
Liaquat Ali Khan – His Role and Contribution in the Pakistan Movement 1936 - 1947

_____ Kishwar Sultana

Liaquat Ali Khan, the First Prime Minister of Pakistan, was a close associate of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah in the struggle for Pakistan. He was born into the Nawab family of the Punjab and the United Provinces and himself owned 300 villages (60 in the Punjab and 240 in Muzaffarnagar, UP). He was educated at Aligarh Muslim University and at Oxford in England. In politics he devoted himself to the cause of the Muslims in particular and of all Indians in general. When Jinnah started his efforts for the cause of Pakistan in 1936, he got him appointed as the Honorary Secretary-General of the All India Muslim League, largest Muslim political organization which later championed the cause of Pakistan under Jinnah's leadership. During all the crucial times and moments of the Pakistan Movement, Liaquat was one of those leaders who enjoyed full confidence of Jinnah. In the last phase of the struggle, Liaquat was very close to Jinnah because in his dialogues with the British Government, it was Liaquat who all the times was with him. It was because of the confidence which Jinnah had in Liaquat that he was appointed as First Prime Minister of Pakistan. Jinnah died on 11 September 1948, but it was Liaquat who guided the Pakistani Nation in crucial moments after the demise of the Quaid. He was a brave and courageous leader who knew how to lead Pakistan in different directions. As a brave leader when he was about to address a public meeting in Rawalpindi on 16 October 1951 he was shot dead. His killing is still shrouded in mystery because of various factors. The role he played in the Pakistan Movement needs to be further probed. A number of books and articles have been written on Liaquat but the facts have not yet been fully explored. Now is the time that the young scholars should understand this gigantic task.. Even his role as Prime Minister is also shrouded in various mysteries and enigmas. But the focus of this paper is only on his role and contribution in the Movement of Pakistan as the 'right hand' of Jinnah as the Quaid himself termed him. There are certain facts

mentioned in these papers which have not been mentioned earlier in the published works on Liaquat Ali Khan.

Early Career and Education

Liaquat Ali Khan was born on 1 October 1895. His father Nawab Rustam Ali Khan was one of the biggest landlords of the Punjab and the UP. His mother was Mahmoodah Begum who arranged for Liaquat's early Islamic education including Quran and Hadith. His father had great respect and regard for the services of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, founder of Two-Nation theory in British India and founder of the Aligarh Muslim College. After schooling in his native town, he was admitted into the M.A.O.College, Aligarh in 1913 wherefrom he graduated in 1918 in Political Science and LL.B. His father died in 1919. In 1920 he was sent to England to get higher education at Exeter College, Oxford University where he earned Master in Law and Justice with a Bronze Medal by the College faculty in 1921, and Bar-at-Law from the Inner Temple, one of the four Law Colleges in London, in 1922. After completion of his studies he went on a tour to a number of European countries and returned to India in 1923. During his student years both at Oxford and London, Liaquat actively participated in student's politics and even acted as Honorary Treasurer of the Muslim Society, London which devoted to the cause of Indian Muslim students in England. On return to his country he started his law practice as an Advocate of the Lahore High Court.¹

Early Political Career

He entered politics in 1923 by joining the All India Muslim League.² At the same in 1923 he contested election for a seat in the Punjab Legislative Assembly in which he was defeated. Then he shifted his attention to the UP where also he had his lands. When he joined the Muslim League, Jinnah was engaged in reviving the All India Muslim League which then had become a moribund organization. For this Jinnah, as President of the Party, had convened 15th session of the AIML at Lucknow on 31 March – 1 April 1923.³ On second day when Zahur Ahmed, Secretary of the Muslim League, noticed that despite the fact there were a large number of attendances in the session, “there was not the requisite number of *bona fide* members of the League”, the President “adjourned the Session, *sine die*”.⁴ This adjourned session was held in Lahore on 24-25 May 1924 which was attended by Liaquat Ali Khan.⁵ In the elections of 1926 he contested for a seat in the UP Legislative Assembly from Muzaffarnagar wherefrom he lucky enough to succeed and became member of the UP Legislative Assembly. Thus he was elected Member of the UP Legislative Assembly in 1926. Thereafter he was continuously elected as Member of the UP Legislative Council till 1947 when he was elected as Member of the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Since 1932 Liaquat became Deputy Leader of the Muslim group in the UP Legislative Council and later became Leader of his UP Muslim League Parliamentarians.

Liaquat developed acquaintance with Jinnah, President of the Party in 1924 when he hosted a dinner party in honour of Jinnah's wife Ruttie Jinnah in Simla⁶. As a result of Delhi Muslim Proposals of 1927, the AIML became divided into two groups – Jinnah League and Shafi League. Liaquat decided to side with the Jinnah League. He only attended the sessions and meetings of the Jinnah League. The 20th Session of the All India Muslim League headed by Jinnah was held in Calcutta on 26-30 December 1928 presided over by Jinnah's close friend Raja Sahib of Mahmudabad.⁷ The Nehru Report of August 1928 had created an alarming situation for the Muslim India. Longest debates between the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League were held for developing a consensus and resolution of Muslim issues. In this Liaquat sided with Jinnah. For representing the Muslim League at the Conference Table with the Congress leaders, AIML in this session nominated a delegation of 23 member headed by Jinnah to discuss the Nehru Report with the Congress leaders. Liaquat was also included in this delegation.⁸ Jinnah was impressed by Liaquat's role in this dialogue. Liaquat was continuously elected member of the UP Legislative Council after every three years' tenure. In 1931 he was elected Deputy President of the UP Legislative Council by a vote of 53 to 49.⁹

