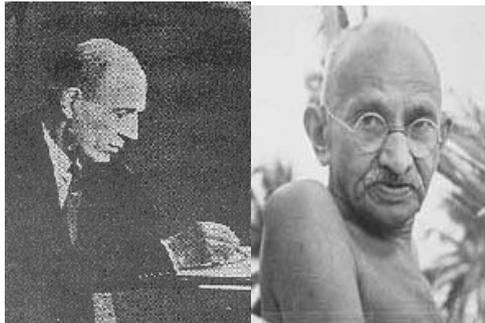


UNIT 13 – UPSC - Gandhi Irwin Pact, Second Round Table Conference

India's History : Modern India : Second Round Table Conference; Irwin-Gandhi Pact : 1931

Gandhi-Irwin Pact



After the conclusion of the First Round Table Conference, the British government realized that the cooperation of the Indian National Congress was necessary for further advancement in the making of the Indian constitution. Thus, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, extended an invitation to Gandhi for talks. Gandhi agreed to end the Civil Disobedience Movement without laying down any preconditions.



The agreement between Gandhi and Irwin was signed on March 5, 1931. Following are the salient points of this agreement:

1. The Congress would discontinue the Civil Disobedience Movement.
2. The Congress would participate in the Round Table Conference.
3. The Government would withdraw all ordinances issued to curb the Congress.
4. The Government would withdraw all prosecutions relating to offenses not involving violence.
5. The Government would release all persons undergoing sentences of imprisonment for their activities in the civil disobedience movement.

The pact shows that the British Government was anxious to bring the Congress to the conference table.

Second Round Table Conference



The second session of the conference opened in London on September 7, 1931. The main task of the conference was done through the two committees on federal structure and minorities. Gandhi was a member of both but he adopted a very unreasonable attitude. He claimed that he represented all India and dismissed all other Indian delegates as non-representative because they did not belong to the Congress.

The communal problem represented the most difficult issue for the delegates. Gandhi again tabled the Congress scheme for a settlement, a mere reproduction of the Nehru Report, but all the minorities rejected it.

As a counter to the Congress scheme, the Muslims, the depressed classes, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, and the Europeans presented a joint statement of claims which they said must stand as an interdependent whole. As their main demands were not acceptable to Gandhi, the communal issue was postponed for future discussion.

Three important committees drafted their reports; the Franchise Committee, the Federal Finance Committee and States Inquiry Committee.

On the concluding day, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald appealed to the Indian leaders to reach a communal settlement. Failing to do so, he said, would force the British government would take a unilateral decision.

Quaid-i-Azam did not participate in the session of the Second Round Table Conference as he had decided to keep himself aloof from the Indian politics and to practice as a professional lawyer in England.

On his return to India, Gandhi once again started Civil Disobedience Movement and was duly arrested.