

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS PAKISTAN

As the Moghul Empire in India crumbled, British East India Company extended its sway over the country. The defeat of Nawab Sirajuddowla at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 brought Bengal under the indirect control of the British East India Company. Nawab Mir Kashim made a valiant effort to regain supremacy but at the Battle of Buxar in 1764 he was defeated. The British East India Company obtained the Dewani of Bengal from the nominal Moghul Emperor, Shah Alam. The dependence of Emperor Shah Alam or the Nawab of Oudh on British might became the determining factor in the polity of India. South India and northwest India gradually came under the sway of the Company. Under British rule for nearly a century and a half, India was somewhat of a united polity. Independence from the British rule in 1947 saw the partition of the country into two sovereign states, India and Pakistan. [See Chronology of Events Leading to Independence of India and Pakistan, Appendix 3, pp.400-401.] The basic reason for the partition of the country was the misunderstanding between the two major religious communities —the Hindus and the Muslims. In the last days of united India positive hostility characterised the relations between the two communities and communal riots took heavy toll of human lives. The comparative backwardness which engulfed the erstwhile ruling class vis-a-vis the other community was perhaps the more fundamental reason for the partition of British India.

MUSLIM POLITICS IN THE FIRST CENTURY OF BRITISH RULE

Under the British rule, the Muslim community suffered in every walk of life. The rulers naturally suspected them and therefore favoured other communities. The Muslims could not easily forget that they were the erstwhile rulers and could not accept a subordinate position in society. They accepted their defeat with sullenness and continued to harbour animosity towards their victors. The loss of ruling authority greatly deflated the entire community. Very soon they also lost economically as ownership of land passed on to other hands. Lord Cornwallis introduced the permanent resettlement system in 1793. A large number of moneyed traders from Calcutta availed of this opportunity to become landlords (*zamindars*). Then the operation of the sunset law, under which the estates of defaulting landlords were put to auction, installed a large number of managers and clerks of Muslim landlords as the new *zamindars* in their place. For a while Muslims continued to hold important positions in the government specially in revenue collection and dispensation of justice. But as Persian was substituted by English as the official language of the courts of law in 1837 they lost this advantage too. Sullenly they stayed away from English education, emphasised religious education and relapsed into obscurantism. They were so uninterested in modern education that trust funds for Muslim education could not be used for them. Hoogly College was established in 1836 and trust funds left by Haji Mohammed Mohsin for promotion of Muslim education were used in setting it up. But in 1850 only five percent of the students of this college were Muslims.¹ The deprivation of Muslims in all walks of life was so evident in the nineteenth century.

The Puritan movement begun in early eighteenth century by Shah Waliullah of Delhi, by a curious turn of events became the inspiration for militant religious movements a century later. Syed Ahmed of Barielly, Titu Meer of West Bengal, Haji Shariatullah and his son Dudu Mia of Faridpur were both religious leaders and social reformers. They urged adherence to Puritanism and at the same time challenged repression and

injustice. Faraidi movement of Bengali Muslims and Tariqah-e-Mohammadiya movement of central Indian Muslims aimed not only at purification of religion but also at political mobilisation against the infidel and unjust British rulers.² British suspicion of Muslim loyalty under the circumstances was only natural. Muslims were systematically ousted from positions of importance and the vacuum was filled by members of the Hindu community. The Muslim decline and fall began "ever since the British occupation of the country. Every change, executive, administrative or legal, introduced by the British, inflicted a series of blows on the Muslim community."³ In Bengal the suppression of Muslims was particularly vigorous because it was the hot-bed of anti-British politics. This became more so after the abortive liberation struggle of 1857. The liberation war was a disorganised uprising by armed elements with limited social mobilisation and strong loyalist elements resisted it. One of the immediate effects of this struggle was deliberate elimination of people from Bengal and central India from the defense forces and induction of loyalist Punjabis and Sikhs in their place.⁴