When Jinnah along with his sister Fatima and daughter Dina decided to settle in London and had gone to England in 1930 and the Muslim India and the All India Muslim League became a divided house, Liaquat went to England along with his wife Ra'na Liaquat and met Jinnah along with his family in July 1933 at their Hampstead residence in London, and convinced him to return to India to save the Muslims from further division.¹⁰ Jinnah returned to India in December 1934.¹¹ Liaquat thus became very close to Jinnah.

Services in strengthening the All India Muslim League

24th Session of the All India Muslim League was held in Bombay on 11-12 April 1936 presided over by Syed Wazir Hasan, former Chief Judge of the Oudh Chief Court.. Towards the end of this session a number of Resolutions were moved by Jinnah, regular President of All India Muslim League. One of them related to election of Liaquat as Honorary Secretary of the All India Muslim League which was approved unanimously. Thus Liaquat was elected Secretary for a term of three years which was further extended after every tenure.¹² Liaquat functioned as the Honorary Secretary-General of the AIML from 1936 to 1947. Thus main burden of the organization of the Muslim League fell on the shoulders of Liaquat who worked day and night to make the party emerge as the most popular organization of the Muslim India. Jinnah, being President of the Party, was engaged in other national matters of confronting various types of opposition to the very cause of the Muslim Nation. The challenges were great which are discussed later in this paper. The organization of the party was left to Liaquat who successfully worked to the entire confidence of President of the Party.

The organization of the Muslim League needed full coverage not only in the maintenance of the proceedings and records of the meetings of the Councils, Working Committees, Subject Committee, Annual Sessions and other committee meetings of the party, Liaquat's personal care for drafting and recording the proceedings of the party were found marvelous which we as historians do not see in case of the sessions and meetings of the party before 1936.¹³ The National Archives of Pakistan and Archives of the Freedom Movement are the best testimony for this.¹⁴ Even Shamsul Hassan Collections prove this reality.¹⁵

He strengthened the provincial branches of the Muslim League in the Provinces

Liaquat Ali Khan strengthened the cause of the Muslim League in various provinces. Because of his organizational efforts the Muslim League was popularized at the grass root level. The concern of the party leaders and that of Jinnah was to concentrate on the majority Muslim provinces like those of Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Sindh, NWFP (KPK), and Baluchistan because these provinces were going to form part of Pakistan demand. Here his services with reference to some of the provinces are mentioned. With reference to Bengal and Assam the task was entrusted to other leaders. In Sindh, the Muslim League had easily been popularized without much difficulty. In Baluchistan also the situation was favorable because of the efforts of Qazi Mohammad Isa, President of the Baluchistan Muslim League.

The most ticklish issue was with reference to the Punjab and NWFP (KPK) because of the special situation prevailing in these two provinces. Historically these two provinces were very important as they provided majority of the martial races heavily represented in the Indian Army. Not only throughout the history of the Muslim Rule in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, the soldiers and fighters of these two provinces played pivotal role in strengthening the cause of Muslim Power in the subcontinent, the British Power was also based on these soldiers. The soldiers of these two provinces represented majority of the Indian armed forces. Even in the World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) their courage and chivalry was tested and proved in majority of the war fronts in different regions and various parts of the world.

During the Pakistan Movement, the problem with these two provinces was that the Unionist Party headed by Malik Khizar Hayat Khan was in power. Khizar became Chief Minister of the Punjab after the death of Sikandar Hayat Khan in 1942. He continued to remain so until March 1947 when as a pressure from the anti-Khizar Movement successfully led by the Muslim League leaders he had to quit office.¹⁶ In strengthening the Muslim League for the cause of Pakistan, Liaquat, as Secretary-General of the party, played pivotal role. The same was the case with the NWFP (KPK). But the situation in this province was totally different because the Congress government headed by Dr. Khan Sahib was in power in 1946-1947.

As a result of the elections of 1946, Congress Ministry in NWFP was installed headed by Dr. Khan Sahib as the Chief Minister. The Muslim League did not accept this Ministry and it started the Civil Disobedience Movement against this Ministry on 20 February 1947. The Movement lasted until the announcement of 3 June 1947 Partition Plan by which a referendum was to be held in NWFP in order to chalk out a course of action of its inclusion in Pakistan or United India.¹⁷ Jinnah and Liaquat closely watched and controlled this movement and defended the issue before the Viceroy in a number of high level meetings.

