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## **CRIPPS MISSION (MARCH, 1942) IN INDIA: WHY DID IT FAIL?**

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# Cripps Mission (March, 1942) In India: Why Did It Fail?

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**Abstract – The British Government after careful consideration sent Cripps, a brilliant lawyer, an avowed socialist, an intimate friend of Nehru to India. Cripps had long been a serious student of the Indian question and had the reputation of being favorably disposed to Indian aspirations. For some time the United States had been pressing Britain to satisfy Indian demands for Self-government.**

**Key Words: Cripps Mission, Muslim League, Two Nation Theory, Congress, Hindu- Muslim Politics.**

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## INTRODUCTION

After the signing of the Atlantic Charter which guaranteed the "right of all people to choose the form of Government under which they will live." Stafford Cripps with this aims and directives arrived in Delhi on 22nd March, 1942. He brought with him a new constitutional scheme approved by the British Cabinet. But no body from the Congress expected any good thing from him. The Congress however agreed to have dialogues with Cripps only with an aim to know the British mind.

Stafford Cripps spent three weeks in India in March and April 1942 and after hectic activities and prolonged discussions announced his proposals in the form of Draft Declaration on 30th March, 1942. In that declaration India was promised Dominion Status with the power to secede from the British Common wealth.

The constitution of Indian Dominion equal in every aspect with other Dominions to be framed by an elected constitution making body set up after the War was also promised by the Declaration. Provision for participation of the States in this body was also made.

The constitution finally framed by this body would also be implemented by the British Government but any province of British India would have the right to reject the constitution so made and to retain its existing constitutional position or frame another constitution by agreement with the British Government. The province had the option to accede subsequently to the Indian Dominion if it so desired.

The declaration implicitly suggested a partition of India in the long run in case the new constitution was found

unacceptable by any province or provinces. This also invited "the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the Counsels of their country of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations." Cripps warned that rejection of these proposals would mean postponement of the Constitutional issue till the end of the War which would be "a bitter blow to the friends of India all over the world."

Cripps proposal also outlined the composition of the constitution making-body and how it would be elected, adding that until the formation of the new constitution the British Government would remain responsible for the defence of India. The Cripps proposals were an attempt to satisfy the Congress by the promise of a Constituent Assembly and the League by the provision that any province would be at liberty to reject the Constitution and form a new constitution by agreement with the British Government.

The Cripps proposals were rejected by the Congress in its meeting 11th April, 1942. The Working Committee reiterated the demand for freedom before the people could participate in the defence of the country on a national basis.

The Working Committee expressed its disapproval of the proposed Composition of the Constitution making body and the right of the rulers of the Indian States to decide the future of millions of people living in these states. This was a "negation of both democracy and self-determination." The proposals therefore were rejected by the Congress as Vague and incomplete.

The Muslim League welcomed the implicit recognition of the possibility of Pakistan but rejected the proposals because it had given greatest importance and priority to the creation of one Indian Union. The League reaffirmed its conviction that the “only solution of India’s constitutional problem is the partition of India into independent Zones.”

On 4th April an unhappy Gandhi advised Cripps to take the first plane home and leave India. Cripps admitting his failure left India on 12th April, 1942. On the next day Gandhi commented on his ill-fated mission in the following words “It is a thousand pities that the British Government should have sent a proposal for dissolving the political dead lock which on the face of it was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. And it was a misfortune that the bearer should have been Sir Stafford Cripps acclaimed as a radical among radicals and a friend of India.” exposed the real imperialistic character of Churchill Government which wanted only the Balkanization of India.

The Congress could wait no further, when the British rule was sure to harm India in a disastrous way. Gandhi therefore came to his final decision that the British rule in India must come to an end. The decision was thrashed out in the Working Committee during July 1942 and confirmed by a meeting of the All Congress Committee in Bombay on 8th August, 1942. This historic decision of the Congress inaugurated a new chapter in the history of Modern India.

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