

DIRECT ACTION CAMPAIGN (1946)

Provoked by the success of the Congress, the Muslim League launched a direct action campaign on 16 August 1946, to achieve Pakistan which resulted in communal riots across the country. Rioting broke out on an unprecedented scale, especially in Bengal and Bihar, the massacre of Muslims in Kolkata brought Gandhi to scene, where he worked with the Muslim provincial Chief Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. Gandhiji's and Suhrawardy's efforts calmed fears in Bengal, but rioting quickly spread elsewhere.

It disassociated itself from the Cabinet Plan. As a result, Viceroy Wavell invited the Congress to join the interim government, although it had practically rejected the plan. However, the Viceroy soon realised the futility of the scheme without the participation of the League. Therefore, on 14 October 1946, he extended an invitation to them ask well. Jinnah nominated Liaquat Ali Khan. T. T. Chundrigar, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, Ghavanfar Ali Khan and Jogendra Nath Mandal to the cabinet. The Congress allocated the Finance Ministry to the League. This, in effect, placed the whole governmental set-up under the Muslim League. As Minister of Finance, Liaquat Ali Khan presented a budget which was called a 'poor man's budget' and it adversely affected the Hindu capitalists. Disagreements among the ministers paralysed the government, already haunted by the spectre of civil war.

The deadlock between the Congress and the League further worsened in this set-up. On 22 March 1947, Lord Mountbatten arrived as the last Viceroy of India. He announced that power would be transferred from the British to Indian hands by June 1948. Mountbatten assessed the situation and was convinced that Congress was willing to accept partition as the price of

independence; Jinnah would accept a smaller Pakistan than the one he demanded, that is, all of Punjab and Bengal, and the Sikhs would learn to accept the division of Punjab. Mountbatten was able to persuade most Indian leaders that immediate acceptance of his plan was imperative. Lord Mountbatten entered into a series of talks with the Congress and the Muslim League. Jinnah made it clear that the demand for Pakistan had the support of all the Muslims of India and that he could not withdraw from it. With staunch extremists, such as Patel, agreeing to the Muslim demand for a separate homeland, Mountbatten now prepared for the partition of India and announced it on 3 June 1947.

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