

The Cripps Mission (1942)

Introduction

During the Second World War, Britain needed India's support against the Axis Powers. Under international pressure, especially from the USA and China, Britain sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India in 1942. His mission was to offer proposals that could satisfy Indian political leaders and gain their cooperation in the war.

Main Proposals

The Cripps Mission suggested that India would receive dominion status after the war. A constituent assembly would be formed by Indians to make their own constitution. Provinces that did not agree with the constitution could choose to stay out and remain independent. Minorities were promised safeguards for their rights. However, Britain would keep control over defense and military matters until the war ended, and the Governor-General would continue to exercise authority.

Reaction of the Congress

The Congress Party rejected the Cripps proposals. They wanted complete and immediate independence, not dominion status after the war. They also strongly opposed the option for provinces to separate, as it threatened the unity of India. Gandhi criticized the mission, calling it a "post-dated cheque on a bankrupt bank," meaning it was worthless. Congress leaders refused cooperation unless Britain gave total power at once.

Reaction of the Muslim League

The Muslim League also rejected the proposals. The League wanted a clear acceptance of Pakistan, not just the right of provinces to separate. Jinnah feared that without Pakistan, Muslims would remain under Hindu domination in the new constitution-making body. He believed the mission was only a delaying tactic. The League decided to continue its political struggle, which strengthened its role as the true representative of Indian Muslims.

Failure and Importance

The Cripps Mission failed because both Congress and the Muslim League rejected it. Britain was not ready to give full freedom during the war. The failure increased mistrust between Hindus and Muslims. After this, Congress launched the Quit India Movement, while the Muslim League gained more importance by standing firm on its demand for Pakistan. This failure showed that Britain could no longer ignore India's independence struggle and prepared the ground for future political changes.