The social and economic development of the Hindu community in Bengal in the first century of the British rule in India was as remarkable as the backwardness of the Muslim community. Bengali Hindus flourished under state patronage. The fact that the seat of the government was in Calcutta right up to 1911 helped the advancement of the Bengali community. Bengalis did well in securing government jobs and receiving government favours. They also wielded the greatest influence on the rulers. The first institutions of western education were set up in Bengal and Bengali Hindus took full advantage of the new facilities. Most of the Indian scholars at Fort William College, established in 1800, were Hindus. As early as 1816 the Hindu college was established. The acceptance of English education by the Hindus moved them ahead of Muslim community. Raja Ram Mohan Ray set up the Brahma Samaj in 1828 and this was a milestone in Bengali renaissance which was a monopoly of the Hindu community. A comparable Muslim institution did not come about until 1863 when Nawab Abdul Latif established the

Muhammedan Literary Society of Calcutta.⁵ The comparative backwardness of the Muslims was highlighted in W. W. Hunter's *Indian Mussalmans* published in 1871. There was not much exaggeration in the following description provided by Hunter:⁶

A hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born mussalman to become poor, at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich.... During the last 75 years the mussalman houses of Bengal have either disappeared from the earth or are at the moment being submerged beneath the new strata of society which our rule has developed.

MUSLIM MODERNISM IN BENGAL

In late nineteenth century in order to come into prominence the Muslims of India were required to prove their loyalty to the rulers first and then compete with the Hindus who had the advantage of an early start. The frustration from the failure of the militant social and religious movements and finally the liberation struggle called for a reconsideration of strategy by the Muslim community. This resulted in a loyalist movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1863 Calcutta Muhammedan Society was established. Sir Syed established the Scientific Society of Aligarh in 1864.⁷ Syed Ameer Ali established National Muhammedan Association in 1878.⁸ Still later in 1896, Muhammedan Reform Association came up in Calcutta as Abdul Latif and Ameer Ali were no longer on the social and cultural scene. These organisations started the Muslim intellectual renaissance in India. Islam was being rediscovered, its closeness with Christianity was being established. Acceptance of British rule from a religious point of view was being argued. A plea for scientific enquiry, learning of English and western education was being made. Enlightenment of the Muslim community, inculcation of loyalty to the rulers in them and articulation of their legitimate grievances were some of the objectives of these associations. Although it started as a loyalist movement, it marked the beginning of Muslim modernism in India.⁹

About the same time many Britishers were also advocating a fresh look at the Muslims of India. There was a genuine feeling for redressing the grievances of the Muslims and rectifying the injustices meted out to them. Sir Richard Temple, W. W. Hunter, W. A. Gregory, and Sir John Strachey, eminent people connected with the administration of and life in India, were calling for a change of attitude on the part of the rulers.¹⁰

ESTABLISHMENT OF ALL INDIA CONGRESS AND MUSLIM LEAGUE

In 1885 All India Congress was organised to provide a forum in which Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved. The moving spirit behind the organisation was a retired government official, Allan Octavian Hume.¹¹ Sir Syed rightly judged that it would run into collision with the government and requested the Muslims to shun the organisation. The organisation was soon captured by fundamentalist Hindu leaders and the Muslims were further alienated from it when it started taking anti-Muslim stand on cow slaughter, Ganapati festival and Shivaji festival. In 1886 Sir Syed organised the Annual Muhammedan Education Conference as an alternative forum for the Muslims. In 1888 he set up the Indian Patriotic Association impressing upon the Muslims not to get involved in agitational politics of the Congress. Although a few Muslim leaders from various parts of India participated in the Congress conferences, by and large Muslims kept away from it.

In 1903 the plan for partition of Bengal was made known. Bengal in those days was spread out from the border of Central Province to the end of Assam encompassing the provinces of Orissa, Bihar, Bengal and Assam of later days. This huge province was to be partitioned into two provinces, namely East Bengal and Assam and Bengal and some territorial adjustments between Bengal and Central provinces was to be made. The province of East Bengal and Assam would have an area of 106,540 square miles (275,938 square kilometres) inhabited by

thirty-one million people with its capital located at Dacca and Shillong. This would be a predominantly Muslim province as eighteen million of thirty-one million people would be Muslims. The province of Bengal on the other hand would cover an area of 141,580 square miles (366,692 square kilometres) inhabited by fifty-four million people out of whom only nine million would be Muslims. The capital of Bengal would remain in Calcutta with Darjeeling as the summer capital.¹² The partition plan was the culmination of a long-standing thinking on improving administrative efficiency by re-delimiting the boundaries of an unwieldy province.¹³ This partition came about in 1905 and was annulled in 1911. This short period meant the opening of opportunities which Muslims nowhere in India had experienced at all. Employment opportunities were there but more important was the opportunity for educational advancement.¹⁴ Partition came up for strong criticism from the Congress and very bitter opposition from the Bengali Hindu community.¹⁵ This strengthened Muslim solidarity on the one hand and increased mistrust between the communities on the other hand. The Muslims felt the urgent need for a political platform of their own.