For instance on 16 April a meeting in the Viceroy House Delhi was held presided over by Viceroy Lord Wavell¹⁸ and attended by Nehru, Liaquat, Sardar Baldev Singh, Field Marshal Sir C. Auchinleck, Sir Caroe, the Governor, Lord Ismay, Sir E Mievill, Abell, and Capt. Brockman. In this meeting Liaquat Ali Khan said that “the trouble in the NWFP and elsewhere was due to the fact that H.M.G. had announced that they would hand over power in June 1948 without making a decision to whom power was to be handed over. The result was bound to be discord between parties and that each party would do their utmost to be in power in the Province when the terminal date was reached”. Sir Caroe expressed his desire to hold fresh election in NWFP, but Mountbatten, instead of holding elections, proposed to solve the whole problem of Muslim concern in British India. Nehru was of the view that the elections would generate further “disturbance” in the provinces.¹⁹ In this way Liaquat fully advocated the cause of this movement. Even in the Referendum held in July 1947 Liaquat played very important role in guiding the activities of the NWFP Muslim League which successfully resulted in favour of Pakistan when people of the province overwhelmingly voted for Pakistan. Result of this referendum was announced on 20 July in which 286,370 out of 292,118 votes polled were cast for Pakistan.²⁰ Thus the overwhelming majority of the people of NWFP decided to join Pakistan.

Contribution in Pakistan Movement

As a result of the elections of 1937, the Congress ministries were installed in the six Hindu majority provinces of UP, CP, Bombay, Madras, Bihar, and Orissa which functioned from July 1937 to November 1939. These provincial governments acted as if they were the “Hindu Governments” because they became very cruel on the Muslim population of their respective provinces. The Muslim League leaders raised a strong voice against this cruelty. Liaquat Ali Khan raised his voice against the Congress Government cruelty on the Muslim in the UP Legislative Council.²¹ On this issue Special Session of the AIML was held in Calcutta on 17-18 1938 presided over by Jinnah who in his presidential address pointed out the Hindu cruelty against the Muslims in these aforementioned six provinces and quoted certain alarming instances. He also pointed out that when the Muslim Members of the Legislative Councils pointed out these cruelties, the Hindu Members of the Councils laughed at them and ridiculed them. Quoting the example of Liaquat Ali Khan’s pointing out this aspect in the UP Legislative Council, Jinnah said that when Liaquat was reciting the “tales of oppression on

Muslims in difference places and was giving concrete instances in support of his allegations, what were the Congressmen in the House doing? They were laughing and ridiculing him.” Jinnah further complained that actually “the sufferings of Muslims are, to the Congress, matters for mockery and laughter.”²²

In 1937 the Constitution of the AIML was revised in order to make it more comprehensive and popular amongst the masses in which Liaquat played a key role.²³ In December 1938 session of the Muslim League at Patna this Constitution was further amended on a motion by Liaquat Ali Khan. By this amendment, all the members of the Muslim League Parties in the Provincial Legislatures were declared to be *ex-officio* delegates at the Annual or Special Sessions of the AIML without payment of a delegate’s fee.²⁴ At the Lahore session of the All India Muslim League held on 22-24 March 1940 the historic “Pakistan Resolution” was adopted. At this session Liaquat’s role was also very important after Jinnah. The Constitution of the AIML was further amended on a motion by Liaquat which were unanimously approved. By this amendment the Working Committee of AIML was authorized to “control, direct and regulate all the activities of the various provincial Leagues strictly in consonance with the aims, objects and rules of the AIML”. The Working Committee was also authorized “to take disciplinary action” against individual members of the Council of the AIML who violate the decisions of the League or act in contravention of its aims and objects, subject to the right of appeal to the Council of the AIML. The Working Committee was even empowered “to suspend, dissolve or disaffiliate any provincial League” which fails in its duties, or ignores the decisions or directions of the AIML, subject to right of appeal to the Council of AIML.²⁵ Another amendment in the Constitution of the AIML was moved by Liaquat at the Madras session of the AIML held on 12-15 April 1941 by which it was made clear that the minorities in the Muslim State shall be provided “adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards” in order to protect “their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them”.²⁶ By another amendment approved by Delhi session of the AIML held in April 1943 which was moved by Liaquat himself with the approval of the President, Honorary Secretary-General was authorized to elect representative(s) by the provincial League in special cases and for good reasons to be explained by the nominated members of the province which were to be adjudged by the Secretary with the approval of the President.²⁷ At this session Liaquat’s further tenure for three years as Honorary Secretary was also extended.²⁸ In the Karachi session of the Muslim League held in December 1943, his extension was formally approved by the annual sessions. Actually Sardar Aurangzeb Khan from the NWFP (KPK) moved for such confirmation. During the course of his speech, Jinnah praised the services of Liaquat for the cause of the party as well as the Muslim Nation for the last seven years. He even termed him as “my right hand”. Continuing, Jinnah said:

The Nawazada had worked and served day and night, and none could possibly have an idea of the great burden he shouldered. Nawabzada Ali

Khan commanded the universal respect and confidence of the Musalmans. Though a Nawabzada, he was a thorough proletarian; he hoped other Nawabs in the country would follow his example.²⁹

