Section I

After the 1945–46 elections the lines were clearly drawn for the claims and counter-claims of the end game. Congress still wanted independence to come before settling the communal problem. This meant having an essentially unitary form of government – one constitution and one nation – strong enough to fulfil the purposes for which independence was being sought, while appeasing the fears of provinces and minority groups. In contrast, Jinnah and the League reiterated their demand that the first step must be to accept Pakistan in principle now that the Muslim electorate had given its verdict in favour of it. Once Congress was prepared to recognise this, ‘the whole spirit would change and we should become friends’. If the British then ‘declared their decision in favour of Pakistan there would be no trouble’ since the ‘Hindus would quickly accept it’.¹

Another British initiative was now inevitable, and Congress at any rate wanted to speed up matters. Seeing this, Jinnah had to show a little more of his hand: the principle of Pakistan, he now explained, meant that the old unitary centre of British India had to be replaced by two distinct and separate political entities or federations organised by two constituent assemblies, one for the Muslim provinces and the other for the Hindu provinces. These two assemblies would then send their representatives to yet another centre, above them both, where for the time being the British would remain as ringmaster and umpire; at this centre, League and Congress, representing the Muslim provinces (Pakistan) and Hindu provinces (Hindustan) respectively, had to be given equal status, safeguarded by a ‘British Crown Representative’ who would ‘co-ordinate the policies of the two federations in such matters as Defence and Foreign Affairs’.² By allowing this centre an executive but no legislature, Jinnah

¹ Note of conversation between Jinnah and Arthur Moore, 28 January 1946, R/3/1/105, I.O.L.
² Note by George Abell on conversation between Major Wyatt and Jinnah, 5 February 1946, R/3/1/105, I.O.L. A Parliamentary Delegation had visited India in January 1946, to meet the leading political personalities. This was generally viewed as a prelude to a fresh British initiative.
at a stroke avoided the obvious difficulty of claiming parity of status in an all-India legislature when the federation of the Muslim provinces only contained a quarter of the country’s population. If the overall centre was confined to dealing only with defence and external affairs, it could plausibly be maintained that the counting of heads, so awkward to Jinnah’s case, was no longer relevant. At this centre, the League or Pakistan provinces, with their own sovereign constituent assembly, would be the equals of the Congress provinces. This would give Jinnah an important say in the negotiations about the form and powers the all-India federation was to possess.

There was some merit and some logic, albeit strained, in Jinnah’s line of argument. Once it had achieved equality of status at the all-India level, the League might be able to win the safeguards for which it had been fighting all along. But there were many stumbling-blocks, not least at the provincial level. Large non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim provinces bruised the logic that the demand for Pakistan was based on the principle of self-determination. The Hindus and Sikhs of Ambala division and the Hindus of Burdwan might jeopardise the shaky dominance that Jinnah’s uncertain Leaguers had in their provincial assemblies. So Jinnah privately admitted to Woodrow Wyatt, who was visiting India with a Parliamentary Delegation, that he might be prepared to let Ambala and Burdwan go; Calcutta, however, he had to have, even at the price of ‘serious trouble’ and civil war. This threat of communal violence was the ultimate weapon in the armoury of a politician, playing from extreme weakness for the highest stakes, who had no experience of launching or controlling an agitation. According to Wyatt, Jinnah was ‘prepared to concede [a] lot more than might appear at first sight’. But Jinnah’s grand strategy was grounded on the mistaken assumption that the end game would be played according to a leisurely timetable. He did not think that India was about to be bundled into a snap decision by a Raj suddenly anxious to quit.

As late as February 1946, Jinnah continued to remind London about its promises during the war. But the context had changed: a new team

3 Ibid.
4 When Jinnah told Wyatt that he himself would welcome a two-year moratorium, in which he would take perfect rest in the Aga Khan’s palace this was a comment not only on his own weariness but on what he assumed were the relatively easy-going timetables of the Raj. (See Note by George Abell, ibid.)
5 Jinnah told the Secretary of State: ‘A caretaker Government already exists... and there is no need to tinker with it under the new phraseology of “political Executive Council”. Equally, the idea of a single Constitution-making body is fundamentally opposed to the basic principles that the Muslim League has declared times out of number. It will be perfectly futile to force such a measure upon Muslim India, as it must result in disaster,
was in charge in London and its priorities were quite different from those of the wartime coalition it replaced. The communal problem had been a convenient instrument in British policy so long as there was no question of constitutional advance. Once the war was over, it posed the largest and most inconvenient obstacle to the changes which metropolitan calculations and Indian circumstances imperiously demanded. On 15 March 1946, Attlee told the House of Commons that he could not permit a 'minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority', however important the minority might be. He was proposing to send a Cabinet Delegation to India. Indians would decide their own future, and the Delegation was intended to assist them in settling their differences and in setting up a constitution-making body and a representative Executive Council for the interim period. The question whether India would remain in the British Commonwealth was to be left to the Indians to decide.

On 23 March 1946, the Cabinet Mission arrived in Karachi. It consisted of the Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence; that veteran of inconclusive Indian negotiations, Sir Stafford Cripps, now the President of the Board of Trade; and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr A. V. Alexander. Alexander was the weakest brother of this three-man team. In his first public statement, the Secretary of State announced that the Mission came with no recipe for Indian independence. It did not have a formula for a compromise between the Congress demand for majority rule at the centre and the more extreme forms of the League's demand for Pakistan. The League would not be allowed to veto political advance but equally Congress would not be allowed simply to dictate. As the Viceroy's Executive Council told the Mission, the main obstacle to a compromise was an issue which for long had been swept under the carpet: the need to redraw provincial boundaries if the Muslim provinces were to be given more autonomy than they had previously possessed. However intractable this issue might prove to be, the Mission must keep working for a political settlement. The Mission could not be allowed to fail; the Executive Council insisted, it 'must refuse to permit a break-

not to say that it will be a breach of the solemn declaration of August 1940 and the repeated assurances of H.M.G. to that effect given from time to time.' (Jinnah to Pethick-Lawrence, 9 February 1946, R/3/1/105, I.O.L.)


7 'The precise road towards the final structure of India's independence is not yet clear', the Secretary of State admitted, 'but let the vision of it inspire us all in our renewed efforts to find a path of cooperation'. (Pethick-Lawrence's press statement, 23 March 1946, T.P., VII, 1.)
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Map 4. Cabinet Mission proposal for a three-section federation, 1946. Though the proposal did not allocate Princely States to any of the three sections, it was assumed that most, if not all, would wish to enter into a federal type of union with them.
Delhi no longer felt it had law and order under control, and it did not think it could deal with communal outbursts which might accompany a breakdown of negotiations. This was a striking commentary on how fragile a hold the ostensible leaders of political India, British, Congress and League alike, had over the forces below.

The danger that Hindus and Muslims would set at each others' throats was a constant fear in British thinking; it was even more important in the thinking of the High Commands of the Congress and of the League. 'The big boys of Congress and League', as George Abell noted, were beginning to get 'alarmed lest their followers break loose'. If that were to happen the leaders would cease to lead, the followers would not follow and that thin crust of order which the British and their collaborators had maintained for a century and a half of rule would break down, with disorders on a scale never before seen in India, and certainly unprecedented in Britain's experience overseas. Long before the Calcutta killings, the Mission had been warned that: 'The cities of India are just in the mood for such riots, and the goonda element is out of hand. The Communists would, on present form, rejoice in the chance to make trouble . . . the effect on the Indian Army and police might be catastrophic . . .'. More alarming was the evidence that even if Jinnah could be squared, his provincial lieutenants might ignore his lead if it did not suit them to follow him. In the Punjab, Shaukat Hayat was calling-up ex-servicemen, apparently for a Jihad for 'Pakistan', but in fact as a manoeuvre to get rid of the Khizar ministry. In Bengal Jinnah had no sway over the people, and could not bring them out in 'open revolt'. But the Governor came to the wrong conclusion that this meant Bengal would be immune from disorders. He was right that Jinnah was irrelevant, but it was just in the Quaid-i-Azam's lack of control that the potential danger lay. If the Calcutta underworld and its volatile goondas were to break loose, then not only Jinnah, but shadier local operators such as Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim might discover that disorders in Bengal, all very well for gentlemen to float as paper tigers from their ivory towers, could spring into lethal violence in bazaars and backstreets once they were unleashed.

These ominous stirrings were still below the surface when Jinnah first met the Cabinet Mission in the calm of Viceregal Lodge. But even Jinnah

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8 Note of meeting between the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy's Executive Council, 26 March 1946, ibid., 7.
9 Note by George Abell, 7 April 1946. T.P., vii, 160-1; see also Thorne to Abell, 5 April 1946, ibid., 149-51.
10 See note by Woodrow Wyatt, 28 March 1946, ibid., 22-3.
11 Note by Burrows, undated, ibid., 67.
could no longer ignore the fact that he was unable to control powerful forces brewing at the base. He began cautiously – stating some facts and reminding the Mission of Britain’s responsibilities: ‘India was neither united nor divided – it was a British possession’.

The League was wasting its time trying to negotiate with the Congress. So H.M.G. should make an award, as it had done in 1932, this time accepting the principle of Pakistan. Once this had been done, there should be no difficulty in getting the two new states to make a mutual defence treaty, and this would assure that matters such as foreign policy, defence and communications would be dealt with by a centre.

By letting the Mission know that he envisaged some form of union government once power was transferred, Jinnah for the first time had come out with his real strategy. But as ever Jinnah’s weak point was the question of Pakistan’s boundaries. He wanted a ‘viable Pakistan’, not one ‘carved up or mutilated’. He was prepared to give up claims to Assam and settle for the five Muslim provinces as they were; ‘mutual adjustments’ of boundaries could be discussed later provided this did not prejudice Pakistan’s viability as a ‘live State economically’. This meant Pakistan must have Calcutta; ‘Pakistan without Calcutta would be like asking a man to live without his heart’.