In 1906, John Morley, Secretary of State for India in his budget speech indicated impending constitutional reforms. It was felt that the Muslim point of view should be put across to the Viceroy lest through default it was lost sight of. Nawab Mohsin-ul Mulk organised a deputation of Muslim leaders to call on Lord Minto. A representative meeting was presided over by Sir Abdur Rahim of Bengal and a deputation led by His Highness the Agha Khan waited on the Viceroy. The deputation demanded Muslim representation in elective bodies through separate electorate, weightage in Muslim representation so that they were not swept away by Hindu brute majority and greater share for the Muslims in civil services.¹⁶ These demands embodied in what is known as Simla Address of 1906 was termed as "command performance" in the Congress circle, but it marked the beginning of Muslim political activism.¹⁷ Nawab Sir Salimullah of Bengal invited all Muslim leaders of India to Dacca. Hindu opposition to partition alarmed these people and

opportunity of constitutional reforms excited them. At a convention at Shahbagh on 30 December 1906 Nawab Sir Salimullah moved a Resolution establishing the All-India Muslim League. The Muslim League emerged as a political party with three objectives namely, promotion of loyalty among the Muslims to the rulers, protection and advancement of their political rights and interests and prevention of the feeling of hostility to other communities.¹⁸

HINDU MUSLIM UNITY

While the principle of separate electorate was accepted in Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, the Muslim community received a serious jolt in the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911. The relations between the two communities deteriorated and the Muslim community got disillusioned with British sense of justice and fairplay. At that time the Congress was being led by one of the brightest luminaries of Indian politics. Gokhale's first concern was Hindu-Muslim unity and second, responsible self-government for India. Gokhale openly supported separate electorate as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. He led the Congress away from extremist positions earlier postulated under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He stood for provincial autonomy to protect the diversity in the Indian polity. Muslim League at the time was also led by a moderate leader. His Highness the Agha Khan who was elected permanent President of the League in 1907 but resigned in 1914. Another great leader, an able lieutenant of Gokhale, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, acted as an intermediary between the two parties to forge unity in the nation. Muslim League made an important move in 1913 which facilitated the evolution of a united national platform. It declared self-government as its political objective and demanded adequate and secure representation of Muslim interests in the constitutional system and the body politics of the country.

The demand for separate electorate aimed at sure and secure representation. The demand for weightage system called for adequate representation; in the Muslim majority areas Muslims

would allow more than proportionate representation to non-Muslims in lieu of more than proportionate representation that they would get in Hindu majority provinces. The demand for a large measure of autonomy was in Gokhale's scheme but Muslims gave greater emphasis to it. This emphasis sprang from a desire to protect Muslim interests; while governments dominated by Muslims could be formed in quite a few provinces, in the centre it could never be so. Gokhale died in 1915 but his efforts bore fruit in 1916; in a rare mood of accommodation Congress and Muslim League signed the famous Lucknow Pact.¹⁹ Muslim demands were acceptable to the Congress and the entire country was asking for constitutional reforms at the conclusion of the war. For the sake of Muslims of minority provinces the Muslims of Bengal and Punjab underwent sacrifice in their right of franchise. Bengali Muslims became a minority in the provincial legislature securing only 40% of the total number of seats, a sacrifice that no one else had to make. The Punjabi Muslims lost their majority but retained 50% of the seats. No Hindu majority province lost its majority in any provincial legislature.

Partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, but re-delimitation of provincial boundaries could not be prevented for long. In fact, the annulment of the partition plan contributed to emergence of a large number of provinces in the course of time. Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Assam grew out of the remnants of the Partition Plan. Later Sind was to be carved out of Bombay Presidency.

