

Muslim League's Agitation against the NWFP Congress Ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib 1937-1939

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to investigate the politics of Frontier Congress and Frontier Muslim League. The paper has critically examined the issue of Muslim League's agitation against the Congress Ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib. When Dr. Khan Sahib's Congress Ministry was installed with the connivance of certain members who were previously with Sir Qayyum and Khan Sahib's Ministry was installed it boosted the Muslim League activities. This not only made the Muslim Leaguers realize to become united but organized certain meetings in protest against certain actions of the Khan Sahib Ministry. The details of these activities have been provided and it has also been explained as to how the Muslim League progressed and gained strength by late 1938. The party became an important provincial political organization and demonstrated against the Assembly Hall in Peshawar on certain issues and its certain leaders and workers were arrested by the Khan Ministry. This agitation continued until

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the Khan Sahib Ministry resigned in November 1939 on the Congress Working Committee's call.

Introduction

There were fifty total seats in the NWFP Legislative Assembly. Of these, 36 were reserved for the Muslims. From amongst 36 Muslim seats Congress contested 29 seats, but they won only 15 seats. There were nine general seats, eight of which were contested by the Congress and only four won by the Congress. As the All India Muslim League was not well-prepared for the elections of 1937 in the Frontier Assembly, it did not contest any of the seats in the provincial assembly. Therefore, it could not be said that the people of NWFP were not with the Muslim League. The Indian National Congress which was more organized was also not popular amongst the masses. Even the Hindu and Sikh communities were divided. About half of them were with the Congress, while the other half were against it. Thus people at large were not with the Congress. As the Muslim League was not well organized, it could not sponsor any candidate. Rather, keeping in view various groupings within different Muslim sections of the province, it left the matter on the individual influential persons. Therefore, the majority of the Muslims of the NWFP preferred to vote for the independent Muslims. The party-wise position in these elections of 1937 was as follows:

1.	Congress	19 ¹
2.	Hindu-Sikh Nationalists	7
3.	Muslim Independent Party	2
4.	Independent Muslims	21
5.	Independent Hindus	1
	Total:	<hr/> 50

The 1937 Frontier Assembly elections show that Congress was able to win only 19 (15 Muslims + 4 non-Muslims) seats.

¹ For the names of these Congress elected members, see Syed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Muslim League in NWFP* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1992), 43.

Therefore, it cannot be said that the Congress did win majority support in the house of 50.² Of the 14 seats reserved for the non-Muslims the Congress was able to win only 4 seats. Seven elected members were elected from the group of Hindu-Sikh Nationalists who were functioning separate from the Congress. Even one influential Hindu got himself elected as an independent candidate. The other fact which required to be noted in these elections was that out of 36 seats reserved for the Muslims, majority (i.e. 23 members) who got elected did not belong to the Congress. This was because of the fact that majority of the Muslims in the province did not like the Congress activities.³ Instead they were independents.⁴ All these Muslim members supported the candidature of Sir Abdul Qayyum for the Chief Ministership. Four non-Muslims also supported Sir Qayyum. Thus with the support of 27 members Qayyum became Chief Minister of NWFP on 1 April 1937. The political parties who contested these elections were the Congress Party, Hindu-Sikh nationalist Party.⁵ By combining together all the Muslim members along with support of some non-Muslim members Sir Abdul Qayyum formed his United Muslim Nationalist Party.⁶

Despite its full preparedness the Congress was not able to get clear majority support of the members of the elected members of the Frontier Assembly. It was Sir Abdul Qayyum who was able to muster support of the majority with his United Muslim Nationalist Party that he was able to show his strength to the Governor Sir George Cunningham.

2. *Indian Annual Register*, I (1937): 168.

3. Allah Bakhsh Yusufi, *Siyasat-i-Sardad key Irtaqai Manazil* (Urdu), (Karachi: Mohammad Ali Educational Society, 3 Hatti Yusufi House, 1972), 77.

4. Yusufi, *Siyasat -i-Sardad key Irtaqai Manazil*.

5. Shah, *Muslim League in NWFP*, 28.

6. Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement 1937-1947* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1990), 10.

The Muslim League which had been founded in NWFP in 1912 had become weak by the time the elections of 1937.⁷ It was because of its poor organization that it could not participate in the elections. It was only after the elections that the Muslim League became active especially after the installation of the Congress Ministry headed by Dr. Khan Sahib which replaced Sir Abdul Qayyum in September 1937.

The Muslim candidates in NWFP contested election in the name of different local Muslim groups, but in the position of independents. The elected 23 independent Muslim legislators grouped themselves into three parties: 1) Progressive Party headed by Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan, 2) Hazara Democratic Party in which members belonging to Hazara were included, 3) Azad Party in which rest of the Muslims and even some non-Muslims were included. These parties allied with each other and formed the NWFP Ministry headed by Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan.⁸

Sir Qayyum's Ministry did accomplish a number of steps for its credit. The most important was that it removed ban on the political activities in the province.⁹ The ban on the Congress politicians was also removed and a number of political prisoners were released from the jails. Ban on Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was also removed. But since he was arrested by the federal government, the federal government had agreed to release Ghaffar Khan from confinement after a resolution in this connection was passed by the majority vote in the Central Assembly in February 1935. Mohammad Ali Jinnah had also spoken in favour of release of the Khan. Resolution in this connection was approved by the Central Legislative Assembly in February 1935. Jinnah not only voted in its favour but pleaded with the British that they should not be cruel on the defeated person in the Non-

7 Riaz Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947: Secret Police Abstracts* (Islamabad: NIHCR, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008), 87-88.