This was the view from the centre, stated by Jinnah, arrogating the role of spokesman for all of Muslim India and anxious to stifle its customary babel of tongues. But the Mission could not avoid lending an ear to mutterings from the Muslim provinces. As the Mission listened, so the worms crawled out of the intricate woodwork of Muslim India; it quickly became apparent that behind the simple cry for ‘Pakistan’ lay a host of complex and conflicting interests, some of which had very little to do with the shape that Pakistan was coming to assume in Jinnah’s guarded exposition. Muslim provinces wanted to hang on to, perhaps even to improve, their autonomy and standing against any centre, whoever controlled it – the British, the Congress or even their very own League. These advocates of states’ rights wanted their provinces to remain intact, and they wanted to keep for themselves all the patronage and profit of office in them. So provinces, the products of mere administrative convenience in times long past, were now put forward as entities whose frontiers were inviolate. According to Suhrawardy, the

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12 See Jinnah’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 4 April 1946, ibid., 119–23.

13 When asked to be a little more specific, Jinnah tartly responded that specificity was all very well for those with huge secretariats, like the British and the Congress; the League had a hard enough job running its one office in Delhi, let alone producing detailed schemes. (Ibid., 123–4.)

14 Ibid., 124.
case for 'Pakistan' was Bengal's common historical traditions, its distinctive culture, and its linguistic solidarities. Religion, was conveniently forgotten in Suhrawardy's exposition. So were the other provinces. Bengal was Bengali, not Muslim. That a powerful provincialism rather than commitment to 'Pakistan' lay behind the demands of most groups in Muslim provinces was proved by their fears of being dominated from the centre, even if that centre was to be the League's. It showed itself also in their readiness to sell their Muslim brothers in other provinces to buy something for themselves. The chief minister of Sind, Ghulam Hussain, thought all would be well if only all-India politics could be kept out of the provinces, and in particular out of Sind. As far as he was concerned, Hindus could have western Bengal (but not Calcutta), and the Sikhs could have their Sikhistan. But Sind must be left alone by all outsiders, whatever their faith.

When his own Leaguers in the provinces demolished Jinnah's case for Pakistan with such nonchalance, it is hardly surprising that his old rivals could make an even better job of it. Khizar explained to the Mission that the Punjab's dilemma was that an united Punjab, inside Pakistan, might be good for Muslims, but Punjab's Hindus and Sikhs would never accept it. A partitioned Punjab, on the other hand would be a disaster for those Muslims left stranded in the eastern districts of the Punjab. If only Jinnah had been forced to bring these hard facts into the open by being pushed into defining clearly what Pakistan was, then at least the Punjab's unthinking enthusiasm for it might have been rather more subdued. This was the Punjab's problem, faced with the Pakistan demand. But Pakistan would also bundle Sindhis, Baluchis and Pathans into a new union with Punjabis. Although they shared a common religion, Khizar

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15 When gently reminded that there was a contradiction here between the Pakistan demand based on the 'two nation' theory and his own claim that Bengal and Assam should be kept together because of linguistic affinities, Suhrawardy brushed this aside as typical imperialist logic chopping. (See Suhrawardy's meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 8 April 1946, ibid., 163–6.)

16 See Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah's meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 4 April 1946, ibid., 126. Neither Mamdot nor Suhrawardy would have been too happy at this lavish Sindhi's generosity at their expense. Mamdot, the president of the Punjab Muslim League told the Mission in unequivocal terms that Pakistan must have an undivided Punjab. This was hardly surprising. Mamdot's estate in Ferozepur was unlikely to be included in Pakistan if there were 'mutual adjustments'. Mamdot, however, disguised his personal interests by arguing that Hindus and Sikhs would be treated well in Pakistan which would be a 'democratic state'. More to the point, the Sikhs had never defined the boundaries of Sikhistan, and constituted a majority only in the Amritsar and Ferozepur districts and were in a majority in only one out of five divisions in these districts. (See the Nawab of Mamdot's meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 2 April 1946, ibid., 91.)
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seemed to hint that the Punjabis were not minded to share much else with them. According to Khizar, the only answer was: provincial autonomy, states’ rights and a weak federal centre. Khizar, the heir of that old Unionist tradition which had been eroded but not wholly broken by the League, was simply stating the time-honoured Punjab alternative which envisaged the three main Punjabi communities sharing power inside an undivided province which would have a considerable say at a weak centre. The real point of difference between Khizar and Jinnah about the powers of the centre was that Jinnah needed control over the Pakistan provinces (themselves a constituent element of a weak central federation) whereas Khizar wanted no Pakistan centre or at most a weak centre over the Muslim provinces.17

Muslim politicians in Sind and the N.W.F.P. who did not belong to the League told the Mission how the League had ridden roughshod over their real interests. G. M. Syed, the Sindhi leader now in exile but once a candidate for the job of chief minister in a League ministry, argued that the root of the problem was the overweening ambitions of the two High Commands, Congress and League, and their arbitrary dictates which were ‘destructive not only of Provincial Autonomy but of the freedom and welfare of the Indian people’.18 He wanted the provinces to be left alone. Before they had been bullied by all-India leaders, politicians in the provinces had known how to manage their affairs and keep everyone happy in the best of all provincial worlds. Syed wanted Azad (or free) Sind, not Pakistan. In the N.W.F.P., the Mission was bluntly told by the Congress chief minister, Dr Khan Sahib, that the League did not represent Muslims. The Pathans had no love for their Punjabi neighbours. They would never willingly join Pakistan. They wanted no centre at all but they did not fear domination by a Hindu centre. What they wanted most of all was to be entirely independent. Indeed, the Khan Sahib was not even prepared to admit that there was a meaningful political distinction between Hindus and Muslims. The League had won votes in the Frontier by bringing round vested interests and playing with the fires of fanaticism which would soon burn everyone’s fingers. So he wanted the Frontier to be left to its own devices without interference from any centre, Hindu, Muslim or whatever.19 An Indian version of the Balkans seemed to be the provincial Muslims’ dream.

17 See Khizar Hayat’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 5 April 1946, ibid., 147–8.
18 See G. M. Syed’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 2 April 1946, ibid., 92–3.
19 See Dr Khan Sahib’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 1 April 1946, ibid., 74–5.
So the Muslim provinces were singing a tune different from Jinnah, particularly when non-Leaguers who had no reason to echo Jinnah’s case burst into voice. No Muslim politician in the Punjab, Bengal, Sind or the Frontier had any reason within their own province to fear Congress domination; so they had a narrower, and a rather different, angle of vision about their interests from that of a grand strategist at the centre. But as ever Jinnah’s line did have some support from Muslims in provinces where they were in a minority. Such Muslims, as Khaliquzzaman admitted, would gain little directly from Pakistan but indirectly they would gain something substantial. A Congress-dominated Hindustan would have to treat its Muslim minorities well, since it could not afford to fall out with Pakistan, with hostage Hindus and Sikhs in its territories. Then there were the views of embryonic capitalists in western India who saw good pickings for their enterprise in a Pakistan free of Birlas, Tatas and Thakurdases. For Muslim businessmen from Bombay, who hoped to prosper in the uncompetitive markets of Pakistan, just as for the traditionally foot-loose service groups in north India who were ready to go anywhere in search of office, Pakistan promised to be a land of opportunity, not a slough of despond.

Although Jinnah failed to prevent the Mission from speaking to some wayward Muslims, he did manage to get the A.I.M.L. to hold a Legislators’ Convention to endorse his case emphatically. Its purpose was not to discuss the practicalities of Pakistan; it was simply to demonstrate that Muslim opinion was solidly behind its spokesman. The resolution the Convention passed was the Jinnah line of the moment: instead of two ‘Independent States’, the resolution now demanded for Pakistan a single ‘sovereign Independent State’ and two separate constituent assemblies for the Muslim and Hindu provinces, with safeguards for the minorities in Pakistan and Hindustan.


21 Khaliquzzaman frankly equated the interests of the entire Muslim community of the U.P. when he spoke of the Congress threat to Muslim landed classes. He informed the Mission that a number of Muslims, especially the educated classes, intended to migrate to Pakistan, and Muslim industrialists from Bombay might also wish to transfer their business to the Punjab. (Ibid.)

22 The resolution ‘emphatically’ declared that any attempt to force an interim arrangement at the centre would ‘leave the Muslims no alternative but to resist such imposition by all possible means for their survival and national existence’. (See resolution of the A.I.M.L.’s Legislators’ Convention, 9 April 1946, in Pirzada (ed.), Foundations of Pakistan, vol. II, pp. 512–13.)
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Suhrawardy and his Muslims back into line, and of stamping out
ominous signs of a Bengali breakaway which threatened the tripartite
negotiations at the top. The resolution was hardly the product of a well-
conceived effort by representative Muslims to hammer out the problems,
practicalities and purposes of Pakistan. It made, for example, no
mention of how Pakistan would organise its defence, although Jinnah in
private admitted that 'Defence is the key pin of the problem', and was
visibly shaken when he was told that if he insisted on a separate army for
Pakistan, the British officers would simply quit and 'wish both Pakistan
and Hindustan the very best of luck in running their own armies'.

Jinnah was right in anticipating that defence would be a key issue in a
transfer of power. Britain's strategic interests in the region called for a
common defence structure for all of India. This, Jinnah hoped, would be
the best insurance for his strategy. That strategy, if it was to do
something for all Muslims including those in Hindu provinces and not
merely for those in the majority provinces, required some form of
common arrangements at the centre between Hindustan and Pakistan.
The demand for a separate foreign policy and army for Pakistan, as
Jinnah knew very well, flew in the face of British interests which
depended on India remaining the keystone of Commonwealth defence.
But this line had the merit of giving the League some leverage and
something substantial to concede when it came to bargaining about
arrangements at the centre between Pakistan and Hindustan, especially
over a common defence policy.