The leadership of the Congress had passed on to Mohan Das Karamchad Gandhi who landed in India in 1915. Hindu-Muslim honeymoon continued. During the first World War, India made handsome contributions to the war effort in both money and men. The issue of home rule or responsible government began to be agitated both in India and in London. In 1918 Montague-Chelmsford Reforms proposals were published. It provided for limited provincial autonomy and a system of dyarchy in transaction of government business with overriding powers granted to the representatives of the imperial authority. These proposals were far short of expectations in India, yet some of the moderate leaders including Gandhi and Jinnah were willing

to try them out. The atmosphere, however, was greatly vitiated by two developments. Rowlatt Committee report on criminal conspiracies connected with revolutionary movements brought forth repressive laws providing for arbitrary arrest and trial. These Acts were rejected by the country and massive demonstrations were staged against them. One such gathering at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar was ruthlessly attacked by General Dyer in which a large number of unarmed demonstrators were killed and maimed. Jallianwala Bagh massacre became a rallying point for anti-British agitation. Simultaneously steps were taken at the Versailles Conference to dismember Turkey which represented Muslim political and religious leadership in the world. The Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph of Islam was a revered institution in India. The end of the Khilafat was not acceptable to Indian Muslims. Agitation mounted on that score as well. In 1920 Hindus and Muslims jointly launched the Khilafat and Non-Violent Non-Cooperation movements. Ali brothers, Maulana Mohammed Ali in particular, and Gandhi were the leaders of this united movement. By 1922 the movement after a successful showing lost momentum. The Chauri Chaura incident in United Province tarnished the non-violent character of the movement and Gandhi unilaterally cried a halt to the movement. Soon afterwards Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Turkey abolished the caliphate taking the winds out of the sails of the Khilafat movement. The period from 1913 to 1924 marked the most cordial political relations between the two major communities of India. From 1919 to 1924 the Muslim League did not hold any annual conference. During this period the demand for self-rule also gained prominence.

When the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation leaders stepped out of jail in 1924, they entered a different world. Hindu-Muslim unity was gone, instead militant Hinduism was surging ahead. Suddhi and Sangathan movement began in 1923 and Rastriya Svem Sevak Sangha was organised in 1926. All of these groups wanted to convert Muslims into Hindus and hinduise followers of other religions in India. Agitation against beef-eating and playing music in front of the mosques caused innumerable communal riots.²⁰ In all its annual conferences the Muslim

League in 1924, 1925 and 1926 urged for communal settlement. Unity conferences were held beginning 1924. But the Congress would not directly condemn communal frenzy. The only silver lining was the Bengal Pact worked out by C. R. Das who had formed Swarajya Party breaking away from the Congress. Under C. R. Das, Hindu-Muslim unity continued to flourish in Bengal. But his death in 1925 and the rise of Hindu Mahasabha dashed all hopes there too. M. A. Jinnah, who was conferred the exalted title of "Ambassador of Unity" made a final effort in February 1927. He offered a compromise package in which separate electorate was given up in return for reservation of one third of the seats in central legislature for the Muslims, representation in Bengal and the Punjab on population basis and representation in other provinces in a manner where the majority community would make concessions for the minority community.²¹

In November 1927 the government appointed Simon Commission to report on India's future constitutional progress. In 1928, the Congress produced a blueprint for responsible government in the country known as Nehru Report after its chairman Pandit Motilal Nehru. The famous Nehru Report neglected Muslim demands and aspirations. It turned down the demand for provincial autonomy of the scale Muslims demanded. It refused to reserve seats for Muslims in all provinces. It did not wholeheartedly accept establishment of responsible government in backward Muslim majority provinces. It did not clearly recommend carving out of Sind which would be a Muslim-majority province.²² Muslim response to the Nehru Report was the Fourteen Points of M. A. Jinnah announced in 1929.²³ The representation of Muslims in the services, in elective offices and in the government in general and preservation of the distinctive Muslim culture were the cornerstones of Muslim demands.

COMMUNAL POLITICS AND THE DEMAND FOR PAKISTAN

Hindu Muslim relations which remained tense between 1924 and 1927 finally ruptured in 1928. Maulana Mohammed Ali, a devoted Congress member, left the organisation altogether.