8 Yusufi, *Siyasat -i-Sardad key Irtaqai Manazil*, 77-78.

9 Yusufi, *Siyasat -i-Sardad key Irtaqai Manazil*, 277.

Cooperation Movement in British India in 1930-1934.¹⁰ Despite the approval of this resolution, Ghaffar Khan's entry into Punjab and NWFP was banned until August 1937.¹¹

Abdul Ghaffar Khan who had been released from a five years confinement came to Lahore in August 1937 and said that he was not happy with the government of Sir Abdul Qayyum. Therefore, he was trying to install a Congress Ministry in the Frontier Province for which great efforts were required.¹²

Because of his serious illness, Sir Qayyum could not attend the Lucknow session of the Muslim League. He could not recover from this illness and finally died on December 4, 1937.¹³ This was a great loss not only to his family but the Muslim League as well. His death shocked Jinnah, the President of the All India Muslim League who had to work hard to make the Muslim League popular in the years to come when movement for Pakistan was successfully marching in other Muslim majority areas. However, the work of Sir Qayyum was taken up by Sardar Mohammad Aurazeb Khan, Advocate, who being member of the Khilafat group of the Muslims in the province tried hard to revive the Muslim League in the NWFP.¹⁴ The job of the Congress and the Red-Shirt leaders of the NWFP (now KPK) became very easy because they were no longer to face the challenges from the great personality of Sir Qayyum.¹⁵ However, the functioning of the Congress ministry made the Muslims of NWFP realize to become united. It was this feeling which later led to the revival of

10 *Indian Annual Register*, II, (1936): 187.

11 *Indian Annual Register*, II, (1936): 187. Also see; Shah, *North-West Frontier Province*, 72-74.

12 *Times of India*, August 23, 1937.

13 Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, *Wavell and the Dying Days of the Raj* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2011), 40.

14 Yusufi, *Siyasat -i-Sardad key Irtaqai Manazil*, 78-79.

15 Sana Ullah Akhtar, *The Fight for Freedom & Khaksar Tehrik* (Lahore: Al-Faisal Nashran, 2012), 78-79.

Muslim League in the province under Sardar Aurangzeb Khan in 1938.¹⁶

Installation of Dr. Khan Sahib Congress Ministry in NWFP

The Congress Ministries in the six-Hindu majority provinces had been formed in July 1937. The Congress did try its best to form the Ministry in the NWFP also in the same month, but due to lack of support from a number of groups belonging to the Coalition Ministry of Sir Abdul Qayyum, these efforts could not succeed. However, by September, a number of Khans and Hindu-Sikh members had been won over because of various reasons including pressure from Gandhi and other Hindu leaders. To influence the Muslim members, the services of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were acquired by the Congress. In this way, some Azad Party members and some Muslim members from Hazara Party were bribed and they became ready to support the formation of Dr. Khan Sahib's Ministry.¹⁷ After the required support had been managed, Dr. Khan Sahib, Leader of the Opposition Party in the Frontier Assembly, moved a resolution of no-confidence in the Frontier Assembly against Sir Qayyum's Ministry which was passed by the Assembly on September 3 by 27 votes to 22.¹⁸ The 27 members comprised 19 Congressmen, 4 Democrats, 2 Independents, and 2 who resigned the Hindu-Sikh Nationalist Party which was supporting the Qayyum Ministry.¹⁹ As a result of this resolution, Sir Qayyum's Ministry resigned. The session of the Assembly was postponed to September 17. Next day, Dr. Khan Sahib, leader of the Congress Party in the Frontier

16 Aziz Javed, *Quaid-i-Azam Aur Sarhad* (Urdu) (Peshawar: Idara Tehqeeq-i-Tasneef, 1976) 72.

17 Yusufi, *Siyasat -i-Sardad key Irtaqai Mana*, 77-78.

18 *Debates of the NWFP Legislative Assembly From 1st September to 30th September 1937*, Vol. II (Peshawar, Government Stationery and Printing, 1938), 98.

19 *Indian Annual Register* II (1937): 277. Also see; Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the NWFP 1937-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59-60.

Assembly, was invited by the Governor to form the Ministry. Thus the new Ministry was appointed with the approval of the Frontier Governor: Dr. Khan Sahib became Chief Minister, Lala Bhanu Ram Gandhi was appointed Finance Minister and Kazi Ataullah was appointed as Education Minister.²⁰ Sir Abdul Qayyum became leader of the Opposition in the Frontier Assembly. The installation of Khan Sahib Ministry also did help greatly for strengthening the Congress Party in the NWFP.²¹

Revival of Muslim League in NWFP and its Agitation against the Congress Ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib

In June-July 1937 a number of local leaders of Nowshera gathered and arranged a number of meetings of the local Muslim League with Tila Muhammad as President, Abdul Wahid Khan, Pleader as the Secretary of the Nowshera Branch of the Muslim League and spoke against the Congress leadership.²² As already mentioned, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was released from jail in August 1937. Immediately following his release, Dr. Khan Sahib started efforts to remove Sahibzada's Ministry in which he succeeded in September 1937 as mentioned before. A number of Khans of Charsadda, who were opposed to the Congress, held their meetings on 14 and then on 21 November 1937 in which they spoke against the Congress and Dr. Khan Sahib Ministry. On December 12, 1937, 150 Khans of Charsadda sub-division met Umarzai and formed an Islamia Jirga which identified itself with the Peshawar District Muslim League with Khan Bahadur Sadullah Khan, as President, and Muhammad Akbar as Secretary of this Jirga.²³ On December 19, 1937 a meeting of the Muslim League was held at Tangi (Bannu) attended by some 200 people. In his address Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, MLA, criticized the role of the Congress Ministry of deviating from

20 *Indian Annual Register II (1937): 278*

21 Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement*, 11.

22 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 87-88.

23 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 89.

their promises. Similarly another meeting of the Muslim League was held in Bannu on January 2, 1938 in which Mian Ziauddin criticized the Congress Ministry for having failed to fulfill their election promise of a 50 percent reduction in land revenue. He also pleaded that the policy of the present Congress Government was directed towards the advancement of Hindu interests and it was acting on "orders from Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru".²⁴ It was also charged that the Ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib was acting against the Muslim interests. At another meeting of the Muslim League held at Mardan on January 21, 1938 the Muslim League speakers also charged Dr. Khan Sahib for having avoided taking part in the Shahid Ganj mosque agitation. At this meeting it was also charged that Dr. Khan Sahib did not express condolence on the death of Haji Sahib of Torangzai, but instead expressed condolence on the death of Jawaharlal Nehru's mother.²⁵

With the dawn of 1938 a new wave of protests by the Muslim League workers and leaders started and a number of new branches of the Muslim League in various cities and areas of NWFP were opened. On February 1, 1938 a meeting attended by 200 people was held in Bannu in which nucleus of a branch of the Muslim League with Khan Bahadur Ghulam Haider Khan and Nasrullah Khan, MLAs, were elected President and Secretary, respectively.²⁶ Soon, another branch of the Muslim League at Nowshera was formed with Muhammad Umar Khan as President and Hidayatullah Khan as its Secretary. This meeting was mainly organized by Abdul Wahid, Pleader.²⁷ During first week of February 1938, some other meetings of the Muslim League were reported to have been held in Mardan and Peshawar protesting the attitude of Dr. Khan Sahib's Ministry for not speaking for Muslim interests. The decision of the Punjab

24 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 91.

25 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 92.

26 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 94.

27 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 87-88.

High Court on the Shahidganj case in favour of the Sikhs was also criticized in these meetings.²⁸

On March 3, 1938 an important meeting was organized in Peshawar by the Muslim League to protest against the recent Islamia College Bill by which grant of the College was reduced. Agha Lal Badshah organized this Muslim League meeting. He alleged that the Islamia College grant has been reduced so that number of Muslim students in the College could be reduced. Khan Bahadur Saaduddin Khan also addressed the meeting. In his speech he alleged that Khan Sahib Ministry was taking steps against the Muslim interests and protecting the Sikh murderers. At the end of the meeting, a procession of about 250 persons paraded through the bazaars of the city and came to the Assembly Hall carrying the Muslim League flags. A number of prominent Khans of Peshawar district also participated in this protest. They chanted slogans "Muslim League Zindabad" and "Congress Hakumat Murdabad". The Chief Minister Khan Sahib was forced to come and address the crowd. Khan Sahib told the crowd that the Islamia College Bill will be withdrawn from the Assembly. The processionists then dispersed.²⁹ In March 1938 a number of new branches of the Muslim League were opened at different places like Haripur, Dera Imail Khan, and other cities of NWFP.³⁰

Amongst the Muslims a wave of consciousness had aroused because of the anti-Muslim policies of the Congress Governments in six Hindu majority provinces by March 1938. Since the Khan Sahib Ministry was also termed as the Congress Ministry and Abdul Ghaffar Khan was termed as "Sarhadi Gandhi", it awakened the Muslims of the NWFP to attract leaders from other provinces particularly from the Muslim majority provinces. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan from Lahore was invited to address meetings on March 14, 1938 in Nowshera and on March 15, 1938 at Peshawar.

28 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 95.

29 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 98-99.

30 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 99.

Explaining his own experience of being in the Congress, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan said that during his period in the Congress he visualized that the Congress was a Hindu organization taking guidance from Wardha, whereas he realized that the Muslims should get guidance from Madina. It was because of these reasons, he continued, that in the recent by-elections in Saharanpur, Jhansi and Amroha the Muslim League won against the Muslim seats because the Muslims had become fed up with the Congress. He also called upon the Frontier Chief Minister and other Muslim Ministers of the province to leave the Congress and join the Muslim League so as to save Muslim India from Hindu domination.³¹

During his visit to NWFP in 1936, the Quaid tried to revive it but he failed because the local leaders of the province were not united. For instance, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar being already in the Muslim League was not in agreement with Sahibzada Sir Abdul Qayyum and other Muslim leaders who welcomed Jinnah in Peshawar.³² Seeing this situation, Jinnah left the issue and waited for the opportune time in future. He also did not form any Parliamentary Board to contest the coming elections in 1937.³³ That is why most of the Muslim members of the NWFP Assembly were elected as independent candidates. Even Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, did contest and win the provincial election of 1937 as an independent candidate.³⁴ The Muslim League did not contest any election in NWFP Assembly. The Congress who was given an open field to contest the elections also could not

31 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 102-104.

