

⑩ "Mountbatten's task was, therefore, merely to work out details and effect the partition, demanded by the League & accepted by both British Government & the Congress, and this the new Viceroy moved commandingly to perform." Comment.

The British Prime Minister Clement Attlee made an announcement on 20th February 1947 that the date for British withdrawal from India was fixed as 30th June 1948 & a new Viceroy was appointed, Lord Mountbatten. Thus, Mountbatten had clear cut directives from the British government to explore the options of unity & division till October 1947. Mountbatten soon found out that Cabinet Mission Plan was a dead horse & that Jinnah was stuck on his demand for a separate sovereign state for Muslims.

The British could keep India united only through positive intervention which included putting down communal elements with a firm hand. But they chose an easy way out. They preferred to woo both sides so that they both could be Britain's ally. Mountbatten tried to meet the demands of both the Congress & the League which resulted in partition. The main provisions of Mountbatten's Plan were -

i) Punjab & Bengal would decide for partition through voting in legislative assembly in their respective legislative

assemblies.

- ii) Sindh would take its own decision.
- iii) Referendum in NWFP & Sylhet district of Bengal would decide their fate.
- iv) In case of partition, two dominions & two constituent assemblies would be created.
- v) Independence for princely states ruled out, they would either join India or Pakistan.
- vi) A boundary commission would be set up if partition was to be effected.
- vii) Freedom would come on August 15, 1947.

Mountbatten's plan met the League's demand by creating Pakistan & at the same time it also took Congress' position in account by making that Pakistan as small as possible & retained maximum unity. Thus, Mountbatten did his task of working out the details & effecting the partition. However, the speed with which it was done made the whole partition even more disastrous.