M. A. Jinnah tried his best till he came up with his Fourteen Points in 1929. Heartbroken he left India and settled in London. Simon Commission gave its report in 1930 rejecting a unitary system for India. While the process of devolution would continue and partially responsible government would be set up in the provinces, the central government would be fully constituted with officials without responsibility to any Indian electorate. The report proposed a Round Table Conference to decide on the constitutional framework. M. K. Gandhi on behalf of the Congress rejected the report and launched a non-cooperation movement on two grounds; namely, failure of the government to accept Nehru Report and abolition of salt tax. While the non-cooperation movement went on, the first session of the Round Table Conference took place in 1930. Before the second session in 1931 Gandhi-Irwin Pact temporarily ended the non-cooperation movement and Gandhi attended the session. He stuck to Nehru Report and returned to restart the non-cooperation movement. After the third session, Ramsay McDonald announced the Communal Award in 1932.²⁴ By 1934 the non-cooperation movement lost ground and Government of India Act of 1935 was handed down from Westminster parliament. Jinnah was persuaded to return in 1934 to revitalise the Muslim League. Although 1935 Act was not fully satisfactory, both the Congress and the League agreed to give it a trial. Long negotiations continued between the two parties to work out a joint *modus operandi*.

In 1937 Congress governments were installed in seven provinces of India. Muslim League asked for coalition government but Congress would not accept such a compromise.²⁵ The experience of two years under Congress rule was bitter: beef-eating was forbidden, call for Muslim prayers had to be restricted, mosques were desecrated and worshippers attacked, the educational system not only neglected Muslim aspirations but forced their acquiescence in the teaching of Hindu culture and *weltanachung*.²⁶ With the outbreak of war when Congress ministries resigned, Muslims celebrated deliverance. In the failure of the majority community to find accommodation for

the minority community lay the seeds of separation. This strengthened the already surfacing separatist tendencies. The dream of poet Mohammed Iqbal expressed in 1930 and the advocacy of a young zealot, Chaudhury Rahmat Ali, articulated in 1933, received serious attention from the entire Muslim community. The chance of an independent United India became very slim.

Poet Iqbal called for formation of a Muslim state combining the Muslim majority provinces of the northwestern region. He was vague about the position of such a state vis-a-vis India but presumably was thinking of a federation of India of which this state would be a part.²⁷ Chaudhury Rahmat Ali was a student in the United Kingdom and he came out with the demand for Pakistan. It was to be a federation of the provinces of the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, Kashmir and North-West Frontier.²⁸ A number of similar proposals were afloat right up to 1940, but they were not taken seriously.

In 1940 the idea finally caught the imagination. In a convention of the Muslim League in Lahore, for the first time the idea of separate homelands for Muslims of India was mooted. On 23 March, Bengali leader A. K. Fazlul Huq moved the famous Pakistan Resolution which was adopted by the Council the next day. The original Pakistan resolution read as follows:²⁹

Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent states' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in these units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them and in other parts of India where the mussalmans are in minority, adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them.

This session further authorizes the Working Committee to frame a scheme of constitution in accordance with these basic principles, providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defense, external affairs, communications, customs and such other matters as may be necessary.

Pakistan concept of 1940 was really for two or more Muslim homelands. In the following year it was narrowed down to two homelands when the language of Lahore Resolution was amended to read as: "The north-western and eastern zones of India shall be grouped together to constitute independent states as Muslim Free National homelands in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign."³⁰ The concept of one Pakistan gradually developed as a matter of convenience and expediency. The Congress was opposed to any partition of India. The case for partition into two states appeared stronger than the case for partition into three countries. Again in the struggle against the Congress it was necessary for the Muslims to make a demonstration of unity and the demand for one Pakistan spoke of greater unity. Finally, in arguing against Indian nationalism pervading all communities, the two-nation theory worked very effectively. If Muslims of India were a nation as distinct from other Indians they ought to constitute one national state and

not two Muslim homelands. Officially, however, the demand for one Pakistan was not made until the convention of Muslim League legislators was held in Delhi in April 1946. This convention resolved:

That the zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the north-east and the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan in the northwest of India, namely Pakistan zones where the Muslims are in a dominant majority, be constituted into a sovereign independent state and that an unequivocal undertaking be given to implement the establishment of Pakistan without delay.³¹