32 Nishtar to Jinnah, 22 June 1938, in Dr. Naushad Khan, "Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar to Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah: Unpublished Letters from 1937 to 1947", In *Pakistani Scholars on Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, ed. Riaz Ahmad (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam Chair (NIPS), Quaid-i-Azam University, 1999), 105-107.

33 Actually Jinnah initially formed the Frontier Muslim Parliamentary Board, but disbanded it seeing differences amongst the local Muslim Leaders of the Province. For details see; Ahmad, *Pakistan Movement: New Dimensions 1935-1948*, 49-52.

34 Ahmad, *Pakistan Movement: New Dimensions 1935-1948*, 49-52.

get more than 15 Muslim candidates against 36 Muslim seats reserved in the Assembly. The Muslim League became active after the installation of the Congress Ministry in NWFP in September 1937 and by early 1938 as mentioned earlier the activities of the provincial Muslim League had increased and it had become an active body. On account of this reason, the All India Muslim League Council in its meeting held in Calcutta on April 17, 1938 presided over by Jinnah, it was decided to formally affiliate the NWFP Muslim League with the main body of All India Muslim League.³⁵

After the death of Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, the Muslim League leader, was elected Leader of the Opposition in the NWFP Assembly. He opposed the Agricultural Debtors' Relief Bill introduced by the Khan Ministry.³⁶ Anti-Khan Sahib Ministry was gaining momentum day by day. Another meeting of the Muslim League was arranged on April 3, 1938 at Pabbi, Peshawar District which was addressed by Khadim Muhammad Akbar who criticized Abdul Ghaffar Khan for discarding his "Islamic flag" and replacing it with the "Congress flag". It was on account of this reason, he argued, that he dissociated himself from the Red-Shirt Movement and joined the Muslim League. He also criticized Ghaffar Khan for wearing a "Gandhi cap".³⁷

Because of the worse situation created by the installation of Congress Ministries in six Hindu majority provinces and one Muslim province of the Frontier, a Special Session of the All India Muslim League was held at Calcutta on April 17-18, 1938 presided over by Quaid-i-Azam. In his presidential address, Quaid-i-Azam said that in the province of NWFP the Congress Ministry is actually a coalition Ministry.³⁸ Sardar

35 Waheed Ahmad, *The Nation's Voice: Speeches and Statements, March 1935-March 1940* (Karachi, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1992), 609.

36 Ahmad, *The Nation's Voice: Speeches and Statements*, 104.

37 Ahmad, *The Nation's Voice: Speeches and Statements*, 105.

38 S. S. Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1970), 267.

Aurangzeb Khan, Leader of the Opposition in the Frontier Assembly, also attended this session as member of the Muslim League. Ziauddin and Sardar Aurangzeb, from the Frontier, moved this Resolution: "This Meeting of the All India Muslim League calls upon the Musalmans of India to take special steps to combat the Congress anti-Muslim activities in the Frontier Province."³⁹ In support of this resolution Maulana Shaukat Ali, A. K. Fazlul Huq, and Jinnah delivered their short speeches. Maulana Shaukat Ali exposed the Congress attempt to put Muslim against the Muslim. Fazlul Huq, in his speech, made it clear that "every one of the League member is a lion and a tiger and ready to shed the last drop of his blood for the sake of Islam." The Quaid, in his speech, said that the Congress is spending a lot of money in the Frontier for the propagation of the Congress philosophy in a deceiving manner. The Quaid also hoped that soon the time will come when the League will be given high importance by the British Government along with the Congress.⁴⁰

In May 1938, a number of Muslim League leaders from the UP came to NWFP and addressed a number of Muslim League meetings. Maulvi Jamaluddin of Lucknow came to Peshawar on May 12 and addressed a number of meetings. He left the province on May 17. Maulna Hasrat Mohani, another Muslim League leader from the United Provinces also spoke in a number of meetings. In his speech on May 16, he criticized the British for crushing the Muslims in Waziristan and Palestine. He warned the British that the Muslims will never surrender to the British. Maulvi Muhammad Ishaq from Rawalpindi also addressed a meeting held in connection with Eid-i-Milad at Abbotabad on May 13 in which he criticized the Khan Sahib Ministry and termed the Congress a party of the Hindus and Sikhs.⁴¹ On May 25, a meeting of the Muslim League was held in

39 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 270-271.

40 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 271.

41 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 107-108.