Not surprisingly, the two options which emerged from the Mission's
first round of talks with the Indian leaders both envisaged a common
defence structure for India. The option which the Mission preferred was
to keep an unitary India with a loose federation and a centre restricted to
defence and foreign affairs. The second was to concede a sovereign but
truncated Pakistan consisting of Muslim majority-districts in the north-
west (that is, western Punjab, Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan) and the
north-east (eastern Bengal without Calcutta, but with the Sylhet district
of Assam). This sovereign Pakistan would, moreover, be expected to
make a treaty of alliance, for both offensive and defensive purposes, with
Hindustan. The latter option did not answer the all-important strategic

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23 Suhrawardy had been trying to negotiate for a League-Congress coalition ministry in
Bengal. (See Burrows to Wavell, 25 April 1946, T.P., vii. 339-41.) By making Bengal
an integral part of Pakistan (however much this flew in the face of geography), Jinnah
hoped to prevent such a development, at least until he had achieved his larger purposes
at the all-India level.

24 Note by Lieutenant-General A. Smith on his interview with Jinnah, 28 March 1946,
ibid., 20-1.
question to the satisfaction of the military men since a sovereign Pakistan, they feared, would be the exposed flank of subcontinental defence and there was no certainty that the two sovereign states would agree to have common policies about war and peace.  

Both were options of difficulties rather than ideal solutions in that imperfect world in which the Mission’s harassed arbitrators found themselves. Congress would be against the weak centre of the first alternative (Scheme A) and as things stood, was unlikely to accept the second, a truncated Pakistan (Scheme B); while Jinnah would bitterly complain that in the truncated Pakistan that was on offer he was being denied the large sovereign Pakistan which was his only way of ensuring that the Congress would negotiate a common centre. But whatever the reaction of the two all-India parties, the first step was to get H.M.G.’s permission for the Cabinet Mission to negotiate on the basis of the proposal for a small truncated sovereign Pakistan. The Cabinet was told that the Mission itself favoured ‘something on the lines of Scheme A’ but it was quite possible that it might not succeed in securing agreement for it. Unless an agreement was found between the Congress and the League, ‘we risk chaos in India and no scheme of Defence will then be of any value’. Therefore it was essential to consider Scheme B, the truncated sovereign Pakistan, since this might well be ‘the only chance of agreed settlement’.

On 11 April 1946 the momentous question whether London was ready to divide and quit had formally been raised in the Cabinet. The Cabinet was asked to decide whether it would be prepared to deny the central article of the British Indian creed, vital to its traditional conception of metropolitan interests in South Asia. Partition had been named as the price which might have to be paid if power was to be transferred without a holocaust. The decision to be ready to tear the seamless web of Indian unity, which the British had taken more than a century and a half to weave, was taken at one short meeting of the Cabinet. However much they preferred Scheme A, the Cabinet agreed that if Scheme B was the

25 The two states inevitably would become members of the United Nations in their own right, able if they were so minded to go their separate ways. Hindustan might lean towards Russia or China and go its own way heedless of British interests in Malaya, Ceylon and East and South Africa, while Pakistan might lean towards the Muslim states of the Middle East.

26 The Mission’s warning to the Cabinet was clear enough: ‘We are convinced that the overriding necessity is some agreement if it can be attained and that this is the first requirement towards any effective Defence. We hope, therefore, that you will agree to our working for an agreement on the basis of Scheme B if this seems to us to be the only chance of agreed settlement.’ (Cabinet Delegation and Wavell to Attlee, 11 April 1946, ibid., 221.)
only hope of an agreed settlement, then Scheme B it would have to be.\textsuperscript{27}

As the Chiefs of Staff made abundantly clear, the requirements of Britain's future strategic interests in the region, in the end, were more imperious than sticking to the old ideals of Indian unity; Scheme B was bad from the point of view of defence, but it was better than being left with an intractable set of successors; and certainly it was better than having no successors at all, the strategists' nightmare of the chaos which threatened an India left to her own devices.

Yet the detailed comments of the Chiefs of Staff which accompanied Attlee's swift reply to the Mission stressed all the difficulties and dangers of dividing India. Pakistan would consist of territory which lay across the tracks of the traditional routes into India. It would contain the bases from which the air force would have to raise an umbrella over the north-west. Pakistan would rip the old British Indian army into two. The unity of the army, even more than the political unity at New Delhi, had been regarded as essential to India's security from external attack since the very beginnings of British rule. The unity of the army had also been the rod of internal order. The Indian army, that shield of defence, had been a force capable of preventing fires at home, as well as acting as an imperial fire-brigade overseas. All this would be put at risk by Scheme B.\textsuperscript{28} But already some of the Generals, adept at spotting silver linings in the clouds, saw merits in concentrating British interest in the areas beloved of their martial tradition, especially the Punjab. If Scheme B was the only alternative, something might be rescued from the point of view of British strategic interests: 'every effort should be made to obtain agreement for some form of central defence council to be set up which will include not only Pakistan, Hindustan and the Indian States, but also Burma and Ceylon'.\textsuperscript{29} With the Central Defence Council providing an illusion of rescuing something of Britain's strategic requirements, London ratified its Mission's proposal to resolve Solomon's dilemma in India by giving both the claimants some part of what they wanted, at best an 'emasculated version of one or the other rival theses'; a Pakistan trimmed

\textsuperscript{27} Attlee to the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 13 April 1946, Ibid., 260–1.

\textsuperscript{28} To fight a war Pakistan would have to rely on Hindustan for much of its supplies; West Pakistan was likely to identify itself with other Muslim countries, which might lead it into wars of no concern to Hindustan. But the greatest danger was that the government of West Pakistan might through 'fear engendered by her own weakness uncover the vitals of India by not resisting on the natural battle ground of the hills of the Indian frontier'. Nevertheless, the Chiefs of Staff conceded that 'Scheme B will have to be accepted if the only alternative is complete failure to reach agreement and consequent chaos.' (From the War Staff Files, L/WS/I/1029: ff. 82–6, minute of Chiefs of Staff meeting, 12 April 1946, attached to Attlee's reply to the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 13 April 1946, \textit{T.P.}, vii, 261.)

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
to the bone, or a central government stripped of most of its real powers, and not ‘worth much’. Yet both London and Delhi were at one that ‘agreement is the paramount necessity’. Because the ‘risk of disagreement’ was ‘greater’, they would have to ‘tolerate one or other of these alternatives’.  

Once the Cabinet had given the go-ahead, the way was clear to offer Jinnah the alternatives of a small Pakistan with sovereign rights and treaty relations with Hindustan, or a larger Pakistan (with some minor boundary adjustments and only excluding Assam) inside a federation with Hindustan. The great merit was that in such a federation ‘Pakistan’ would have equal status with Hindustan in those two matters over which a rather emasculated all-India centre was to be given authority. There was to be no union legislature and any question at the centre on which the two federal units failed to agree would be referred back to their respective group legislatures. Agreement would not be imposed by central dictate, but by agreement between the two federated governments. To make this all-India federation even more attractive for Jinnah, it was clearly stated that the Muslim-majority areas would have complete control over all their affairs except those specifically given to the centre; and at the centre ‘they would meet the Hindus on a level where it was States which counted and not the number of individuals in them’. This principle of equality, which was exactly what Jinnah had been fighting for all along, was, he was now told, ‘the essence of the proposal’.  

In the confusing story of demand and counter-demand, of tactical side steps, and strategic retreats, of propaganda aimed at turbulent followers, and proposals aimed at more hard-headed opponents, it is easy to lose track of what Jinnah was really after. Since 1940, Jinnah had maintained an immaculate silence on the inner meaning of the Pakistan demand. But once the Cabinet Mission began its enquiries and made its proposals, he allowed its members, and hence the historian, to get a tantalising hint of his real aims and a glimpse of the goal towards which he had been tacking and turning. Upon this flash of candour, so fleetingly revealed in the intentional obfuscations of Jinnah’s tactics, the historian of Pakistan must pounce. Jinnah’s aims had been hinted at in his talks with Wyatt (see pp. 174–5). Now the Mission had offered him the substance of what he was really after. It was not the impractical ‘Pakistan’ of fantasy for which the man in the street or the mullah in the mosque was wont to cry,  

30 At any rate, if H.M.G. had no choice but to make an award of some sort, then it was considered essential that it ‘should remain free to propound more satisfactory versions of one or other of the alternatives . . . a better Pakistan, or a better All-India system’. (Croft to Monteath, 15 April 1946, ibid., 274.)  

31 See Cabinet Delegation and Wavell’s meeting with Jinnah, 16 April 1946, ibid., 281–2.
nor was it the 'mutilated and moth-eaten' Pakistan which was outlined in Scheme B and which finally emerged in 1947. His Pakistan did not intend to throw the advantages of an undivided Punjab and Bengal to the winds; nor did it plan to leave the Muslims in Hindustan unprotected. Undivided provinces and protection for minority Muslims could only be achieved inside the framework of an union with an effective centre where the League had an equal say. So we must carefully assess why Jinnah did not jump more openly and more enthusiastically at what the Mission now had offered in its Scheme A. The answer is simple, but not so simple that historians have given it proper weight. In the first place, as the Secretary of State realised, there was no certainty that Congress would accept the principle of equality or parity at the centre. If Jinnah came forward with too evident an enthusiasm to embrace an offer which the Congress later might reject, he would stand exposed before his followers and would have lost the bargaining counter which his demand for the full sovereign Pakistan gave him. So he had to make a fine calculation of how to proceed. It was only by pressing for even more than he had been offered that Jinnah hoped to persuade Congress to accept the Mission's proposed all-India federal scheme as a lesser evil. Then there were his own followers to consider. Few among them would understand that the Mission had dealt them a royal flush or that equality at an all-India federal centre outweighed the advantages which a sovereign but truncated Pakistan would bring.