The overriding concern even after the adoption of Pakistan Resolution in 1940 was protection of Muslim interests in some manner in an independent India. Demand for Pakistan was first presented before the Cripps Mission which tried to settle the constitutional future of British India in 1942. This Mission recognised the possibility of Pakistan but did not consider it inevitable. It felt that power could not be transferred to a system of government whose authority would be challenged by powerful elements or which would have to coerce such elements. So the Mission proposed constitution-making for the Union with the provision that provinces or states could opt out of the Union if they so desired.³²

GENERAL ELECTION OF 1945-46 AND PARTITION OF INDIA

Soon after the conclusion of World War II, on 19 September 1945 the Wavell Plan was announced. Election to the provincial and central legislatures were to be held and a constitution-making body was to be installed.³³ In December 1945 and January 1946 the country went to the polls.

Pakistan demand was put to test in this election. The Muslim League claimed that they represented the Muslim community of India and their unanimous demand was Pakistan. The Congress disputed this claim and instead maintained that they

represented all communities of India who wanted undivided, independent India. "The results showed a decisive victory for Pakistan: the League won all the Muslim seats in the central assembly and 446 out of the 495 Muslim seats in the provincial assemblies."³⁴ The support for Pakistan was much greater in the Muslim minority provinces than in the Muslim majority areas. In North-West Frontier Province the League captured only seventeen out of a total of thirty-six Muslim seats, in Sind it captured twenty-seven seats out of thirty-five Muslim seats, in the Punjab seventy-five out of eighty-six Muslim seats and in Bengal 113 out of 119 Muslim seats.³⁵ Except in Bengal the Muslim League could not form any provincial government. In Sind a second election had to be held to break the tie between the League and a coalition of other parties and the League finally came out victorious. In Frontier Province there was a clean Congress ministry and in the Punjab emerged a Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition ministry.

Soon after the elections a Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Albert Alexander reached India to find a solution to the constitutional problems and future of the country. The Mission landed in Karachi on 23 March 1946 and on 16 May they announced their constitutional plan.³⁶ This was a plan for a Confederation of India consisting of three Groups of provinces plus the Indian Princely States. Group-B and Group-C were to embrace the northwestern and eastern zones of Pakistan proposal, while Group-A covered the rest of the Indian provinces. The confederal subjects were to be foreign affairs, defense, communications and sufficient taxation powers to raise revenue for administration of federal subjects. The provincial assemblies were to elect a constitution-making body for the Union and dividing itself up into three Groups the same members were to frame the constitutions for the Groups. After the first elections under the new constitution, a province could opt out of a Group and remain in the Union as an individual state. The Cabinet Mission Plan also provided for the installation of an interim government of thirteen ministers, six drawn from the Congress, five from the League and two from other minority

groups. Although the plan did not fully meet the Pakistan demand and made some uncharitable remarks about the concept of Pakistan, the League accepted the total plan in the hope that it would solve the constitutional crisis. The same day, 25 June 1946, the Congress also accepted the important part of the Cabinet Mission Plan; they declined to participate in the interim government but agreed to join the Constituent Assembly and undertake constitution-making. A few days later on 10 July, Nehru, as the President of the Congress held a Press Conference in Bombay where he stated that the Congress was entering the Constituent Assembly "completely unfettered by agreement and free to meet all situations as they arise." He also maintained that the Grouping Scheme had no chance of success and provinces would be free to opt out of Groups before they would ever come into existence. This was interpreted by the League as a rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan as the Grouping Scheme was one of the cornerstones of the constitutional system that was to evolve.³⁷ At the same time the British Government was also backing out. Despite Muslim League's acceptance of Viceroy's invitation to join the interim government no ministers were being sworn in though it was envisaged that this would be done even if all the parties did not agree to join the Cabinet.³⁸

In its frustration, in the council meeting of 27 July, the League withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and called for Direct Action "to achieve Pakistan, to assert their just rights, to vindicate their honour and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated future caste Hindu domination."³⁹ The obstinacy of Congress leadership and its lack of foresight for the second successive time frustrated the hopes for a united India. In the words of a great Indian leader, Maulana A. K. Azad, "The mistake in 1937 was bad enough. The mistake of 1946 proved even more costly."⁴⁰

