

The Quaid and the Establishment of a Military College in India

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The creation of a homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent from the unyielding moulds of British and Hindu India was an epic-inspiring achievement — a cause of much wonderment by scholars everywhere. The Pakistan movement and its singular success and impact on recent Indian history have tended to obscure not only the Quaid's positive contribution to the evolution of Parliamentary Government in India but also to his dedication to causes which he conceived as essential to India's independence. As many as 40 presentations were made at the International Congress held in Islamabad in December 1976 to examine and pronounce on his life and work. It was left to an Englishman, Professor Rushbrook-Williams, to say that in the early stages of his parliamentary career, the Quaid had 'specially distinguished himself by his deep study of Defence questions and by the part which he played in accelerating the Indianization of the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army'. The intention of this paper is to draw the attention of scholars to this somewhat neglected pre-Pakistan movement parliamentary episode of the Quaid's parliamentary career.

From 1909 to 1919 the Quaid was a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. His contribution to the Council's deliberations were immense by any standard. He started his first 3 years term with a clash with the Viceroy, Lord Minto, over the position of the Indians in South Africa. In 1913 he successfully piloted the Wakf Validating Act. From then on he attempted to bring together a coalition of political parties

which while remaining within the bounds of legality, would force the colonial Government to make concessions. The establishment of a Military College in India, which would accelerate the Indianization of commissioned ranks of the Indian Army, was one such concession the Quaid sought.

After interviewing him at the end of 1917, Montagu recorded a note of his and Chelmsford's opinion of the Quaid. 'Jinnah is a very clever man, and it is, of course, an outrage that such a man should have no chance of running the affairs of his own country'. Chelmsford, he went on, had himself tied up in knots while arguing with the Quaid. For his part, the Quaid had come to believe quite early on that the affairs of his country could not be run without, 'a national Army', which he told the Viceroy on 2 February 1917, 'must come and the sooner it comes the better'. At a subsequent meeting of the Imperial War Conference, he helped pass a resolution to the effect that a substantial number of King's commissions should be granted to the people of India and the training colleges should be thrown open to them.

Two months later, while chiding the Maharaja of Jamnagar, who had unwisely said that the Indians should not bargain and ought to wait for what they wanted today till tomorrow, the Quaid told Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, at the Provincial War Conference on 10 June 1918:

I say that we shall bargain and make conditions before we help the Empire if you wish to enable us to help you — you must make the educated people feel that they are the citizens and the King's equal subjects. You say we shall be trusted and made real partners in the Empire. When? We want action and immediate deeds.

Thereafter the Quaid walked out of the Conference when Tilak was refused permission to speak. In December came the most celebrated incident of all. At the time of Willingdon's farewell reception by his Parsi friends, a mass opposition launched by the Quaid resulted in the ignominious break-up of this function. 'People's Jinnah Memorial Hall' was erected by the people of Bombay as a token of their appreciation. However, the Quaid resigned in 1919 from the Imperial Legislative Council in protest against the infamous Rowlatt Bill.

On 14 November 1923, the Quaid was returned, unopposed, as an independent member of India's newly elected National Assembly. He invited all 23 Independents to meet him immediately after the Viceroy's opening address. At this meeting he was able to convince his colleagues to join hands with him to achieve a programme of basic reforms. As a powerful block, the Independents offered to vote with Motilal Nehru's

Swarajist Party on important issues and together defeated the 36 nominated members who sided with the Central Government. A new Nationalist party thus came into being in the Assembly to the Viceroy's dismay. With great talent and skill, the Quaid helped to fashion legislation that went to the heart of India's struggle for independence. There was hardly a motion he did not speak on, with the precision of a lawyer, without fear or favour.

In this setting, a resolution was introduced in the Assembly on 18 February 1925, recommending to the Governor-General in Council that early steps be taken for starting a well-equipped Military College in a suitable locality to train Indians for the commissioned ranks in the Indian Army service and that the necessary funds be sanctioned to start the preliminary work. Similar resolutions had been adopted in 1921 and 1923 in the Quaid's absence. However, despite the concurrence of the Government no concrete steps had been taken to give effect to these resolutions. On this occasion, too, Mr. Bunden, the Army Secretary, opposed the motion, calling it a premature scheme.