Liaquat was also very particular in making provision for more women's participation in the committees of the AIML. It was on his encouragement and desire of Quaid-i-Azam that Begum Aizaz Rasul moved a resolution for reconstitution of the Women's Sub-Committee which was actually appointed at the Patna session of the AIML in December 1938 for the purpose of giving adequate opportunities to the women in their development and growth in order to participate in the struggle for social, economic and political emancipation of the Muslim Women in British India. The purpose of appointment of this Committee was that this Committee could see that the Muslim Women could watch the interests of the Muslim Women at every district, city, provincial and national level.³⁰ In 1938 Begum Habibullah moved the resolution which was seconded by Jinnah. At the Madras session Liaquat seconded Begum Aizaz's resolution.³¹ Thus both Jinnah and Liaquat championed the cause of Muslim Women. This Women Committee was further enlarged in April 1943 on a motion by Liaquat Ali Khan himself at the 30th session of the AIML held in Delhi in April 1943.³² Speaking in support of this resolution Begum Aizaz Rasul said that it seemed that when all provinces were exhausted, it was the turn of the women. In other words, she continued, "the women came last!". Begum Rasul also pointed that throughout the Muslim rule, especially in early Islamic history the Muslim Women supported men in all times of "crisis". Liaquat supported her in her stance.³³

Liaquat Ali Khan had deep regard for the Pir Pagaro of Sindh. Pir Sibgatullah Pagaro who was recently tried under Martial Law Court, was sentenced to death on 20 March 1943 and buried at some secret place.³⁴ At the April 1943 session of the AIML held at Karachi a special resolution for deploring this "unjustifiable action of the Government" was moved by Maulana Abdul Hamid Badayuni. Speaking in support of this resolution Liaquat termed this "act of injustice" on the part of Government in strong words.³⁵ This was done by Liaquat because the Pir Pagara was staunch supporter of the Pakistan Movement.

On the last day of AIML Karachi session, i.e. 26 December 1943, Liaquat Ali Khan, as General Secretary of the party, as usual, presented his annual report to the session, soon after Jinnah's arrival at 11.00 AM. Generally the Secretary was not required to address the session after submission of the annual report, but this time Liaquat was asked by the President to address the session and explain the critical situation which was being faced by the leaders of the Pakistan Movement for the achievement of their goal of Pakistan. Actually at that time the Hindu press was giving the impression that "Mr. Gandhi had changed his heart and was now willing to withdraw his August Resolution" and accept the cause of Pakistan. Commenting on this Liaquat suggested to Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress "to adopt a straightforward course with a view to solving the deadlock" and to approach Jinnah directly, rather than adopting a "mischievous" course. He

also suggested to Congress leadership to stop their “evil machinations”. The Hindu Press was also advised by Liaquat not to use language of “taunts and sarcasms” or of “mischievous remarks” against “the Quaid-i-Azam with a view to disrupting the solidarity of Musalmans”. He also made it clear to them that 100 million Mussalmans of British India had full “confidence” in their Quaid-i-Azam who is also “their beloved leader”.³⁶ He also condemned dastardly recent attack on the Quaid-i-Azam and made it clear:

The Musalmans of India are now wide awake. They are moving forward with their heads erect and eyes open; and I am sure that, God willing, the day is not far off when their firm determination and untiring efforts, willing sacrifices, disciplined and organized action, under courageous and inspiring leadership of the Quaid-i-Azam, will secure them their cherished goal of Pakistan.³⁷

There were problems in the Sindh Muslim League of disunity amongst the local leadership. In order to resolve their differences and to unite the Sindh Provincial Muslim League a six member Committee of Action was proposed by Jinnah as per rules of AIML on the last day of the Karachi Session 1943 which comprised of G.M., Syed, Haji Sattar Essack Saith, Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Khan of Mamdot, Qazi Mohammad Isa, and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan. Liaquat was also appointed as Convener of this Committee. This Committee was to submit its report to the AIML Council.³⁸

Cabinet Mission

Liaquat helped Jinnah in dealings and dialogues with the Cabinet Delegation during March – August 1946. He always stood by Jinnah. Lord Pethick Lawrence by his letter of 27 April asked both to Jinnah and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to nominate a four member delegation from each of their respective parties – Indian Nation Congress and All India Muslim League-to discuss matters with the Cabinet Mission in a joint meeting so that a joint formula could be evolved.³⁹ In his reply of 29 April, Jinnah informed Lord Pethick Lawrence that the Muslim League Working Committee in its meeting held on 28 April approved the idea of participation in the joint meeting with the Congress leaders and nominated the following as representatives of the Muslim League for this meeting:

1. Mr. M.A.Jinnah
2. Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan
3. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, and
4. Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar.⁴⁰

Along with this letter Jinnah also sent a copy of the Resolution passed by All-India Muslim League Legislators’ Convention on 9 April 1946 which stipulated in an unequivocal terms:

1. That the Zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East and the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West of India, namely Pakistan Zones, where the Muslims are in a dominant majority, be constituted into a sovereign independent State and that an unequivocal undertaking be given to implement the establishment of Pakistan without delay;
2. That Two Separate Constitution-making Bodies be set up by the people of Pakistan and the people of Hindustan for the purpose of framing their respective Constitutions;
3. That the minorities in Pakistan and Hindustan be provided with safeguards on the lines of the All-India Muslim League Resolution passed on 23rd March 1940, at Lahore;
4. That the acceptance of the Muslim League demand of Pakistan and its implementation without delay are the *sine qua non* for the Muslim League co-operation and participation in the formation of an Interim Government at the Centre.⁴¹

The Congress also agreed to the proposal of participation in the Simla discussion and nominated the following four Congress representatives for participation in the deliberations: 1) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, 2) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, 3) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and 4) Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.⁴² In order to maintain Gandhi's towering position as settled with the Viceroy and the Congress Leaders, it was maintained that at the request of the Cabinet Delegation and the Congress Working Committee, Gandhi was also to remain available in Simla during the days of the Conference in Simla.⁴³ This was interesting to note that Gandhi who was not member of the Congress was treated like that which was a mockery to befool the Muslims and other minorities.