So the game was played in Jinnah's usual manner. He argued that equality at the centre was all very well on Cabinet paper, but would never work in Khadi practice. Equality could hardly be assured inside a system of government where one party had the big battalions, and the other the small. What Jinnah needed was to get all the parties to agree to dissolve the existing centre, in principle if not in fact, and then immediately to recreate it on the basis of a sovereign Pakistan. In his opinion this alone would ensure the Muslims equal treatment at the centre, since it would be an equality underwritten by the law of nations: a treaty between sovereign states. In return he was prepared to give up parts of the six Muslim provinces (though Assam could hardly be considered a Muslim province) to which he had laid claim. But unless and until Congress came forward with a clear 'yes', he would not say 'what he was willing to give up' (see p. 168). He wanted to make terms with the Congress, but only if it gave him a 'viable' state, not if it 'struck at the heart of Pakistan'. If Congress refused to budge, then Jinnah wanted the Mission to impose a settlement, and thought they were in a 'position to do it' (see pp. 174–5). In fact he would have preferred the British to give him what they had offered and what he was ready to accept by an award, since the Congress
was unlikely in the end to concede such a degree of sovereignty to Pakistan which his scheme demanded. So the British should impose their solution and stay on for a few years to make it stick. Union here and now between League and Congress provinces was all very well only provided the British remained to supervise fair play to the weaker partner represented by the League.\textsuperscript{32}

Jinnah's reasoning depended on two assumptions. The first was that if the League and Congress could not agree, the British were ready to make an award, and then stay on to enforce it. The second was that the Congress would never willingly accept the outright partition of India which the full-blown claims for a sovereign and separate Pakistan entailed. So it was safe to demand division and Pakistan since there was no risk of Congress allowing either to be conceded at the end of the day. Both these assumptions proved to be seriously misguided. The British were not ready to impose a settlement and stay on to work it, and rather than accept a weak centre for an undivided India which made nonsense of their own requirements of a strong central authority, Congress was ready reluctantly to allow contiguous Muslim regions, pared down to the bone, to go their own way. It could then impose upon its India a centre with real authority. For Congress, this was a lesser evil than accepting Jinnah's claims and settling for a weak centre shared with the League and Pakistan. Congress might have been ready to move towards a weaker centre to keep India undivided; but its own purposes required that such a centre evolve out of the existing one, perhaps giving away some of its powers, but not recasting it anew on the basis of a treaty between sovereign states. And this applied to the Indian army also, which Jinnah wanted to divide first and then to bring together again for the purposes of a common defence arrangement.

On 15 April 1946 Congress put forward its own suggestions through its Muslim president, Maulana Azad. It wanted complete independence for an undivided India. There would be one federation of fully autonomous units with residuary powers, and a centre above them with authority over certain subjects, some compulsory, others optional. The compulsory subjects would be defence and foreign affairs, while the optional list included all the remaining central subjects under the existing constitution. This, Azad felt, met all the legitimate Muslim fears.\textsuperscript{33} But the proposal ran into all manner of difficulties. For one thing, it was probable that the Hindu provinces might be persuaded to allow the centre to retain some of the optional subjects, while the Muslim provinces were unlikely

\textsuperscript{32} See Cabinet Delegation and Wavell's meeting with Jinnah, 16 April 1946, ibid., 285.

\textsuperscript{33} See T. P., vii, 285, fn. 3.
to be so persuaded. A federation of provinces, some with greater and others with lesser powers, was not constitutionally or practically very tidy. There would have to be some sort of executive and legislative authority to sort out the problem of compulsory and optional subjects, and this in its turn would raise the thorny question of how the provinces were to be represented in the central organs. This was the dilemma the Cabinet Mission hoped to resolve by their three-tier proposal. It was put forward by Cripps, who had borrowed it from a Punjabi Leaguer, Nawab M. A. Gurmani. At the top there would be the union of all-India, in the middle the sub-federations of Pakistan and Hindustan with their separate legislatures, and below them the provinces and States or groups of States which agreed to join one or other of the two sub-federations.

The Mission persuaded itself that this three-tier wedding cake was the best way to celebrate the sanctified union of Muslim and Hindu India. Even Wavell saw merits in this complex scheme, though he was not sure whether Congress would agree to the proposed sub-federations and the concentration of power which group legislatures on the second tier would entail. The real point was that a group legislature on the second tier was a major concession to the League, a way of roping Jinnah into accepting the scheme. The League with its weak structure of authority over the legislatures of the Muslim-majority provinces needed a central Muslim legislature in order to keep these provinces under some control. While the Congress with its ‘strong party control’ might be able to work a system which only had provincial legislatures, the League would find it impossible to crack the whip on its notoriously unruly followers.

On 25 April 1946, Jinnah was shown the two revised plans: in the new numbering Plan A was now the three-tier federal union and Plan B was a minimum sovereign Pakistan. In the first open indication that he might settle for something less than a sovereign Pakistan, Jinnah rejected a

34 Ibid., 317, fn. 1.
35 According to Cripps, the three-tier system would start ‘at the bottom with the Provinces and such larger states or groups of states as agree to join one or other of the two groups. These units should be grouped according to the desire expressed by their popular assemblies into two groups, one of which we refer to as Pakistan and the other as Hindustan. Finally, there should be a Union of All India embracing both Pakistan and Hindustan and if it were so agreed, some or all of the states or groups of states.’ (Memorandum by Sir Stafford Cripps, 18 April 1946, ibid., 306; also see Cabinet Delegation to Wavell, 22 April 1946, ibid., 315–17, documents 130 and 131.)
36 But Alexander argued that this condition was the logical development of something to which the Congress had already agreed, and felt it ‘satisfied our conscience sufficiently on the minority issue’. (See notes of meetings between the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 24 and 25 April 1946, ibid., 325 and 332.)
37 Note of meeting between the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 25 April 1946, ibid., 334.
truncated Pakistan (Plan B) as 'definitely unacceptable' but said he was prepared to consider the three-tier federal union (Plan A) if Congress would do the same.\textsuperscript{38} But the omens that Congress would accept the three-tier proposal were not good. Neither Gandhi nor Nehru liked the scheme; and the Working Committee was reluctant even to consider it. The Mission faced the risk of formally putting the proposal to the Congress and then having it rejected out of hand. Then the only way forward would be an award, with one option foreclosed since the main party had already declared its unwillingness to accept it. So Cripps suggested that they should 'now press the Congress hard', pointing out that since Congress had already accepted the principle of provincial autonomy, the Mission's proposal was simply a way of giving Muslims reasonable protection and taking the sting out of the Pakistan demand.\textsuperscript{39}

But if the Mission now had a formula for a solution to the long-term constitutional problem, they had still to tackle the short-term difficulties. To get the constitution-making machinery moving, an interim government supported by both parties was essential. Congress wanted plenary powers as a condition for coming into an interim government, arguing that its followers would not be satisfied if all that happened was a change in the personnel of the existing Viceroy's Executive Council. But Wavell and the Mission argued for an interim government under the existing constitution on the grounds that Parliamentary legislation would delay getting Indians into office.\textsuperscript{40} Wavell's new Executive Council was to be wholly Indian, except for the Viceroy himself. He would retain the right to distribute portfolios, but he would first consult Indian leaders. The Viceroy would also keep his special powers during the interim period, although, with goodwill and trust, he hoped it would not be necessary to exercise them. Wavell wanted a Council of twelve: five Congressmen including a representative of the Scheduled Castes; five Muslim Leaguers; one Sikh, and one other (Anglo-Indian, Christian or non-League Muslim). Since such a Council was bound to arouse controversy, Wavell was prepared to add a thirteenth member for good luck and maintain the communal balance. If the composition of the Council could be settled, Wavell would suggest the names of the members, but he was willing to listen to objections; alternatively, he was prepared to choose names from lists sent by the parties.\textsuperscript{41}

The long-term solution, however, overshadowed the question of the

\textsuperscript{38} Meeting of the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 26 April 1946, ibid., 342.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} See meeting of the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell with Maulana Azad, 17 April 1946, ibid., 294–7.

\textsuperscript{41} See Wavell's undated note, ibid., 359–61.
interim government. Jinnah wanted the long-term issue settled first on a basis he deemed to be satisfactory. The Mission had somehow to bring the two parties to the negotiating table. If the talks produced no agreement (and no one really believed that an agreement was likely), then at least the Mission would be justified in coming out publicly with its own proposals. On 26 April, Azad thought somewhat optimistically that the Congress Working Committee might negotiate on the basis of a single federation, broken into two, and legislating separately for optional subjects. The Mission saw this as a step forward. The invitation to the presidents of the two parties, couched in identical terms, stated that the Mission had in mind an union government dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications, and two groups of provinces – Muslim and Hindu – dealing with the remaining subjects. Both the parties agreed to send their representatives to confer with the Mission and the Viceroy at Simla. But agreeing to meet did not mean that they were prepared to negotiate in earnest. Azad’s reply to Pethick-Lawrence now suggested that Congress was in no mood to give much away. It objected to the ‘residuary sovereign rights’ which the Mission planned to give to provincial governments; it maintained that ‘Congress has never accepted the division of India into predominantly Hindu and predominantly Muslim Provinces’, but did admit that there might have to be an optional and a compulsory list of subjects at the federal centre. With such a reaction from even Azad, it is a wonder that the Mission still bothered to make the trek up to Simla.