Charsadda addressed by Khadim Muhammad Akbar of Charsadda. In his speech, he termed Gandhi as "Baiman" whom Abdul Ghaffar Khan is following. He expressed jubilation that the Muslim League candidate in the Amritsar bye-election has recently won. It was also announced that Sardar Aurangzeb Khan and Khan Bahadur Saadullah Khan were rightly appointed as members of the All India Muslim League Working Committee.⁴² Announcement in this regard was made by Jinnah as President of AIML on May 16, 1938.⁴³

In another Muslim League meeting in Peshawar on June 12, 1938 Aurangzeb Khan criticized the NWFP ministry's policy for working against the Muslim interests. He had returned to Peshawar on June 8 after attending the Muslim League Working Committee meeting in Bombay presided over by Jinnah. Aurangzeb Khan explained that the Congress was interested to negotiate with Jinnah for the purpose of talking in connection with the Muslim interests, but Jinnah refused until the Congress recognized the All India Muslim League as the only representative body of the Muslim opinion of the whole country. He also informed that Jinnah was thinking the NWFP as "one of those provinces constituting the backbone of the Muslim community in India". In his speech Aurangzeb also charged Khan Sahib Ministry for acting against the Muslim interests in the field of education and quoted a number of instances.⁴⁴ As the Muslim League in NWFP was facing great financial deficit, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan explained in a meeting on July 8 held in his house in Peshawar that Mohammad Ali Jinnah proposed to collect one crore of rupees from important persons from various provinces of India. Aurangzeb also hoped to get some money from Jinnah for further spreading activities of the Muslim League in NWFP. He also charged Abdul Ghaffar

42 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 108.

43 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," In *The Nation's Voice, Towards Consolidation: Speeches and Statements; March 1935-March 1940*, ed. Waheed Ahmad, 256.

44 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 110.

Khan and the Congress of NWFP that they were heavily financed by the Congress stalwarts in India.⁴⁵

Maulana Shaukat Ali addressed a number of public meetings organized by the Muslim League from July 8 to July 23 1938 in different cities of the NWFP Province. He addressed meetings in Peshawar, Charsada, Hazara, Kohat, Swabi, Nowshera and Mardan. In his speeches he urged upon Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib to leave the Congress and join the Muslim League because the Congress is working against the Muslim interests. The Congress leaders, Maulana Shaukat charged, the Congress has replaced "Allah-o-Akbar" by "Bande Mataram" slogan which is against Islam. He argued that the province has the majority of 95 percent Muslim population; it does not fit for the Muslim leaders to remain in the Congress. But his calls were not heard. Rather, at a number of places such as Charsada, Maulana Shaukat Ali's meetings were tried to be disturbed, but because of Police control no untoward incident happened.⁴⁶

There were complaints against the Bannu Deputy Commissioner's negative attitude against the Muslims of Bannu for acting against certain Muslim League leaders who were supporting the cause of Waziristan and criticizing the British cruelties in Waziristan. Unnecessary house searches of Muslim leaders of Bannu were carried out by the officials. To protest this, a public meeting was organized by the Muslim League in Bannu on July 26, 1938 which was addressed by the Muslim League leaders including Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, MLA, Khan Bahadur Sa'adullah Khan, MLA, Mian Ziauddin, Mohammad Ismail Ghaznavi, and Allah Bakhsh Yusafi. On July 29, 1938 they left Peshawar for Delhi to attend the forthcoming meeting of the All India Muslim League in Delhi.⁴⁷ Day by day the Muslim League was becoming popular in the province. In a meeting on

45 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 118.

46 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 119-120.

47 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 120-122.

August 29, 1938 in Mirzai, district Peshawar Sahibul Haq of the village along with 20 other Muslims joined the Muslim League. Similarly a number of persons in Swabi in a meeting held on August 31, 1938 addressed by Mian Ziauddin joined the Muslim League. Mian Ziauddin criticized the anti-Muslim policy of the Khan Sahib Ministry.⁴⁸

A big political conference was arranged by the Frontier Muslim League in Abbottabad on September 10-11, 1938 which was presided over by Ch. Khaliquzzaman from the UP. The Conference was spread over six sessions. About 2500 people attended the first session. A large number of volunteers from Peshawar, Mardan, Hazara, and Rawalpindi districts attended this conference. Prominent personalities from other provinces also participated in this Muslim League Conference. Most prominent amongst them were Mian Jalaluddin Din, Mehdi Hussain, Raja of Pirpur, United Provinces, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan of Lahore, Maulana Maula Bakhsh of Rawalpindi, Sh. Abdul Majid, MLA from Karachi and Syed Mustafa Shah Gilani. Abdul Rashid, MLA was President of the Reception Committee of this Conference who presented his welcome address in which he criticized the role of the Khan Sahib Congress Ministry. Ch. Khaliqauzzaman delivered his presidential address in which he spoke against the Congress and the Hindu leaders of working against the Muslim interests. On September 11, the second day of the Conference, the chief speaker was Maulana Zafar Ali Khan who criticized the Congress as the Hindu body and termed Abdul Ghaffar Khan as a simple Muslim who was blindly following the Congress. He called upon Ghaffar Khan to understand the Hindu mind when most of the Muslim India had realized this reality and come forward by leaving the Congress and join the Muslim League ranks. Next speaker was Maulana Abdul Hamid of UP who condemned the Congress Ministry's role in the Frontier and criticized Abdul Ghafar Khan for coming under the influence of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. It was because of this

48 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 126-127.