During 5-12 May 1946, at Simla, a tripartite conference was arranged, attended by the Muslim League, Congress and British Cabinet delegation.⁴⁴ The Viceroy also joined the delegation during their deliberations. In this the Cabinet Mission decided to play the part of a friendly mediator, who would suggest a solution which the parties concerned could be asked to discuss round a table. The Congress stood for a strong and organic federal Centre with powers limited to specified items and rejected the suggestion of Groups, or sub-federations, within the Union, while the Muslim League stood for a separate and independent Pakistan State.⁴⁵ The Conference met on 5-6 May at Viceregal Lodge, Simla, then it adjourned to 8 May when the Delegation suggested certain points of rapprochements. Both the parties got time to ponder over the suggestions and again met on 9 May which continued up to 12 May 1946. Ultimately it failed to reach any settlement. Thus Liaquat was with Jinnah in these crucial dialogues to decide the course to Pakistan. Liaquat played pivotal role as the "right hand" man of the Quaid-i-Azam during the latter's dialogues with the Cabinet Mission.⁴⁶

Interim Government

After a lot of dialogues and parleys with the Viceroy Lord Wavell, Jinnah in his letter of 14 October 1946 proposed the following as five nominees on behalf of

the Muslim League led by Liaquat which also included one Hindu scheduled caste member from the Muslim League quota:

1. Liaquat Ali Khan,
Hon. Secretary, AIML, MLA (Central)
2. I.I. Chundrigar, M.L.A. (Bombay)
Leader, Muslim League Party in the Bombay Legislative Assembly
and President, Bombay Provincial Muslim League.
3. Abdur Rab Nishtar, Advocate (NWFP)
Member, Working Committee, AIML, Committee of Action and
Council.
4. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, M.L.A. (Punjab),
Member, Council of AIML, of Punjab Muslim League.
5. Jugendra Nath Mandal, Advocate (Bengal), at present Minister of
Bengal Government.⁴⁷

On 24 October 1946 there developed serious political storm when there was dispute between the Congress and the League over the portfolio of Home. As a matter of fact the Viceroy suggested this portfolio to be given to the League, but the Congress firmly declined to do so because there was great tension between the Muslims and the Hindus.⁴⁸ Jinnah, in his message, condemned the communal disturbance in the country. But next day on 25 October the “storm” blew over when the Congress agreed to offer “Finance” to the League.⁴⁹ On 26 October the Congress members took office while the League nominees were also sworn in on the same day thus completing the formation of Cabinet,⁵⁰ while the Viceroy presided over the first meeting of the Cabinet on the same day.⁵¹

Liaquat Ali Khan, who was expected to be the Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet in the first instance, addressed the first press conference in Delhi after assuming responsibility as the Finance Minister. He made it clear that “the Muslim League had decided to enter the Interim Government in the interest of Muslim India and the people of this vast subcontinent”.⁵² Allocation of other portfolios for the League members was: 1) I.I. Chundrigar – Commerce, 2) Abdur Rab Nishtar – Port and Air, 3) J.N. Mandal – Legislative, 4) Ghazanfar Ali Khan – Health.⁵³ In the Interim Government, Liaquat not only functioned as an efficient Finance Member, but presented historic budget in February 1947 which is termed as “Poor Man’s Budget”. This was because of the reason that this “budget was based on underlying principles of social justice which had the potential of uniting the poor of both the major communities”.⁵⁴ Because of Liaquat’s control of the Budget as the Finance Minister, the Congress Members were feeling uneasy in meeting their expenses. Consequently, the Congress realized “that cooperation with the League

was impossible and the creation of Pakistan was the only solution to the political impasse”.⁵⁵

Issue of Pakistan Constituent Assembly and Liaquat’ visit to London along with Jinnah, December 1946

When the Interim Government was functioning under the leadership of the Viceroy Lord Wavell, the Congress pressurized the Viceroy to put pressure on Jinnah and the Muslim League members of the Interim Government that the Muslim League members of the Central Legislative Assembly should participate in the Constituent Assembly of India. For this purpose, the Viceroy convened a meeting between the Congress and the Muslim League leaders including Jinnah on 19 November 1946. The Muslim League members headed by Jinnah asked the Viceroy not to touch this issue unless . Instead they advised the Viceroy: “To divide the country between the two communities in any way we liked and then clear out”.⁵⁶ In this meeting, Jinnah also made it clear that unless an agreement between the two communities is reached the holding of a meeting of the Constituent Assembly will be useless.⁵⁷

As a result of Muslim League’s refusal to participate in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly a major crisis brewed up in the capital — Delhi, which perturbed not only the Congress leadership but the government circles were equally disturbed. The Viceroy was therefore compelled to seek advice from the Home Government in London⁵⁸ . Prime Minister Attlee advised holding a Round Table Conference between the Congress, League and other Indian leaders in London.