Celebration of the Direct Action day on 16 August 1946 ignited the fire of communal riots. In Calcutta Bengali Muslims were "worsted" by the Hindus.⁴¹ Reprisals took place in October in Noakhali and Comilla (then called Tippera) districts in East Bengal. Bihar slaughter began in reaction to East Bengal riots

on 30 October, followed by riots in the United Provinces. Before the year was out communal riots in the Punjab and Frontier Province broke out in a very savage and brutal order.⁴² Meanwhile the interim government was fully operative. The Congress had rejected the idea in July, so had the League. But in early August Congress changed its view and on 24 August they joined the government. During the riots it became obvious that the non-participation of the League in the interim government was acting as an impediment to Muslim interest specially because militant Sardar Pattel was holding the portfolio of Home Ministry. Both the Viceroy and the Muslim League were convinced that Muslims should be represented in the interim government. The League joined the government on 25 October. There was, however, no amity between the League and the Congress members of the Cabinet. The Constituent Assembly, however, was not functioning as the League refused to participate in its deliberations unless the Cabinet Mission Plan was accepted by the Congress in toto as the basis for future constitution of India.

The government in Whitehall grew panicky of the civil commotion that engulfed India and decided to transfer power as quickly as possible. Lord Wavell was still trying to find a compromise solution but Attlee did not have the patience for that. Lord Wavell resigned and Lord Mountbatten was sent as the new Governor-General to effect an early transfer of power.⁴³ Mountbatten's persuasive powers and Pattel's militancy blessed the partition plan. Nehru was won over first and then the assault was launched on Gandhi who had initially vowed that partition would take place over his dead body.⁴⁴ On 3 June 1947 Lord Mountbatten announced the plan for transfer of power.⁴⁵ Two Constituent Assemblies for India and Pakistan were to take over powers from the British government. Bengal and the Punjab were to be partitioned, referendums were to be held in Sylhet of Assam Province and in the Frontier Province.

POSTSCRIPT

The birth of the independent states of Pakistan and India saw the slaughter of about a million people in communal strife and a massive transfer of population between West Pakistan and northern India. While some nine million Indian Muslims from East Punjab, United Provinces and Bihar migrated to West Pakistan, some six and a half million Hindus and Sikhs from West Pakistan crossed over to India.⁴⁶ In Bengal, however, a holocaust was avoided through the dedicated efforts of Gandhi and Suhrawardy. There was some two-way migration between the two parts of Bengal and the immediate neighbourhood but it was not on a grand scale.

In retrospect it is interesting to assess the role of Bengal in the Muslim struggle for independence in India. Muslim modernism began in Bengal and central India. Pakistan movement was spearheaded by these same elements. From the birth of the Muslim League through the adoption of Pakistan concept, Bengali leaders had to shape the movement and guide it. When election on the issue of Pakistan was held in 1945-46, Bengal alone returned the League to power under the able leadership of H. S. Suhrawardy. The Punjabi scheme of Pakistan was a self-centred idea in which Muslims of other parts of British India did not matter at all. The Muslim elite in the Punjab or for that matter in the Frontier Province had little or no faith in the concept of Pakistan. Unionists of the Punjab and Khuda-i-Khidmatgars of the Frontier were opposed to the very idea of Pakistan till the last moment. And yet religious frenzy and bigotry were always present in West Pakistan in a degree unbelievable in Bengal. It was the lack of commitment in West Pakistan to the concept of Pakistan that prevented sacrifices on their part for the sake of the nationhood of Pakistan. On the other hand Bengal's deep commitment inspired East Pakistan to make sacrifices for the unity of Pakistani nationhood.