Rising, the Quaid first demolished the Army Secretary's stand by calling him a nobody who could do nothing. The three proposals, he went on, put to His Majesty's Government, in 1923, about (i) admitting Indians to the commissioned ranks of the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and the Royal Air Force; (ii) increasing by 25% the annual number of commissions granted to Indians; and (iii) to establish an Indian Sandhurst, had all been rejected. Referring to the last proposal, the Quaid said:

The question of establishing an Indian Sandhurst was a question full of serious and far reaching consequences. If we are going to establish an Indian Sandhurst, it must by implication be understood that we must have a definite scheme, a scheme for the purpose of reorganizing the Army, its constitution, its future composition, a scheme which will be a practical and workable scheme, which will Indianize the Army in the course of a reasonable period.

Parrying interventions by the Commander-in-Chief, and Col. Crawford, a European nominated member, the Quaid went on:

Only two or three years ago we were given the concession of holding King's commissions, and you started it by sending 10 boys to Sandhurst. Today the entire Army, both Indian and British, is officered by Englishmen. We desire that that should be Indianized.

His final, winning argument was: 'If you want to remove the impression that you are wanting in bona fides, I appeal to you to appoint a committee with comprehensive terms to tackle this question.'

Soon after, the Assembly's Sandhurst Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of the Army Chief of Staff, Lt. General Sir Andrew Skeen, to study the feasibility of establishing a military college in India. The Quaid was one of three Indian members of the sub-committee which undertook a tour of inspection of military academies in England, France, the United States, and Canada. Besides doubling the vacancies from 10 to 20 for Indians in the Army, the Committee recommended the establishment of an Indian Sandhurst in 1933. The Committee suggested that half the number of officers in the Indian Army should be Indian by 1942.

While under consideration of His Majesty's Government in England, the Committee's report was brought before the House for discussion in 1927. Dr Moonje moved a resolution, which was later changed to an agreed amendment by Srinavasa Iyengar, stating that the acceptance of the unanimous recommendations of the Committee would mark a definite beginning in the Indianization of the Army in India. Supporting the amendment on 13 September 1927, the Quaid initiated a long debate in the House bristling with arguments and counter-arguments between the Treasury benches and the Nationalist opposition. At one stage, the Quaid said:

Since 1924 I have had the honour of standing on the floor of this House and addressing the Government. I had pointed out in the very first year, in 1924, to Lord Rawlinson that giving us 10 vacancies is not playing with the Army but playing with the people of India. To say that 350 million people in this country cannot give you 10 boys who can be considered suitable and fit for the King's commission is, I say, an insult to the intelligence of this House.

The Commander-in-Chief was taken to task for not making available to the House and to the public the sub-committee's report of which the Quaid had no doubt been the moving spirit. He was the only Indian member at the First Round Table Conference to bring up the question of Indianization of the Army.

In the short time available to me, I have not been able to find access to the Skeen Committee Report. It would yield rich material about the Quaid's role as one of the Founding Fathers of the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun, through whose portals many Pakistani and Indian officers, including the writer, have passed without knowing what debt of gratitude they owed to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. There is no doubt that but for the Quaid there would not have been any Dehra Dun Indian Military Academy as early as it was. It is also clear that the presence of a significant amount of well-educated and politically

conscious Indian Military Officers, at the end of 1945, amongst a very large number of Indians under arms, was an important factor in the liberation process which led the British to bow to the inevitable.



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Country	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
USA	100	120	150	180	200
UK	80	90	110	130	150
France	60	70	85	100	115
Germany	40	50	60	75	90
Italy	30	40	50	60	70
Japan	20	30	40	50	60
India	10	15	20	25	30
China	5	10	15	20	25
USSR	3	5	7	10	15
Other	2	3	4	5	7
Total	280	340	420	510	600