Accordingly a delegation consisting of Lord Wavell, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan, M.A. Jinnah and Sardar Baldev Singh proceeded to London on same plane from Karachi in the morning of 1 December 1946.

In London a number of meetings of the Indian leaders with the British leaders were held and finally a statement was reached on 6 December 1946 after which the Congress delegation returned home on 8 December 1946, but Jinnah remained behind and returned home on 15 December 1946.⁵⁹ Liaquat remained busy with the Quaid-i-Azam during their dialogues with the British statesmen and parliamentarians including the British Prime Minister, Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India.

On 14 December Jinnah along with Liaquat addressed a press conference in London in which he thus expressed his viewpoint i.e., “The goal of complete independence is Pakistan — certainly”.⁶⁰ Defending his position not to participate in the Constituent Assembly or reference of the case to Federal Court, Jinnah pleaded that there should be a “separate Constituent Assembly for Pakistan” and separate Constituent Assembly for Hindustan.⁶¹ Regarding the Federal Court, Jinnah maintained that main parties to the partition issue of British India were the Congress and the Muslim League. The case of partition or of the two Constituent Assemblies, Jinnah continued, therefore, could not be sent to the Federal Court without the prior settlement of the Congress and the Muslim League.⁶²

Before leaving London for India to participate in the forthcoming meeting of Indian Constituent Assembly due for 9 December, Jawaharlal Nehru pressed upon the British Government to use their pressure on Jinnah and Liaquat so that they could agree to participate in the Indian Constituent Assembly. In order to please Nehru a meeting was arranged at the India Office, London on 4 December in which a marathon discussion took place. Lord Wavell, Lord Pathic-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, Minister without Portfolio, Jinnah, Liaquat and Nehru participated in this meeting. The British Ministers and the Viceroy pressed very hard on Jinnah and Liaquat in the long discussion. Arguments for this were exchanged between them. The issue of interpretation of the clauses relating to the Sections in the Cabinet Mission's statement of 16 May 1946 came for discussion. The British Government's view was that if the decision of the Constituent Assembly went against what the Muslim want, the matter would be referred to the Federal Court. On this Jinnah thought that "the interpretation was a matter for H.M.G rather than for the Federal Court".⁶³ Jinnah's argument was that the present "atmosphere" was not right for plunging India "into constitution-making". He wanted the British Government to take a political decision to establish Pakistan. Without making such a declaration, he continued his arguments, it would be "unwise" to go for holding the meeting of the Constituent Assembly. In the event of acting by the British Government in such a state of confused state of affairs, Jinnah further argued, "the Congress would find means of mutilating the constitution" with regard to the Groups. Liaquat Ali Khan, in his arguments in this meeting, tried his utmost to impress upon the British Government to act as impartial "umpire" and accept the genuine demand for Pakistan for which the recent elections justified the Muslim League claim. Sir Stafford Cripps emphasized upon Liaquat for acting in the Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru as a compact group. Liaquat's plea was that the Muslim League's joining the "coalition" of the Interim Government did not tantamount that they have accepted "the leadership of Pandit Nehru". It was a "combination of two groups under two heads", each group should respect the views of the other without bulldozing by majority the minority one. Speaking on this issue, Jinnah argued that the Muslim League members had entered the Government upon certain "understanding", i.e. the issue of Pakistan could not be shelved. In order to make the things clear out of "doubts and fears", Jinnah maintained, the British Government should clearly explain their position and should announce the acceptance of the Muslim League demand for Pakistan. Without this "categorical" declaration, Jinnah concluded, the British Government should not go for constitution making efforts in British India.⁶⁴

During this London visit, Liaquat noticed drawbacks in the political skill of Lord Wavell, the Viceroy who accompanied them. Liaquat even noticed that "he was merely a soldier and that he had made mistakes." Endorsing this view of Liaquat, Campbell-John noticed that "it was immediately after this that the idea of a successor began to come into the picture".⁶⁵

Partition Plan, 3 June 1947

After three month long dialogues and marathon discussions amongst the Indian leaders including the Muslim League Leaders, particularly Jinnah and Liaquat, Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy, prepared final draft of the Partition Plan with the approval of the British Home Government. All the leaders of the Muslim League, Congress and other parties who were involved in the dialogues were invited in the morning of 3 June 1947 at the Viceroy House. On behalf of the Muslim League Jinnah and Liaquat participated in this final meeting in which Lord Mountbatten explained the basic contours of the 3 June 1947 partition plan. Mountbatten “appealed for restraint on the part of subordinate leaders and the burial of the past in order to open up the prospect of building a fine future”. On this “Liaquat could not resist the temptation to suggest that restraint was needed not so much from subordinate as from super leaders, for example, Mr. Gandhi at his Prayer meetings” was expected to speak against this Plan. These remarks of Liaquat “touched off all the old bitterness of feeling”.⁶⁶ Both Jinnah and Liaquat brought to the notice of the meeting that “Gandhi was inciting the people to do as they liked and look to other authorities than the Leaders at this conference.” It was on assurance from Patel that “Gandhi would abide loyally by any decision taken”, that Mountbatten stopped further discussion on the matter.⁶⁷ Similarly there were some other matters on which both Liaquat and Jinnah raised their objections. Both the Muslim leaders were thinking that, as in many previous matters the Muslim issues were sidetracked on one pretext or the other, this may not happen again at this juncture. When they felt assured by their careful attitude in this meeting, they nodded to forgo ahead of making announcement of the Partition Plan in the evening broadcast on the Indian Radio, New Delhi.⁶⁸