NOTES

1. Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912* (Dacca: Oxford University Press, 1974), 12.
2. M. A Khan, "Muslim Struggle for Freedom in Bengal, 1757-1947" in S. Sajjad Hussain, ed., *East Pakistan — A Profile* (Dacca: Orient Longman, 1962), 63-71.
3. B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1946), 30.
4. B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, 56.
5. Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-93) hailed from Rajapur in Faridpur district and was educated in Calcutta Madrassa. He became a Deputy Magistrate in 1849 and retired in 1885 serving for thirty years in Calcutta. In 1862 he was the first Muslim member of the Bengal Legislative Council. He was conferred the title of Nawab in 1880, CIE in 1883 and Nawab Bahadur in 1887.
6. W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalmans* (Calcutta: Comrade Publishers, 1945), 150, 157.
7. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98) hailed from Delhi. In 1838 he became a *Munsif*. He was prominent for his literary works specially on Islam. He was a loyalist in 1857. He visited England in 1869 and returned with a mission to spread western education among the Muslims. He set up the Scientific Society in Aligarh in 1864 and started the journal *Tahzibul Akhlaq* in 1870. He founded the Anglo Oriental College in Aligarh in 1877 which became a University twenty years later. He started the Annual Muslim Education Conference in 1886 as a response to the establishment of Indian National Congress.
8. Syed Ameer Ali (1844-1928) hailed from Hoogly district and graduated from Hoogly College in 1867 and obtained his Masters of Arts and Bachelor of Law degree from Calcutta University. He was called to the Bar in 1873. He established the Calcutta Mohammadan Association in 1878. He was in the Bengal Legislative Council from 1878 to 1883 and Governor General's Council from 1883 to 1885. He was appointed a Judge of the High Court in 1890. In 1909 he became a member of the Privy Council. He wrote *History of the Saracenes* in 1889 and the *Spirit of Islam* in 1891.
9. W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Lahore: Sh. Mohammed Ashraf Publications, 1963): 3-8, 46-47, 50-51.
10. I. H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan* (Karachi: Karachi University Press, 1965), 19.
11. Chaudhury Mohammed Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 7.
12. A. R. Mallick, "The Muslims and the Partition of Bengal 1905" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 19.
13. A. R. Mallick, "The Muslims and the Partition of Bengal 1905" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 1-4.
14. A. R. Mallick, "The Muslims and the Partition of Bengal 1905" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 25.

15. A. R. Mallick, "The Muslims and the Partition of Bengal 1905" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 19. See also, B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, 111.
16. Jamiluddin Ahmed, "Foundation of All India Muslim League" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 32.
17. B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, 428-443.
18. Jamiluddin Ahmed, "Foundation of All India Muslim League" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 35-38.
19. Mahmud Hussain, "The Lucknow Pact" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 131-137.
20. I. H. Qureshi, "Hindu Communal Movements" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 255-275. See also, I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent* (The Hague, 1962), 279-282. The Suddhi movement was reclaiming Muslim converts back to Hinduism; Sangathan was training Hindu youth to fight; and Rastriya Svem Sevak Sangha was a militant Hindu disciplined force.
21. G. W. Chaudhury, "Nehru Report" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 277-278.
22. G. W. Chaudhury, "Nehru Report" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 283-292.
23. G. W. Chaudhury, "Nehru Report" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 298-300.
24. G. W. Chaudhury, "Nehru Report" in *History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III:1, 26.

The Award distributed seats as follows:

Centre Province	Muslim Population %	Muslim Seats %
		33
Bengal	55	48
Assam	34	31
Bihar & Orissa	11	24
United Province	15	29
Central Province	5	14
Punjab	57	49
Sind	71	57
Northwest Frontier Province	92	72
Madras	8	13
Bombay	9	17

25. I. H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, 88-33.
26. I. H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, 99-105.
27. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan* (Lahore: All Pakistan Legal Decisions, 1963), 124.
28. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 135.
29. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 201.
30. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 202.

31. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 204.
32. K. B. Sayeed, *Pakistan, The Formative Phase* (Karachi: Pakistan Publishing House, 1960), 126
33. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 225-226.
34. Choudhury Mohammed Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, 48.
35. I. H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, 243-244.
36. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 233-247.
37. A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1988), 164-167. *
38. I. H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, 266-267.
39. Quoted in I. H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, 275.
40. A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 172.
41. Ian Stephens, *Pakistan* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 109.
42. Ian Stephens, *Pakistan*, 109-114.
43. Ian Stephens, *Pakistan*, 117-119.
44. A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 203-204.
45. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Evolution of Pakistan*, 249-256.
46. Choudhury Mohammed Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*: 264, 268, 274.