Section 2

On 5 May 1946, the tripartite Conference opened at Simla. Congress and League each sent four representatives: Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan from the Congress and Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar and Nawab Ismail Khan from the League. But no one had agreed to anything before Simla, and no one was minded to give away much at it. Jinnah wanted power to lie at the intermediate level; Congress wanted it

42 See Cabinet Delegation to Attlee, 27 April 1946, ibid., 351.
43 See Pethick-Lawrence to Azad, 27 April 1946, ibid., 352. (A similar letter was sent to Jinnah.)
44 Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 27 April 1946, ibid., 353 and 28 April 1946, ibid, 357–8.
45 It is ironic that there were two Muslims from the Congress and three minority-province Muslims from the League who met to decide the future of India and of the Muslims in the majority provinces. But they might as well have been Catholics and Protestants in Belfast for all the love that was lost between them. Jinnah set the tone of the Conference by refusing to shake hands with Azad.
at the top. The Mission's hope was 'somehow . . . to arrive at a position which Jinnah can regard as conceding Pakistan and Congress can regard as not conceding it'.46 Here indeed was a task for a magician, and Simla was short of wizards in the early summer of 1946.

Both parties had diametrically different conceptions of what power the union centre should possess. Finance was the nub of the matter, since power comes out of the drawers of the till. Congress wanted a self-supporting centre, with control over subjects to do with revenue. Jinnah claimed he wanted a centre with no real financial powers, a mere agent for the federations, dependent on doles from the provinces. He did not want the centre to have authority to levy taxes upon the groups. The union would have to be given a budget for defence, but that budget was to be kept to the minimum in line with previous expenditure by the two federations who would have to agree on what to give. If the union needed more money, Jinnah wanted its budget to go to the group legislatures for their approval.47 Not surprisingly, Nehru retorted that Congress could never accept such a 'vague and airy Centre'.48

By his implacable opposition to an union legislature, Jinnah showed what he was really after. He would have preferred even foreign affairs and defence, the union centre's two responsibilities, to be discussed and settled in the group legislatures, and he conceded with reluctance that this was neither logical nor practical.49 But if there was to be an union legislature, parity for the League was of the essence: different legislatures would be entitled to elect an equal number of representatives to the union legislature, and the balance between the League and the Congress had to be made immune to any changes, even if the princes were to come in later.50

At the end of the first long day of shadow boxing, nothing had been agreed. Congress had come out clearly against the grouping of provinces and the creation of executive and legislative machinery on the second

46 Croft to Monteath, 3 May 1946, T.P., VII, 410.
47 First meeting of the Second Simla Conference, 5 May 1946, ibid., 426.
48 Ibid., 427. Vague and airy though Nehru's critics sometimes found him, he knew better that someone had to provide the money for those with their heads in the clouds.
49 The Secretary of State asked the Leaguers whether they envisaged India's foreign minister trotting off like some peripatetic envoy to two or three legislatures, attempting to justify his policy to three different sets of interests; and whether India's guns would have three barrels swivelling round to three points of the compass according to the conflicting demands of three houses. Jinnah thought he had made his point when he drew an analogy between the foreign policy of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the new India he wanted; but someone reminded him that the Commonwealth did not have a common foreign policy. (Ibid, 428.)
50 Second meeting of the Second Simla Conference, 5 May 1946, ibid., 430.
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Such an arrangement would be 'cumbrous, static and disjointed, leading to continuous friction'. The grouping scheme, with its three layers, was, Wavell confessed, far from 'ideal from the administrative point of view', but had been devised to deal with a 'psychological difficulty' and with the problems to which the Congress's own proposals for two lists of central subjects had given rise. The optional subjects, the Mission decided, could best be discussed by the group legislatures. For his part, Nehru let the cat out of the bag when he hinted that Congress's proposals were not seen by it as a final solution, and the constitution it had in mind was to be something different, since provincial autonomy presented the real threat to an united India. What Nehru and Congress wanted was a 'strong and organic' centre for the union, even if its powers were to be limited to a narrower range of subjects than they preferred.

Congress did not like grouping because it made the provinces the arbiters of India's future constitution and gave the League too much say at the centre. But this was precisely why Jinnah wanted a group legislature for the Muslim provinces. Both Congress and League wanted their centres to control their provinces, but the Congress wanted to control the provinces from an union legislature which it knew it could dominate while Jinnah wanted his central authority to flow from a group legislature - this was to be his centre, and from it he hoped to build up a real authority over his less amenable Muslim provinces. This was just what Congress wanted to prevent by insisting that the issue of grouping had to be decided by the all-India constituent assembly. That assembly would settle the shape of the union and a fortiori the provincial constitutions. Confident of victory in the constituent assembly, Congress did not believe that grouping would survive at the end of the day. It had the measure of Jinnah's weaknesses. Once Muslims entered the constituent assembly, with freedom around the corner, and Congress clearly in the saddle, Muslims, indeed even Leaguers, would in all probability exhibit that renowned Indian talent for crossing the floor. This would prove the Congress's point that Muslims were Indians just like everyone else, that Congress was a secular party open to all-comers.

Jinnah could not accept this line. Grouping alone had brought him to Simla. He had been denied a sovereign Pakistan and offered grouping instead. Now Congress wanted to take away grouping, or at best keep it at a tantalising distance which could only be reached by an united and

51 See Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 6 May 1946, ibid., 434.
52 Third meeting of the Second Simla Conference, 6 May 1946, ibid., 436.
53 See the third and fourth meetings of the Second Simla Conference, 6 May 1946, ibid., 437 and 441.
solid League when in fact he knew that the League was neither united nor solid. Unless he was given grouping Jinnah would not stay to talk at Simla. The uncertain hold he had over his followers was cutting down his options at the negotiating table. It was not that Jinnah was simply cussedly inflexible as the Guardians sometimes portrayed him; he was unbending because, knowing his power was so brittle, he realised that by bending a fragile League might break beyond repair. The via tuta for Jinnah was Pakistan or grouping for Muslim provinces, with an equal say in the constitution-making body. More than 'mere psychology or a vague feeling of sentiment' was at stake, Jinnah argued, and he was right. Grouping was the only 'way to prevent complete partition', and the groups should be allowed to set up the machinery for making the constitution, not the machinery the groups. The assembly making the constitution was not to be sovereign; sovereignty would flow only once a constitution had been agreed upon. With authority to settle everything, including provincial constitutions, the constituent assemblies of the groups would only leave the three agreed subjects to the union. These group assemblies would be elected by the provincial legislatures and the Princely States would have a constituent assembly of their own. Once all these assemblies had been set up, they would send their representatives to an union assembly, tied and strictly bound to its three common subjects. Since even this emasculated centre might threaten the Muslim provinces, Jinnah wanted the groups to have the right to secede within five years – a stern reminder to the Congress to behave even-handedly towards the infant Muslim groups during the early years of the union, and also to his own followers that they would have to follow their leader. This was hard play, and it depended on the other players not overthrowing the table.

Six more days of proposals and counter-proposals did not disguise the fact that the Conference had broken down over the issue of grouping, 'the whole guts' of the problem, as Jinnah pithily told the disappointed Viceroy. Details are mere glosses in the margin since there was so little common ground between the Congress and the League. Jinnah laid

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54 See record of fourth meeting of the Second Simla Conference, 6 May 1946, ibid., 441.
55 Patel said that this was partition, which was the reality of the grouping scheme. Jinnah assured him that he was not trying to break the union but there had to be constitutional means (just as there have to be divorce laws) to end it if it proved impossible in the 'light of experience'. (Ibid., 442.)

According to Gandhi, the grouping scheme was 'really worse than Pakistan' and there could be no question of equality between Hindu provinces and their vastly larger populations and the much smaller Muslim provinces. (Gandhi to Cripps, 8 May 1946, ibid., 466.)

56 See note by Wavell, 13 May 1946, ibid., 540.
down the League’s conditions: grouping must come before union; there had to be at least two assemblies to settle the constitution; all the Muslim provinces, both in the west and the east, had to be in one group, as the price for conceding Assam; provinces had to be denied the right to opt out until the constitution for the Muslim group had been settled. In its turn, the Congress called for a sovereign constituent assembly; there was to be no parity for the Muslim group (or groups) whether in the executive or legislature at the centre, and currency and customs had to remain in the hands of the centre in addition to ‘other subjects as on closer scrutiny may be found to be intimately allied to them’, such as central planning.

On 12 May 1946, the Simla negotiations openly collapsed. Both parties rushed to register their claims before the Mission announced its proposals in lieu of an agreed settlement. The Mission was not in a position to make an award. Awards can only be made, and made to stick, if the makers are ready to impose their decisions, by force or by political persuasion. The Mission had come to India to find a way by which the British could get out of India, keeping their interests intact, but giving their responsibilities away. Its proposals of mid-May were intended to concentrate the minds of their would-be successors, not to lay down the definitive law. On 16 May 1946, the Mission proposed the three-tier system, a compromise between Jinnah’s full sovereign Pakistan and Congress’s ‘strong and organic’ centre. The union would control the three common subjects and it would have the power to raise its own revenues. It would have an executive and legislature with representatives from British India and the Indian States. There would be no parity between Congress and Muslim provinces.