Partition process and establishment of Pakistan

In order to chalk out the administrative consequences of the partition a meeting was held on 5 June 1947 presided over by Lord Mountbatten and attended by Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan, and Vallabhbhai Patel in which various legal aspects of the partition were discussed. Jinnah said that there were “many things to do.” Therefore he wanted “to understand which was the first” because “they could not all be done at once.”⁶⁹ He suggested that first of all there should be Partition Tribunal which “should be the supreme and final authority and it should not be responsible to the present Interim Government” which was working only as a caretaker government.⁷⁰ As no final decision could be reached the meeting was again held on 7 June presided over by the Viceroy in which Jinnah’s stance and position was discussed. Jinnah’s proposition was first opposed by Mountbatten, Nehru and Patel, but Jinnah finally convinced all of them about his justified stand. Consequently it was agreed that a Partition Council should be set up consisting of two of the top ranking leaders of the Congress and two of the Muslim League and His Excellency the Viceroy as Chairman of the Council. A Committee and Arbitral Tribunal shall assist the Partition Council. The present Cabinet Secretariat in New Delhi would function as Secretariat of the Partition Council.⁷¹ Meetings of the Partition Council were held thrice in a week.

Jinnah was very keen to settle all issues of partition and even appointment of Governors, sending diplomatic representatives abroad for which he wrote to Mountbatten on 9 June. By his letter of 11 June Jinnah further emphasized this matter of appointment.⁷²

From the AIML, Jinnah and Liaquat were nominated, and from Congress, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad were nominated as members of the Partition Council.⁷³ On 12 June the machinery for implementing the Partition was set up. H.M.Patel from Hindustan side, and Mohamad Ali from Pakistan side were nominated as members of this Committee responsible for implementation of partition issues.⁷⁴ Various experts were also to be nominated on this Committee.⁷⁵

The Partition issues were also discussed in other forums presided over by the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten. The issue was thoroughly discussed in Viceroy's 16th Miscellaneous Meeting held on 5 June 1947. Pandit Nehru, Jinnah, Sardar Patel Priplani, Liaquat Ali Khan, Nishtar, Sardar Baldev Singh, Lord Ismay, Sir E. Mievillie participated in this meeting which was presided over by Lord Mountbatten. Lt.Col Erskine Crum attended as Secretary of this meeting. In response to Nehru's plea that emergence of Pakistan should be treated as "seceding" from the rest of India, Jinnah strongly pleaded that "it was not a question of secession, but of division" of India to which majority agreed.⁷⁶ In this Liaquat participated in a number of meetings of the Partition Committee and during the deliberations contributed on various issues like those of finalization of the final draft of Indian Independence Bill, division of armed forces, division of various assets, etc.⁷⁷ On the issue of division of Armed Forces, Liaquat, like Jinnah, was determined to "to take over the reins of Government with their own armed Forces in being" under a separate and independent Command. This was vehemently expressed in a meeting of Partition Council on 30 June 1947 presided over by Lord Mountbatten.⁷⁸ Actually what the Congress leadership wanted was to keep the Armed Forces of both India and Pakistan under a joint command of Gen. Auchinleck with his headquarters in Delhi, a plea which was not acceptable both to Jinnah and Liaquat.⁷⁹

In this way various issues relating to the Partition were settled by Jinnah in consultation with Liaquat who really served as his 'right hand' man. Finally when Pakistan Constituent Assembly's first meeting has held in Karachi on 10 August 1947 and Jinnah was elected as first President of this Assembly, Liaquat did accomplish two important resolutions at this First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. One related to moving a resolution by Liaquat himself by which Jinnah in all public documents was to be termed as "Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah" and the other getting the flag of Pakistan approved by Constituent Assembly. These two resolutions were passed unanimously. Thus Liaquat further proved to be not only loyal to Jinnah but to the cause and ideology of Pakistan which he later as first Prime Minister of Pakistan preserved by another milestone resolution for determining the objectives of Pakistan termed as "Objectives Resolution" in March 1949 on the basis of which later constitutions of Pakistan

were framed. In this document, basic contours of ideology were determined by Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan.⁸⁰

Thus Liaquat Ali Khan, after Quaid-i-Azam, played pivotal role not only in the Pakistan Movement, in strengthening the All India Muslim League, in all the important meetings relating with the Pakistan matters. Even in the evolution of Partition Plan and its implementation paving the way to Pakistan through dangerous path, Liaquat's role is no doubt a very important and carried signal importance for which he will be remembered for ever.⁸¹

Notes and References

¹ Roger D. Long, 'Dear Mr. Jinnah' – *Selected Correspondence and Speeches of Liaquat Ali Khan 1937 – 1947*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. xvi.

