>
<td>Leader; the title by which Subhas Chandra Bose became known</td>
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<tr>
<td>pak</td>
<td>pure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>village council of five elected persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pandit</td>
<td>honorific term applied to a learned Brahmin</td>
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<tr>
<td>purdah</td>
<td>literally a veil or curtain; the Muslim practice of keeping women in seclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>purna-swaraj</td>
<td>complete independence</td>
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<td>Quaid-i-Azam</td>
<td>the Great Leader; the title by which Jinnah became known amongst Muslim Leaguers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raj</td>
<td>kingdom, rule or sovereignty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>Muslim month of fasting (during daylight)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ramanama</td>
<td>the name of Rama or God</td>
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<tr>
<td>rupee</td>
<td>the Indian and Pakistani unit of currency</td>
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<tr>
<td>sabha</td>
<td>association; society; organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sardar</td>
<td>chief; an honorific term for a nobleman</td>
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<tr>
<td>satyagraha</td>
<td>literally &quot;truth force&quot; or &quot;soul force&quot;; a term coined by Gandhi to denote his technique of asserting truth so as to effect political change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>Untouchables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharia</td>
<td>Islamic law</td>
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<tr>
<td>swadeshi</td>
<td>literally of one's own country; denoted the economic doctrine of preferential use of the products of one's own country</td>
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<tr>
<td>swaraj</td>
<td>self-government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thana</td>
<td>police station; area of its jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ulema</td>
<td>persons versed in Islamic religious law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakil</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>zoolumraj</td>
<td>tyranny</td>
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</table>
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