The 16 May statement was potentially a disaster for Jinnah. He wanted parity; he was against allowing the union centre to raise its own revenues; he did not want an union legislature at all, and had insisted that even minor decisions, whether legislative or executive, on any ‘controversial’ matter at the centre must have a three-fourths not a bare majority. But there was worse to come. The League had demanded that the provinces and the Princely States should be sovereign in all matters except those specifically conceded to the centre. The Mission, however, spoke about

57 See note by Wyatt on his conversation with Jinnah, 9 May 1946, ibid., 475.
58 See Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 9 May 1946, ibid., 476-7.
59 See Jinnah to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 May 1946, ibid., 516-17 and Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 May 1946, ibid., 518-21.
60 See Cabinet Mission’s statement, 16 May 1946, ibid., 582-91.
61 See Jinnah to Pethick-Lawrence, 12 May 1946, ibid., 517, paragraph 8. The Mission’s proposals merely suggested that any communal issue in the legislature would be decided by a majority voice of the affected community as well as a majority of all those present and voting irrespective of community.
residuary powers for the provinces, not the ‘sovereign’ rights which its letters of invitation to Azad and Jinnah before Simla had mentioned. Instead of one Muslim group, which Jinnah wanted, there were to be two, one consisting of the Punjab, Sind, the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan (Group B), and the other of Bengal and Assam (Group C). The Mission’s plan did entitle provinces to form groups, equip themselves with executives and legislatures, and ask for their constitution to be changed after a ten-year interval. But there was no mention of the right of secession from the union. All in all, the 16 May statement contained evidence of a greater deference to the Congress standpoint, hinting to Jinnah that perhaps he had missed the bus.

The details of the Mission’s plan showed how far the League’s case had fallen. The League had asked for Hindus and Muslims to have seats in the union assembly in proportion to their population; Congress preferred single transferable votes since Hindu and Sikh minorities in the Muslim provinces had been given weightage – this was standing separate representation on its head. The Mission ruled along Congress lines. Muslims from all three groups could now expect a mere seventy-nine seats in a central legislature which contained 292. So in the Mission’s

62 See Pethick-Lawrence to Azad, 27 April 1946, ibid., 352.
63 According to the Mission’s proposal the provincial legislatures would elect their representatives through proportional representation by a single transferable vote. (See Cabinet Delegation’s statement, 16 May 1946, ibid., 582-91.)
64 Of the 187 seats given to the Hindu provinces, twenty were for their Muslim minorities. The north-western group had thirty-five seats at the centre, of which twenty-two were for Muslims. Bengal and Assam had seventy seats, of which a bare majority of thirty-six were for Muslims. The following table gives the composition of the proposed union legislature:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Sikh</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>167</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjab (28)†</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.W.F.P. (3)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind (4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
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Jinnah’s ‘Pakistan’ and the Cabinet Mission plan

proposals the Muslim provinces of the north-west ended up with only two seats more than Muslims in the minority provinces. Punjab, which did not have a League ministry, was left in clear control of its group. Indian States, with ninety-three representatives, gave Congress a potentially overwhelming majority. Of course the Mission’s proposals reflected the political arithmetic of India far more accurately than Jinnah’s calculations. But that is precisely why he did not like them, was opposed to a single constitution-making body and needed a settlement by treaty between sovereign states, not by a share-out between the big and the small. For Jinnah the worst cut of all was that grouping was not made binding upon the provinces even though they would initially have to meet in groups. According to the Mission, the union assembly would begin by setting up an electoral commission.\(^\text{65}\) Then the provincial representatives would divide according to their groups;\(^\text{66}\) these groups would settle their provincial constitutions and decide whether they wanted group constitutions or not. In Group B, for example, Punjab was dominant but the other provinces in its group could cut loose from its sway once the constitution had been framed.\(^\text{67}\)

Admittedly few of Jinnah’s followers could understand the full implications of the Mission’s proposals, but its preamble, harshly worded and openly rejecting a sovereign Pakistan, put the Quaid-i-Azam in an

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<th>Province</th>
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<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Sikh</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group C</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bengal (60)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assam (10)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
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*There was to be an additional representative from Baluchistan. 
†These indicate the number of seats allotted to the province in the union legislature. 
Ibid.

\(^{65}\) The union constituent assembly would meet in Delhi, initially only to elect a chairman and other officers and an Advisory Committee on the rights of citizens, minorities and tribal and excluded areas. But it was obvious that if the League made the election of the chairman a communal issue the constitution-making process would be nipped in the bud.

\(^{66}\) In the preliminary stage the Indian States would be represented by a negotiating committee since the plan did not suggest a method of selection for State representatives. (See paragraph 19 (ii) of the statement, T.P., vii, 589.)

\(^{67}\) There was no provincial legislature in Baluchistan which could decide to opt out of Group B. The representatives of Baluchistan were to be selected by a Shahi Jirga (or grand meeting of all the tribal sardars). Only after the new constitutional arrangements had been settled could a province decide to opt out of a group by the decision of its newly elected legislature. In other words, they had to parley before quitting.
impossible quandary. Until now his own followers had not questioned his tactics, however little he was wont to explain what they were. But now Jinnah was bombarded with telegrams from his followers openly questioning his line. They were bemused by his letter to Pethick-Lawrence of 12 May which seemed to give Pakistan away by conceding the principle of an union government. Since the Mission’s preamble so clearly rejected ‘Pakistan’, how could Jinnah reconcile its proposals with their demands? Jinnah took refuge behind the closed doors of his Working Committee, and called a meeting of the A.I.M.L. Council (which for the past twenty-two months he had not needed to do). Jinnah had to placate his followers, and needed time to do so. But time was running out, since the Mission and the Congress were both in a hurry. Jinnah argued for a steady unhurried pace, and asked for a month before giving his reaction to the Mission’s plan. Jinnah, far less sanguine of his control over events, and uncertain of winning a dangerous game, was now being questioned even by the Leaguers who previously had followed his lead blindly.

But there were attractions for the Muslim provinces in the Mission’s plan, so it was by no means out of the question that Jinnah could reconcile them to it. The average Punjabi, according to the Governor, would be pleased with the proposals. In Khizar’s opinion, religious enthusiasm was a ‘passing phase’, and most Muslims in the Punjab would be ‘content to settle down’ and take a moderate line. Equally,

68 See AIML/File. No. 142 (Working Committee’s Meetings 1943–1947) and AIML/SHC/1, Files 1 and 2 (Punjab vol. II, General Correspondence 1944–1947 and NWFP vol. II, 1944–47).
69 See note on Jinnah’s telephone conversation with George Abell, 18 May 1946, T.P., vii, 619. Liaquat told Wavell that according to the League’s constitution it was impossible to summon the Council at less than a fortnight’s notice. But he later informed them that Jinnah had called a meeting of the League’s Working Committee for 3 June instead of 10 June, and the A.I.M.L.’s Council’s meeting for the 5th instead of the 15th June. (Liaquat Ali Khan’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 19 May 1946, ibid., 623.)
70 Liaquat, taking Jinnah’s line, argued that calm was needed to formulate the response to the Mission’s statement. No sensible decision could be arrived at in the existing ‘atmosphere of emotionalism’. (See Liaquat’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 19 May 1946, ibid., 628–9.)
71 But Khizar was less optimistic about grouping; there was already friction between the Punjab and the Frontier Province over the question of a joint police force. The Pathans, understandably enough, did not want to come under the Punjab’s sway. As the Governor of the Punjab commented, ‘it would be certainly unwise for them to do so’. Khizar was also against having anything to do with Sind. (See Jenkins to Wavell, 17 May 1946, ibid., 604–5.) But the Syed group in Sind had already condemned the notion of grouping, arguing that their province should have nothing to do with the Punjab; they
many Bengali Muslims were relieved that the Mission had left their province undivided and essentially a ‘self-governing entity’, and were keen that Jinnah should accept the proposals. As far as the Punjab and Bengal were concerned, Muslims had reason to be pleased with the Mission’s plan. It was simply that the wording of the preamble which rejected ‘Pakistan’ debarred them from expressing their delight openly until Jinnah had given his clearance. By making much of ‘Pakistan’ in an unspecified way when he had little else in his armoury, Jinnah could not now easily reveal its inwardness or deny what had become a catch-all for a host of unattainable dreams.

On 22 May 1946 Jinnah, realising that he could no longer delay, gave his first reaction to the Mission’s statement. Some of it was predictable: he regretted that the Mission had trotted out ‘commonplace and exploded arguments against Pakistan and resorted to special pleadings couched in deplorable language which is calculated to hurt the feelings of Muslim India’. This was a curt nod meant for those in the govs; he went on to keep his options open. He carefully avoided rejecting the Mission’s statement out of hand, arguing that it was not for him but for the A.I.M.L. Council to decide the matter. By this device, more transparent to the historian than to his contemporaries, Jinnah hoped to salvage from the 16 May statement something of the Mission’s pre-Simla scheme. But Congress was not ready to stand by while Jinnah tried to bring round his Council. Congress openly admitted that its policy was to go further still in the opposite direction, to ‘improve’ on the statement and get the sovereign constituent assembly which it wanted. The Congress could scent victory. Its press was against any appeasement of the League, and the Viceroy feared that some members of the Congress High Command, led by Vallabhbhai Patel, were preparing to bid for the whole cake – ‘This section has no interest in the framing of the final wanted Sind to simply opt out of everything and become sovereign in its right. Yet other Sindhi Muslims were seemingly happy with the proposals since they learnt from the Hindu press that they had been offered more than what Pakistan would have given them. (See Mudie to Wavell, 24 May 1946, ibid., 678.)

Burrows feared that if Jinnah rejected the statement this might signal a general Jihad and the Bengal League ministry might reluctantly be forced by the High Command to resign. (Burrows’s meeting with the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 24 May 1946, ibid., 675-7.)

Jinnah’s statement on the Cabinet Mission plan, 22 May 1946, in Sherwani (ed.), Pakistan Resolution to Pakistan, p. 118.