² Ibid.

³ S.S.Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents 1906-1947*, Vol. I 1906-1924, Islamabad, NIHCR, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2007, pp. 564-571.

⁴ Ibid., p. 570.

⁵ S.M.Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan*, Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970, p. 454.

⁶ Ibid., p. xix.

⁷ For proceedings of this session see Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, pp. 117-129.

⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

⁹ Long, 'Dear Mr. Jinnah' ..., p.xviii.

¹⁰ Kazmi, *Liaquat Ali Khan*, p. 28.

¹¹ See Riaz Ahmad, *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: Second Phase of his Freedom Struggle, 1924 – 1934*, Chair on Quaid-i-Azam and Freedom Movement, NIPS, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 1994.

¹² Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, p. 236.

¹³ See Kishwar Sultana, *Politics of the All India Muslim League 1924-1940*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2016.

¹⁴ See *All India Muslim League Papers*, National Archives of Pakistan, Islamabad and Archives of the Freedom Movement, Central Library, Karachi University, Karachi.

¹⁵ See Shamsul Hassan Collection, National Archives of Pakistan, Islamabad.

¹⁶ Riaz Ahmad, *The Punjab Muslim League: Secret Police Abstracts 1906-1947*, Islamabad, NIHCR, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008, pp. 336-337.

¹⁷ NWFP Police Abstract of Intelligence, Vol. XXXXIII, Peshawar, 25 February 1947, NDC Library, Islamabad. For more detail of this anti-Khan Sahib movement see Riaz Ahmad, "An Aspect of the Pakistan Movement: Muslim League's Civil Disobedience Movement against the NWFP Ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib (20 February - 4 June 1947)", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXVIII, No.2 (2007), NIHCR, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, pp.7-30.

¹⁹ For details see M.Iqbal Chawla, *Wavell and the Dying Days of the Raj: Britain's Penultimate Viceroy in India*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, and Penderel Moon (Eds), *The Transfer of Power 1942-7, March - 30 May 1947*, Vol.X, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981), pp.286-92.

²⁰ For Liaquat's services in this regard see Riaz Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League: Secret Police Abstracts 1913-1947*, Islamabad, NIHCR, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008.

²¹ See Debates of the UP Legislative Council 1937-1939.

²² Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, pp. 260-261.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.342-343.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-290.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 401.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

³⁴ Syed Ashfaq Hussain Shah, "Sindh key Tehrik-i-Hurriyat main Pir Sibghatullah Shah Sani (Pir Pagaro) ka kirdar" (Urdu), Ph. D. Thesis, Multan, Department of History, Bahauddin Zakariya University, 2016.pp. 127-130.

³⁵ Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, p. 400.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

³⁹ Pathick-Lawrence to Jinnah, 27 April 1946, in *Transfer of Power in India*, Vol. VII, p. 352

⁴⁰ Jinnah to Lord Pethick-Laswrence, 29 April 1946, in *ibid.*, pp. 371-372

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.373-374.

⁴² Indian Annual Register 1945, Vol. I, p. 135.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Transfer of Power 1942-47*, vol.VII, pp.425-75.

⁴⁵ Survey of Political and Constitutional Position in British India 1946, in IOR R/1/5/69, British Library (OIOC), London.

⁴⁶ See Kazmi, *Liaquat Ali Khan ...*, Chapter 6 – Liaquat and the Cabinet Mission, pp.151-180.

⁴⁷ Jinnah to Wavell, 14 October 1946, Nicholas Manserg and Pendra Moon, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol.VIII, London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1979, p.726.

⁴⁸ *Times of India*, 25 October 1946.

⁴⁹ *Times of India*, 26 October 1946.

⁵⁰ *Times of India*, 28 October 1946.

⁵¹ For record of this meeting see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 26 October 1946, *ibid.*, pp.825-26.

⁵² *Times of India*, 28 October 1946.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Kazmi, *Liaquat Ali Khan ...*, p. 220.

⁵⁵ Long, 'Dear Mr. Jinnah' ..., p. 284.

⁵⁶ "Minutes of the Viceroy's Interview with Jinnah on 19 November 1940", *Wavell Papers*, Eur. Mss. D.977/8, British Library (OIOC), London.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Kazmi, *Liaquat Ali Khan ...*, p. 220.

⁵⁹ *Times of India*, 16 December 1946

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.315

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.316.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Minutes of the meeting held at India Office, London, 4 December 1946 in IOR L/P&J/10/111, British Library, London.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, Robert Hale, 1972, p. 69.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-106.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Times of India*, 8 August 1947.

⁷¹ Setting up of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, R/3/1/168, British Library (OIOC), London.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Mountbatten Papers*, F.200/106, British Library (OIOC), London.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ For details of the Partition Meetings see a number of documents in Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power 1942-1947*, vols. XI-XII, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982.

⁷⁸ Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 125.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

⁸⁰ See Roger D. Long, *Dear Mr. Jinnah...*

⁸¹ For further study see Ziauddin Ahmad, *Liaquat Ali Khan – Builder of Pakistan*, Karachi, Royal Book Co., 1990.