Congress Ministry that the students had been made to recite “Bande Mataram” which is against Islam. Abdul Majid Sindhi, MLA presided over the first session of September 11, and in his speech criticized the Congress machinations. Prof. Inayatullah, proprietor of the “Muslim League Weekly” of Lahore made a very strong attack on the Congress’ role in the United Provinces. He said that it was impossible to trust the Hindu leaders like Gandhi and Nehru whose sole aim was to establish “Hindu Raj” in India. Towards the end of the Conference, eight resolutions were passed calling upon the British to stop cruelties in Waziristan and Palestine. A resolution condemning the anti-Muslim policies of the Congress Ministries in the Hindu majority provinces was also passed. Another resolution condemning the Frontier Government for acting against Allah Bakhsh Yusufi Press was also passed.⁴⁹

Abdul Majid Sindhi also addressed at some other places of NWFP. On September 13, 1938 he addressed a Muslim League meeting at Peshawar attended by about 1000 people. On 16 September 1938 he addressed another Muslim League meeting at Ziarat Kaka Sahib also with Sardar Aurangzeb Khan which was attended by some 600 people. Mian Muhammad Musahib of Ziarat Kaka Sahib presented a welcome address to Abdul Majid Sindhi and criticized the role of Frontier Ministry for having acting against the Muslim interests and protecting the Sikh and Hindu interests in the province. He alleged that Dr. Khan Sahib was responsible for abolishing certain Islamic books in the schools on the advice of the Congress.⁵⁰

As a result of these Muslim League leaders’ visit to the Frontier Province, a number of local Muslim leaders left the Congress and joined the Muslim League. Khushal Khan of Nawan Shehr was one of them.⁵¹ On account of this, His Highness the Mehtar of Chitral also visited Peshawar to

49 “Statesman, May 18, 1938,” 127-131.

50 “Statesman, May 18, 1938,” 133-134.

51 “Statesman, May 18, 1938,” 135.

sympathize with the Muslim League leaders of the province. In conclusion of these meetings and great impact which resulted into creation of ill-feeling between the supporters of Redshirts and followers the Muslim League in Charsada sub-division of Peshawar district.⁵²

In October 1938 important meetings were held in Bannu and Mardan in which a number of new persons joined the Muslim League. The speakers which included Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, MLA, Muhammad Safdar Khan, Pleader of Haripur, announced that a number of new persons from different areas of the province have joined the Muslim League including Raja Abdul Rahman Khan and Khan Sahib Muhammad Attai Khan. In his speech Maulana Zafar Ali Khan criticized Gandhi for his anti-Muslim drive. He also explained that persons like Dr. Khan Sahib, Abdul Ghaffar Khan fail to understand the real nature of Gandhi who had hidden contempt against the Muslims.⁵³ In these meetings what was particularly pointed out on the part of Dr. Khan Sahib's Ministry's role against the Muslims was reducing the grant of Islamia College, Peshawar, prosecution in the Turab Ali case, locating a punitive police post in village Mayar, oppression of poor zamindars of Ghallandher village, and provincial government's inaction to prevent the British cruelty in Waziristan, provincial government's failure to protest against British Government's repression on the Muslims in Palestine, and in failure to protest against the introduction of Wardha Educational Scheme in the six Hindu majority provinces.⁵⁴

Similarly, various protest meetings were held in the months of November and December 1938 in Bannu, Peshawar, Nowshera, Abbottabad, Haripur, Charsadda, D. I. Khan, and other cities of the Frontier Province addressed by prominent leaders including Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. In each of these cities, Muslim League committees were formulated. It was

52 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 134-135.

53 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 138-140.

54 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 139-141

noted that the number of participants had increased from hundreds to the thousands. To quote an example, the formation of Peshawar City Muslim League Branch on December 13, 1938, Ghulam Hussain, and Ghulam Rabbani Sethi were elected President and Secretary of this Committee respectively with three other office bearers and the Working Committee included as many as forty personalities including Sardar Aurangzeb Khan.⁵⁵

The issue of Congress being the Hindu body as again mentioned by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan in his address to the Muslim League Conference at Abbottabad on October 11, 1938 as mentioned before was further highlighted at the 26th session of the All India Muslim League held at Patna on December 26-29, 1938 both by Syed Abdul Aziz, Chairman of Reception Committee of this Session and by the Quaid-i-Azam in his Presidential. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan had also pointed out that the Muslims all over India had realized the Hindu character of the Congress but Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib have failed to realize this. To augment this argument, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan had pointed out in Oct 1938 at Abbotabad that out of 21 members of the Congress Working Committee only two were Muslims.⁵⁶ Syed Abul Aziz in this welcome address to the Patna Session of the Muslim League said that the Muslim had been cooperating with the Congress since the Lucknow Pact of 1916, but they have been deceived by the Report of 1928 which signaled the concept of Hindu Raj.⁵⁷ Quaid-i-Azam in his Presidential Address to the Patna Session not only endorsed what was said by Abdul Aziz, but added: "The Congress High Command wanted the Musalmans to be a mere understudy of the Congress, mere foot pages of the Congress leader, to be used, governed and brought to heel when they had served the purpose of the Congress. The Congress leaders wanted them to submit unconditionally to

55 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 145-146.

56 "Statesman, May 18, 1938," 120.

57 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 272-273.