The League had been reassured and the Congress told that the constituent assembly would become sovereign only after the constitution had been framed. (See record of meeting between Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps with Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawab Ismail Khan and Sardar Nishtar, 16 May 1946, T.P., vii, 580.)
Constitution; all it wants is power, complete power, and power at once'.  

Jinnah was on the defensive, reluctant to face his own Working Committee and the League Council, 'nervous' and understandably alarmed at the way the Congress point of view and the line the Mission had decided to take were coming together. Everyone (except the League), the Viceroy, the Mission and the Congress were anxious to get on with making the constitution for independent India. This called for an interim government as soon as possible. But not sure that the constitution would go his way, Jinnah was anxious to delay. As he told Wyatt, what was needed was a 'surgical operation'. By this he did not mean partition, but rather a notional division of India into two groups before they joined again in a new partnership of equality. For this 'surgery' to be successful, Jinnah needed the British to remain in charge of defence and foreign affairs to hold the reconstructed centre together. In the nursery of independence, the British would have to remain in charge, disciplining the greedy and succouring the weak. Faced by such unacceptable counsels, Wyatt suggested a way out to that proud man who in the past had always relied solely on his own good judgement. Wyatt proposed that the League should pass a resolution condemning the Mission’s ‘outrageous’ rejection of Pakistan, then state that of course Muslims never expected the British or anyone else to hand them Pakistan on a plate and were ready to win it ‘by their own strong right arm’. To prove its goodwill, the League ‘would accept the Statement as the first step on the road to Pakistan’. Jinnah was apparently ‘delighted’ by this advice, a measure of his mounting despair.

Parity with the Congress, the League’s aim, was still eluding Jinnah. He now looked to the interim government to see if he could achieve parity there. With the ‘British Crown Representative’, the broker between the parties, the League might still get parity in an interim

75 Wavell to Henderson, 21 May 1946, ibid., 654. The leader of this section was Vallabhbhai Patel, India’s Bismarck, that man of iron from Gujerat. Nehru was ready to give the Mission’s plan a chance; Gandhi as ever sat on the fence, but there was no comfort for Jinnah in seeing him there. As Wavell remarked, Gandhi’s stance was a trifle confusing and no one could tell where the Mahatma, ‘a king chameleon’, really sat (ibid.). To make matters worse for Jinnah, on 24 May the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution objecting to compulsory grouping of provinces on the grounds that this infringed on provincial autonomy, and maintaining that the constituent assembly was a sovereign body with final authority to draw up the constitution. Only after the constitution had been drawn could the provinces decide to form groups. (See enclosure no. 370, Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, 24 May 1946, ibid., 679–82.)

76 See note by Wyatt, 25 May 1946, Ibid., 684–7 (my italics).

77 Jinnah exclaimed: ‘That’s it, you’ve got it.’ (Ibid., 687.)
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government and keep it as long as that government survived. If a new constitution failed to emerge during the interim period, all the better. In Jinnah's less than perfect world he was ready to settle for a semi-permanent interim government, with the Viceroy still in charge. At least this would give him time to persuade the Congress and his own Muslims to see good sense in his solution. And good sense it was, in terms of an ideal of Indian unity; unfortunately it was no longer practical politics.

Wavell could not promise Jinnah parity in an interim government; the Mission's proposals did not permit him that degree of latitude. He tried to persuade the League to keep an open mind about the Mission's plan, which it was easier to do once the Mission and the Congress fell out over their interpretation on grouping and on the status of the constituent assembly. He was able to offer the League a share, less than a lion's but a lot more than a jackal's, in the interim government. Wavell gave Jinnah his 'personal assurance', on behalf of the Mission, 'that we do not propose to make any discrimination in the treatment of either party; and that we shall go ahead with the plan laid down in the statement as far as circumstances permit if either party accepts; but we hope that both will accept'. With this assurance Jinnah was ready on 4 June 1946 to face his League.

Now he could tell his Working Committee that an 'assurance' from the British meant more than agreement with the Congress – the devil they knew was better than the devil they were coming to know. So he advised the Council to accept the Mission's plan on behalf of the League, condemn its preamble, but not fret too much since preamble and substance were clearly not at one. The Mission's plan in fact was a way forward for Pakistan, at least the Pakistan Jinnah was after. The proposed three-tier system gave the essence of a large Pakistan. Muslims would have their majority in two groups, and the centre, even if Congress and Hindus dominated it, had a very restricted domain. At this hedged and limited centre, parity still eluded the Muslims, but parity was more of a bargaining counter than an unnegotiable demand. Defence remained a strong card for Muslims: they would control India's frontiers and this would make them the real custodians of the centre. Moreover, any constitution drawn up would be open to that decennial revision hallowed

78 On 25 May, the Mission rejected the Congress's interpretation of the grouping scheme and the status of the constituent assembly; grouping was an 'essential feature' of the 16 May statement and the constituent assembly would be sovereign after, not before the making of the constitution. (See Mission's statement, 25 May 1946, paragraph 8, T.P., vii, 688-9.)

79 See Wavell to Jinnah, 4 June 1946, ibid., 799.

80 This line was reminiscent of Iqbal's address to the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad in December 1930.
by tradition. If the worse came to the worst, the Muslim units could pack their bags and leave the union, and Groups B and C would be insurance for minority Muslims, a point not lost on the four U.P. Muslims on the Working Committee. If the League rejected the proposals, Jinnah warned, the British would still go ahead and the Congress would be the beneficiary. Times had changed and so had the old balance: the League no longer had a veto on constitutional advance. These harsh facts had to be faced and the League had to enter the interim government if it was to rescue some part of its aims. Even now achieving parity was not out of the question; but unless the League was in the interim government and made its voice heard, it would lose all chance of winning parity. Jinnah’s reasons were a combination of special pleading and pragmatism. In the unhappy position of having to cajole and persuade men who previously had not questioned why, Jinnah was able to win the day only by promising that he would not join any interim government without parity for the League. On 6 June 1946, the A.I.M.L. passed its momentous resolution accepting the Mission’s statement, which, it must be stressed, had rejected Pakistan. All except thirteen Leaguers voted for it. Face was saved by reiterating Pakistan as the goal, and by reserving the

81 Interviews with two of the most important leaders from the Punjab in the A.I.M.L. Council provide interesting insight into Jinnah’s strategy. According to Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Jinnah never wanted a Pakistan which involved the partition of India and was all in favour of accepting the Cabinet Mission’s proposals. The ten-year trial period was the bait Jinnah offered to the separatists in the League Council. Daultana said that this was enough time to ensure a Hindu–Muslim accommodation, and as far as this Punjabi Leaguer was concerned these ‘ten years would be forever’. (My interview with Mian Mumtaz Daultana, 10 February 1980.) Shaukat Hayat claimed responsibility for bringing Jinnah round to accept the Mission’s 16 May statement. According to Shaukat it was he who told the Great Leader: ‘let us wait for ten years’. (Interview with Shaukat Hayat, 5 February 1980, Islamabad.)

82 Of the twenty-one members on the League’s Working Committee, eleven were from the minority provinces, including the president (Jinnah) and the general secretary (Liaquat); ten were from the Muslim-majority provinces. (See T.P., VII, xxx, where the names are given.)

83 As Jinnah later confessed, it was the Viceroy’s ‘assurance’ which had been ‘one of the most important considerations’; that assurance and the Mission’s statement ‘formed one whole’ and without it ‘we would not have got the approval of the Council to the scheme’. (Jinnah to Wavell, 8 June 1946, ibid., 841.)

84 Those who were opposed included spokesmen of extreme religious groups like Hasrat Mohani and Abdus Sattar Niazi. The gulf between the politicians of Pakistan and its religious leaders was increasingly to come into the open. (Interview with Mian Mumtaz Daultana, 10 February 1980.)

85 The League was ‘willing to co-operate with the constitution-making machinery proposed in the scheme outlined by the Mission, in the hope that it would ultimately result in the establishment of a completely sovereign Pakistan’. (See the A.I.M.L.’s resolution of 6 June 1946, in Sherwani (ed.), Pakistan Resolution to Pakistan, p. 127.)
League’s right to modify its stand at any time. But Jinnah got his mandate to enter the interim government and to ‘take such decisions and actions as he deems fit and proper’.\textsuperscript{86}

But for the first time Jinnah’s mandate had been qualified and defined by the League’s Council. Jinnah had reason to be worried. The Congress was publicly agitating against Wavell’s formula of a five:five:two ratio in the interim government. That ratio, Jinnah told Wavell, had been the ‘turning point in our having secured the decision of the Council’.\textsuperscript{87} If that ratio giving Congress and the League an equal share went, then so did Jinnah’s mandate. So Jinnah had to continue to demand parity for the League and the Congress in the interim government, and for good measure he demanded the most important portfolios of defence, foreign affairs, planning, development and commerce for the League. In fact Jinnah wanted the defence portfolio for himself, since he could see that this was the key post, a strong card if it could be held in Muslim hands.\textsuperscript{88} Jinnah also had to demand the right to nominate all Muslims in the interim government.\textsuperscript{89} As he admitted for the first time, he was ‘not his own master’.\textsuperscript{90}

