



Indian Muslims and Partition of India

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had increased considerably and a network of Khilafat Committees had sprung up all over the province. After the Khilafat movement withered away an Afghan Jirga was set up "for religious, social and economic uplift of the Pathans". In January 1930, a volunteer corps was formed in association with this organisation and given the name of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. They started picketing of liquor shops, as was being done by the Congress workers in other parts of the subcontinent. Picketing started in Peshawar on 23 April 1930 and a large crowd assembled to see off their leaders who were ordered to be arrested. The Deputy Commissioner rushed armoured cars to the spot and ordered firing which resulted in heavy casualties. This created an unpleasant situation. The news of what was happening in the province was sought to be suppressed, but the efforts of the Khilafat Committee, Peshawar, and the local leaders to lift the curtain received powerful support from an unexpected quarter. In the summer of 1930, Dr Mirza Yaqub Beg, a dedicated social worker and Vice-President of the Punjab Medical Council, was convalescing at Abbottabad and had special opportunities for getting acquainted with the situation. Beginning in the second week²¹⁸ of June 1930, he wrote a series of temperately-worded, but well-documented and convincing, articles for the newspapers in Lahore and elsewhere. These articles which were reproduced by the Congress newspapers in many places were later collected and published in a booklet entitled *My Impressions of the Frontier Situation*. They were of great value in building up public opinion outside the province. Mirza Yaqub Beg who was in touch with Sir Abdul Qayum and Khan Bahadur Sa'd-ud-Din Khan, the Judicial Commissioner, corresponded with Mian Sir Fazl-i Husain who himself visited Peshawar and placed the true picture before the Viceroy. As a

218. His first article appeared in *The Tribune*, Lahore, on 11 June 1930. It was considered so important that Isemonger, I.G. Police, N.-W.F.P., replied through a Note which was published in *The Tribune* on 18 June 1930. Dr Mirza Yaqub Beg issued a counter-reply to Isemonger's but in the meanwhile his other articles were appearing in *The Muslim Outlook*, Lahore.

result of these and other efforts, a more liberal attitude was adopted by the Government of India towards N.-W.F.P. than was advocated by the local officials.

The happenings of 23 April 1930 had other important consequences also. The sufferings of the Red Shirts for picketing of liquor shops, which was an important activity taken up by the Congress elsewhere, led to the Red Shirts making a common cause with the Indian National Congress. Their leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan adopted Gandhian tactics to an extent that he came to be known as the Frontier Gandhi. He became a prominent member of the Working Committee of the All-India National Congress and in 1935 the venue of the annual sessions of the Congress was named Ghaffar Nagar after him. Within the province he received unanimous support from the Hindus who, though numerically small, had been given such heavy weightage under the Communal Award that the votes of their representatives in the provincial legislature were decisive in case of division amongst the Muslim members.

The Frontier Province had no communal problem like the Punjab or Bengal, where the even distribution of the population led to constant rivalry and conflict. The Muslim League was also very weak, and political life, apart from anti-British activity, was confined "to the traditional rivalry and quarrels of Khans or quasi-feudal land-owners whose influence was now being challenged by the growth of an educated middle class".

In the absence of opposition from a well-organised political party, the Red Shirt leadership succeeded in defeating the representatives of the old aristocracy and when the new Act came into force in 1937, government was formed by Dr Khan Sahib, elder brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. By now, cohesion between Red Shirt leaders and the Congress was practically complete. Gandhi paid repeated visits to the province to bring it fully in line with the Congress-dominated areas. In 1939, Dr Khan Sahib's ministry resigned along with other Congress governments. For some time, the province was without a popular Government, but, on 25 May 1943, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, the Provincial Muslim League leader, was able to form a ministry, with Sardar