Hindu Raj. ... The Congress had now, you must be aware, killed every hope of Hindu-Muslim settlement in the right royal fashion of Fascism. ... The Congress is nothing but a Hindu body".⁵⁸ The Quaid added that "the presence of the few Muslims, the few misled and misguided ones" does not make it a national body. The Congress, he continued, also does not represent the Muslims, Christians, Scheduled Castes, non-Brahman Hindu classes also.⁵⁹ He also made it clear that all the statements of Congress leaders were meant to deceive the Muslims. That is why, he maintained that "I do not believe in such declarations" of the Congress leaders as they started with their anti-Federation statement but actually "they tumbled into the provincial part of the Constitution" and "I say the whole idea behind the Congress leaders' move is once again to deceive the Muslims". Despite all this, he warned, the Congress that "the Muslims are not what they were three years ago." He also conveyed to them: "I want to tell these leaders, however, that they cannot deceive the Muslims anymore". Depicting the real face of the Congress leaders, Jinnah further explained that the real aim of the Congress organization was to become a "totalitarian organization on the Fascist pattern" with "their nefarious scheme of destroying the Muslim culture and organization".⁶⁰ With reference to the NWFP, Jinnah said:

I had a talk with some friends of the North-West Frontier Province. I am told that in that Province our co-religionists—credulous Pathans as they are—have been told that the Congress is for the good of the people, that the Muslim League is the supporter of Imperialism and an ally of imperialism. I say there cannot be a greater falsehood than the allegation that the Muslim League is an ally of Imperialism. Inside the legislature or outside the legislature, have I on any single occasion supported the Imperialism, not to speak of proving myself an ally of Imperialism? (Shouts of No, No).⁶¹

58 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 275-276.

59 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 276.

60 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 279-280.

61 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 280.

Towards the end of his speech, Jinnah thus expressed his confidence in the Muslim Nation: "I say the Muslims and the Muslim League have only one ally, and that ally is the Muslim Nation; and the one and only one to whom they can look for help is God. (Applause)".⁶² This Session of the Muslim League also passed a resolution by which the policies and programme of the Frontier Congress Ministry were condemned.⁶³

From the Frontier Province, Khan Bahadur Sadullah Khan, Mian Ziauddin, and Sardar Aurangzeb Khan attended this Patna Session of the Muslim League. They returned to Peshawar on January 2, 1939.⁶⁴ Allah Bakhsh Yusafi had also gone to attend Patna Session, but he did not return and remained behind as he was due to attend the All India Khilafat Committee meeting in Bombay in January 1939.⁶⁵ The possibility of starting "Direct Action" against the Congress Raj was also discussed by resolution moved by Mr. A. A. Khan in this Patna Session on which a number of speakers from different provinces lively participated. Participating in this discussion on behalf of NWFP, Sardar Aurgangzeb Khan "declared that he would not rest until the present Ministry in the Frontier Province had been replaced. It was an irony of fate and a curse that the Frontier, have more than 90 percent of Muslims, should be under the Congress Administration."⁶⁶

In the first week of January, 1939 two meetings of the Muslim League were arranged in Bannu which were addressed by Taj Ali Khan. In his address, Taj Ali Khan criticized the Khan Sahib Ministry's policies as it did nothing for the betterment of the Frontier Muslims. Comparing it with Sikander Hayat Khan's Unionist Ministry in the Punjab, he said that against the Frontier Ministry, Sikander Hayat's

62 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II.

63 Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 294-295.

64 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 149.

65 Ahmad, *The Frontier Muslim League 1913-1947*, 149.

66 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 283-286.

Ministry in the Punjab had done a lot for the uplift of the Muslim in the Punjab. He also asked the British Government to stop bombing in Waziristan.⁶⁷

During the months of January-April 1939 a number of meetings organized by the Frontier Muslim League were held in various cities of the NWFP in which voices were raised against the working of the Khan Sahib Ministry. The main argument, as witnessed before, advanced in these meetings was the anti-Muslim stance of the Khan Sahib Ministry and for not acting in interest of the Muslims of the Frontier. In a meeting in Peshawar on February 8, 1939 slogans of "Congress Hakumat Barbad" and in support of the "Martyrs of Palestine Zindabad" were raised during the speech delivered by Mian Ziauddin, a barrister from Peshawar. He also blamed Khan Sahib for recruiting 30 percent Muslims in the Malakand Hydro-Electric Scheme and that majority 70 percent employees were the Hindus and Sikhs.⁶⁸ In another meeting in Mardan on February 12, 1939 the speakers blamed Hindu officers for being cruel on the Muslim employees of Hydro-Electric Department of the province. The speakers also blamed the Hindu community for riots in D. I. Khan and the Provincial Government for doing nothing against them.⁶⁹ In a number of speeches by Sardar Aurabgzeb, Mian Ziauddin, Taj Ali Khan and many others in three meetings held in Peshawar, Charsadda and Bannu further criticized Khan Sahib's Ministry for acting on the Congress agenda of Vidya Mandir Scheme of Education in the province.⁷⁰ On 11 11, 1939 a big public meeting was organized in Peshawar by the Muslim League in order to welcome His Highness Mehtar of Chitral. On this occasion a number of workers and leaders of Muslim League including Sardar Aurganzeb Khan, Mian Ziauddin Ghaznavi, and 40 other Muslim League workers welcomed H. H Mehtar of

67 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 283-286.