There was nothing magical about the ratio Wavell had suggested; it was merely the ‘most hopeful basis of settlement’.\textsuperscript{91} Unless there was a coalition in the interim government, ‘there would be a split up and chaos’. Some such ratio as five:five was the price Congress would have to pay to persuade the League to enter into a coalition with it. By accepting something like parity, Congress could get constitution-making under way; it did not commit it to accepting it in the future. But the difficulty was that Congress was not prepared to give up its right to nominate Muslims of its own. Moreover, as Nehru told the Viceroy, Congress believed that a coalition would not work because the Congress and the League were poles apart. Congress abhorred grouping: it wanted a strong centre, and it thought it could get it. In short, its party bosses ‘did not think that Mr Jinnah had any real place in the country’.\textsuperscript{92} So Congress would only settle for an interim government of fourteen: five for Congress, four for the League, one non-League Muslim, one Congress Scheduled Caste, one Indian Christian, one Sikh, and the one obligatory woman whom Congress would find.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{87} Jinnah to Wavell, 8 June 1946, T.P., vii, 841.
\textsuperscript{88} Note by Wavell, 7 June 1946, ibid., 839.
\textsuperscript{89} Jinnah to Wavell, 8 June 1946, ibid., 842.
\textsuperscript{90} See note by Wyatt on conversation with Jinnah, 11 June 1946, ibid., 866–7.
\textsuperscript{91} Meeting of the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 8 June 1946, ibid., 843.
\textsuperscript{92} See Cabinet Delegation and Wavell’s interview with Nehru and Azad, 10 June 1946, ibid., 855.
\textsuperscript{93} Note by Wavell on interview with Nehru, 12 June 1946, ibid., 886–7.
On 16 June 1946, the Mission and the Viceroy announced their terms for the interim government. Fourteen members were to be invited to join the Executive Council and the making of the constitution would move forward as set out in the 16 May statement. The Viceroy would decide on who would have what portfolio in the interim government. It was explicitly stated that the interim government’s composition, a mere expedient for the moment, was ‘in no way to be taken as a precedent for the solution of any other communal question’. It was hoped to get the new Executive Council going in ten days’ time. But the critical paragraph 8 of the 16 June statement made provision for breaking the Congress–League deadlock:

In the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join in the setting up of a coalition Government on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy 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.*

These bold words were intended to get both parties to see the light, and join the Executive Council. Parity as such had been set aside, but something very close to parity had in practice been offered to the League, if caste Hindus were seen as rough equivalents to Muslims. Other minorities – a Sikh, Parsi, Indian Christian and a member of the Scheduled Castes – had been given a place, but some of them belonged to the Congress. Wavell had made a concession to Congress’s unwillingness to accept parity; in turn he looked to Congress to accept the May 16 statement and join the interim government.

But the Congress Working Committee was split down the middle. Patel was against accepting Wavell’s terms for entering the interim government; Gandhi was not so sure, and on certain conditions – Gandhi’s political grammar was always in the conditional – he was ready to be persuaded. But the main difficulty was Wavell’s failure to include

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94 They wearily confessed that ‘no useful purpose can be served by further prolonging these discussions'; a strong and representative interim government was needed, and it was needed here and now. (See statement by the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy, 16 June 1946, ibid., 954.)

95 Those invited were: Sardar Baldev Singh (Sikh representative), Sir N. P. Engineer, Jagiivan Ram (Congress Scheduled Caste), Nehru, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Nishtar, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Nazimuddin, Nawab Ismail Khan, C. Rajagopalachari, H. K. Mahtab and Dr John Matthai.

96 See paragraph 8 of the statement by the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy, 16 June 1946, T.P., vii, 955.

97 Gandhi wanted to bring in Sarat Chandra Bose instead of H. K. Mahtab, the Viceroy’s choice. This was because Bose controlled the left-wing of the party, represented Bengal and led the Congress in the central legislature. Congress also wanted Nishtar out since he
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a Congress Muslim among the new members. In the end Wavell accepted all of the Congress’s objections, except the one that really mattered to both sides, the inclusion of a Muslim who had no allegiance to the League. Even mild concessions by Wavell to the Congress meant acute troubles for Jinnah. His complaints about not being given parity were simply brushed aside. Pethick-Lawrence, his patience strained, told the Quaid-i-Azam that he was no longer bound by his promise to come into the interim government since parity, the condition for entry, had not been granted. This made it more difficult, not easier, for Jinnah. By now Jinnah was feeling the familiar cold draught of political failure and had little choice but to come into the interim government on British terms. He asked all sorts of questions, wanted all manner of assurances, and hedged this way and that. Jinnah wanted assurance that Muslim interests would be safeguarded on the Executive Council and decisions on major communal issues would not be taken if the majority of Muslim members were opposed to it. But the point Jinnah made most strongly was that the League could not sit on an Executive Council with a Muslim who was not of their persuasion: this was 'absolutely and entirely unacceptable' and if these 'Quisling[s]' were brought in, he would not be able 'to show his face anywhere'. These were the entreaties, not the demands of a man, increasingly tired and disheartened, who felt he had been 'let down'. The real bone of contention remained the question of Congress's right to have a Muslim of its own; Gandhi wanted Azad, but Azad, the Congress president, was ready to stay out if it brought the League into the government.

Wavell and the Mission now were well and truly stuck on the horns of yet another dilemma. If Congress rejected their proposals, the League alone would have to be allowed to form the government. Congress had still not accepted the May 16 statement; Jinnah had, so by the Mission's terms he would have to be invited to form the government. Congress obviously could not take that lightly and the agitation it would spark off was not the voters' choice in the Frontier. Wavell accepted Bose's inclusion and Congress agreed to let Nishtar in.

98 See note of interview between Pethick–Lawrence, Alexander and Jinnah, 17 June 1946, T.P., vii, 960.
99 He was not sure whether he would come into the government himself. Some of his followers had begged him not to join the interim government since there would be no one outside capable of keeping the ramshackle party together – Jinnah at least gave the appearance of doing so. But Jinnah wanted the defence portfolio for the League. Wavell wanted to give defence to a Sikh. (See Jinnah to Wavell, 19 June 1946, ibid., 976–7.)
100 See Wavell's note on interview with Jinnah, 18 June 1946, ibid., 971–2. In the circumstances it is easy to see why Jinnah did not summon the League Council, but only spoke with the smaller and more amenable Working Committee.
might break the grip of the right wing over the Congress leadership. On 22 June 1946, the Congress Working Committee decided not to join the interim government. In an effort to 'salvage something out of the wreckage around them', Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence used all their old contacts, and some of their new ones, with Congress, to get it to change its mind. After more inconclusive talks, the Congress Working Committee finally rejected the proposals for the interim government but significantly accepted the constitutional proposals of the May 16 statement. Its motive was clear; it was more than confident that it would be able to change the shape of the eventual constitutional settlement. By accepting the Mission's proposals of May 16, and then grounding its case on paragraph 8 of the June 16 announcement, Congress was in effect torpedoing Wavell's plans for the interim government. As the Viceroy lamented, 'We have in fact been outmanoeuvred by the Congress; and this ability of Congress to twist words and phrases and to take advantage of any slip in wording is what Mr Jinnah has all along feared, and has been the reason for his difficult attitude'.

Jinnah was now told that the interim government would have to be postponed. Of course he pretended to be outraged. But in fact he had deliberately withheld his decision until the Congress had definitively stated its position. If Congress had accepted, Jinnah was not minded to reject the interim government proposals; if Congress in fact turned them down, then Jinnah was eager to accept. Now British ineptitude had confused the situation, and Jinnah was ready to embarrass them by getting the League to accept the proposals for the interim government.

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101 See record of meeting between the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 22 June 1946, ibid., pp. 1002–5.
104 Bluntly Azad told Wavell: 'While adhering to our views, we accept your proposals and are prepared to work them with a view to achieve our objective.' The objective of course was a strong unitary centre. (Azad to Wavell, 25 June 1946, ibid., 1036.)
105 As Wavell confessed, paragraph 8 of the June statement had been 'rashly' conceived, since it now limited his freedom of action. The Congress could and would predictably claim that the original assurances to Jinnah no longer applied. (Note by Wavell, 25 June 1946, ibid., 1038.) Alexander complained that the Congress acceptance of the long-term proposals was 'not . . . genuine'; he had come to India with an open mind; whatever his exasperation with Jinnah's attitude, he now felt 'bound to say that the behaviour of the Congress in the last six weeks seemed to him the most deplorable exhibition that he had witnessed in his political career'. (See record of meeting of the Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 24 June 1946, ibid., 1024.)
106 Note by Wavell for the Cabinet Delegation, enclosure to no. 604, 25 June 1946, ibid., 1038–9.
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which the proposers had reneged for the time being.\footnote{See A.I.M.L. Working Committee's resolution, 25 June 1946, in Pirozda (ed.), Foundations of Pakistan, vol. II, pp. 530–1.} He realised that the League was unlikely to be asked on its own to form an interim government; Pethick-Lawrence did the Quaid-i-Azam less than justice in believing that he really thought the British would ask the League to come in on these terms.\footnote{The Secretary of State thought that Jinnah's hope of forming a government without the Congress was a 'foolish attitude' and 'very dangerous'. But the Quaid-i-Azam hardly needed Pethick-Lawrence to tell him how to play his cards. (See meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 26 June 1946, T.P., VII, 1053.)} Once again Jinnah could pose as the injured party and call upon his followers to rally behind him to fight another day. In this way Jinnah hoped to be able to keep open the semblance of choice in a situation where he was soon to have no choice.

On 26 June 1946, the Raj quartet, who by now were as used to making announcements as to going back upon them, told a less than expectant India that a caretaker government would be formed, not a representative interim one, but negotiations for the latter would continue when all the parties had found time for calm reflection. Jinnah reacted predictably, claiming that this was a 'breach of faith' by perfidious Albion, who was about to 'forfeit the confidence of Muslim India'.\footnote{See Jinnah's statement, 27 June 1946, ibid., 1069–73.} But the Mission had failed to square the circle; the deadly geometry of India's triangle had defeated it. On 28 June, the trio flew back to England, its mission unaccomplished. But it left behind a leader who had sensed that the last chance to achieve what he had always really been after had lain at some point inside the critical month between the statements of 16 May and 16 June. The issue was now to be decided in circumstances over which Jinnah had little control.