68 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 149-150.

69 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 150.

70 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 152-153.

Chitral. A number of new persons joined the Muslims and a number of branches of Muslim League in villages of Turlandi, Nawi Killi, and Yar Hussain were also opened.⁷¹

A number of women branches of the Muslim League were also opened in some cities of the Frontier. Such a meeting of the Women Committee was held in Peshawar on April 18, 1939 on arrival of Miss Khatun of Lucknow in Peshawar. It was also professed that such Women Branches will also be opened in other cities for bringing awareness amongst the Muslim Women.⁷²

In the month of May 1939, an All India Muslim League Deputation consisting of 11 Members including Malak Barkat Ali of Punjab came and addressed a number of meetings from 17 to 23 May 1939 in the districts of Peshawar, Mardan and Abbottabad. During these meetings, anti-Congress speeches on the issues as mentioned before were made. Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, Mian Ziauddin and other leaders of the Frontier accompanied them in their meetings for which wide preparations had already been made. A number of new persons and leaders who were previously in the Frontier Congress left the Congress and joined the Muslim League. Thus this tour of the Muslim League Deputation was a great success because popularity of the Muslim League was further increased in the Province.⁷³

During June -December 1939 the activities and meetings of the Frontier Muslim League further increased not only in terms of their numbers but also in terms of their attendance. Before this the number of attendance in these meetings ranged between 100 – 500, but during June-December 1939 the number of attendance increase from 500 to 2000-5000 people in various cities of the Province. The anti-Khan Sahib Ministry stance was also strengthened amongst the speakers. A Muslim League Conference was held at Swabi

71 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 154.

72 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 154-155.

73 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 156-158.

on July 8-9, 1939 attended by people between 1000-2500 in four different sessions. Even procession of Muslim League National Guards and Khaksars consisting of 400 volunteers including 40 Khaksars was also arranged on 8 July. Prominent amongst the persons who attended this Conference were Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, Mian Ziauddin, Barrister, Behram Khan, Pleader of Mardan, Mian Muhammad Shah, retired extra-Assistant Commissioner of Ismaila, Khan Sahib Mir Alam Khan, Rahim Bakhsh Ghaznavi and Arbab Madad Khan. After the flag-hoisting ceremony, Maluana Zafar Ali Khan and Abdul Halim, Secretary of the Reception Committee read their Addresses in Urdu. At the last session the speakers were Bakht Jamal of Nawi Killi, Maulvi Shah Muhammad of Turlandi, Maulvi Arshad of Moneri and Maulvi Abdul Ali of Yaqubi, who had recently left the Redshirts and joined the Muslim League. The proceedings of this Conference came to a close by the speeches of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Sardar Aurangzeb Khan.⁷⁴

This was followed by a weeklong celebrations of Muslim League Week starting from July 16, 1939 in Peshawar in which different leaders from other cities also participated. Amongst other speakers were also included Bakht Jamal of Nawi Killi, Prof. Inayatullah Khan of Lahore. They spoke against the Hindu Raj pattern of the Congress and criticized the Khan Sahib Ministry for their being loyal to Gandhi and Nehru. The week long activities came to an end on July 21, 1939 with the presidential address of Sardar Aurangzeb Khan. Similar activities were witnessed in the months of August, September, October, November and December 1939. The anti-Khan Sahib Ministry Agitation reached its climax in October 1939 when various demonstrations were held in various cities of Peshawar, Mardan, Abbotabad on the issues of Goonda Bill and arresting a number of Muslim League workers. A big demonstration against the Ministry was also arranged before the Assembly Hall by chanting

74 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 161-163.

slogans of Congress Ministry Murdabad and Goonda Bill Barbad. Sardar Aurganzeb Khan and other Muslim League Leaders led this demonstration. In this demonstration, 10 Muslim Leaders and workers were arrested and sentenced to three years imprisonment. Sardar Aurangzeb Khan in his speech explained that grant of Islamia College has been drastically decreased and Frontier Crimes Regulation repealed by the late Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan Ministry was reinstated by the Khan Sahib Ministry. Demonstration against the Khan Sahib Ministry increased day by day and release of Muslim League workers were demanded, until on Nov 3, 1939 forced by the circumstances Khan Sahib ordered to release these prisoners who were sentenced to three years imprisonment. The agitation against the Khan Sahib Ministry was increasing day by day until towards the end of November 1939 when the Khan Sahib Ministry resigned as the Congress Ministries in other six Hindu majority provinces resigned because of the British joining the World War II. This Congress Ministries resigned on demand by Gandhi.⁷⁵

Conclusion

It is concluded that on the call by Jinnah, December 22, 1939 was celebrated as the Day of Deliverance from the Congress Raj all over British India. In the Frontier Province also this day was celebrated with great warmth and enthusiasm in various cities of Frontier such as Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Nowshera, Turlandi and Swabi. Various meetings by the local branches of the Frontier Muslim League were organized and local leaders of the League addressed these meeting by chanting slogans against the Congress and their policy of Hindu Raj in India. Thenceforward the Muslim League was fully alive to the situation and worked for the protection of Muslim rights with full force and activation.

75 Pirzada, *Foundation of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 164-178.