

**The First Ministry of the Muslim League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (1943-1945):  
A Study of Its Formation and Performance**

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Like other Muslim majority provinces of the subcontinent the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) presently named as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) played an important role in the partition of India and the resultant creation of Pakistan. A host of political leaders from that province under the dynamic leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah took active part in the political movement of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) to its logical conclusion. Among those prime leaders who took an active part in the politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on behalf of the Muslim League was Sardar Mohammad Aurangzeb Khan of Dera Ismail Khan. The purpose of this research paper is to critically evaluate the role played by him in the formation of the First Muslim League Ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The paper highlights the circumstances and factors which led to the formation of this ministry, its working, ups and downs occurred within the Frontier Muslim League and the causes of failure of the ministry as well. An analytical approach has been adopted to ascertain the development and happenings with hope that it would explore some new paradigms for further assessments with regard to the political development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general, and performance of Muslim League Ministry in particular.

**Keywords:** Muslim League Ministry, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan

Political scenario of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was almost entirely different from the other provinces of British India. For a long time it was under the jack-boot of England. As compared to other provinces it was not politically much alive. It was regarded by the British government as the most vulnerable part of its empire. The areas covered by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are of immense strategic importance as it happens to be the gateway to the sub-continent. The north western areas of British India posed a constant threat to the imperial designs of Britain. The geo-strategic importance of the Pakhtun area compelled them to send military expeditions against so-called rebels, hostile elements and miscreants. According to the Imperial Gazetteer of India fifty-four expeditions were undertaken against frontier tribes between 1849 and 1901 while almost similar number of expeditions were undertaken between 1902 and 1947 (Sheikh, 1990: 16).

Such realities and the ambitious attitudes of Britain demonstrate the high strategic importance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in their eyes. In order to suppress the people of those areas, ruthless and repressive laws such as the Murderous Outrageous Act (MOA) and the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) were promulgated by the British colonial power. The FCR was basically aimed at political repression. Indeed every effort was conducted to restrict all such moves of the inhabitants of the area which might lead to the demand for the introduction of reforms and representative government bringing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa equal in status with the other provinces of British India (Singer, 1984: 110).

Although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was separated from the Punjab in 1901 but it was put under a Chief Commissioner with a dual duty of an Agent to the Governor General for the affairs of the tribal areas and the chief head over the administration of settled districts as well. Through the appointment of Chief

Commissioner the settled districts and agencies were connected together (GoP, Gazetteer, 1901: 151). The new province was deprived of the advantages of the constitutional reforms package of 1909 and 1919. The government considered the whole region as unstable, prone to crime and being strategically located unfit for any form of self-government (Shah, 2000). The All India Muslim League constantly struggled to compel the British government for the introduction of constitutional reforms in the area. For instance in its fifth session held at Lahore on 24-25 May 1924 resolutions were passed which *inter alia* stressed the immediate and paramount necessity of introducing reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but the government did not pay any heed to such demands of the League (Spain, 1972: 21).

Initially All-India Muslim League (AIML) had no roots in the local population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and consequently despite being a Muslim majority province, there existed no League organization. The central command of the AIML, however, considered it essential to introduce and popularise its programme in this province. That is why it was the primary objective of Quaid-i-Azam's first visit to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during which he contacted the general masses and tried to organize the provincial Muslim League (Shah, 2002: 74-75). But those leaders who promised to reorganize the Provincial League made no practical effort in that direction. Every one tried to grind his own axe and in such a situation it was impossible to start the task of reorganization of the provincial League (Winson, 1969: 211).

In fact no one of the province initiated any effective measures to enroot the AIML there. As a result several members appointed on the consultative board setup by the Quaid ultimately joined the Indian National Congress (INC). Resultantly, the AIML failed even to get a single nomination from the entire province to contest the elections on its ticket in 1937. As no political organization able to get majority seats in the elections of 1937, a scramble for power in the provincial assembly began. The provincial Congress pending the decision of the INC on the acceptance of ministries remained out of the power game. The decision of the Congress paved the way for the other political actors in the province to gain power through the policy of give and take.

It was Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan who got advantage of the prevailing political situation and formed the United Muslim Nationalist Party (UMNP) within the Assembly. The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, George Cunningham had no option as the Congress was still refusing to accept office, so in the absence of any single large group, invited Sir Qayum to form a ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The ministry was not an effective one and almost six months later a successful vote of no-confidence was passed against it. Afterwards the Governor invited Dr. Khan Sahib on 6 September 1937 to form his own cabinet.

#### **The Formation of the First Muslim League Ministry**

On 4 December 1937 Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan died (Shakeel, 1989: 261) and after his demise Sardar Aurangzeb Khan became the undisputed leader of the Independent Party in the provincial. Knowing his political stature and personality a seven member Muslim League delegation was sent to Sardar Aurangzeb Khan to invite him to join the AIML.

Sardar Mohammad Aurangzeb Khan belonged to a famous Pakhtun tribe "Gandapur" of Dera Ismail Khan. He was born in a *Zamindar* family and got his early education in Karachi and Dera Ismail Khan and then went to Peshawar where he passed his B.A examination from the Missionary College. He obtained his LLB degree from Aligarh Muslim University where he was the President of Muslim Student Union. He started his legal practice at Peshawar and remained in close association and contact with Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan (Attique, 1990: 157).

It seems to be pertinent to point out here that the Second World War that broke out in 1939 played a crucial role in drastically changing the political scenario of the subcontinent. The British Government without getting the local inhabitants or their representatives into confidence declared that India was at war with Germany. That declaration was strongly opposed by the INC. A resolution was moved in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa legislative assembly by the Congress as a protest against the British action of declaring war on behalf of India without the consent of the Indians and adopting measures to curtail the powers of the provincial governments. The resolution was of the view that it was an obvious violation of democratic values and the government should follow the principle of democracy while dealing with the war. On the question of war ultimately the Congress ministry working in the province put her resignation on 7 November 1939. The INC launched Quit India Movement and started a vigorous agitation throughout India which was timed in such a way that it coincided with the bombing of Calcutta and Madras by the Japanese Air Force and the advancement of their troops into Manipur district of Assam at the eastern border. As an immediate response the government arrested all the Congress leaders and half a dozen members of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Legislative Assembly were also detained.

The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, George Cunningham saw no possibility of any alternative ministry and assumed full administrative and legislative powers in his hands. The Indian National Congress adopted a war path against the British government. This bitterness between the British government and the INC paved the way for the AIML to popularise its ideology and party programme in those areas where it still lacked popular support. Moreover, after the passage of Lahore Resolution in March 1940, the political scenario at all India level changed (Aurangzeb to Jinnah, 1939: 329). An important characteristic of the British war policy was to install as many non-Congress ministries in the provinces as possible to demonstrate to the outside world that despite the non-cooperation of the INC, the general public opinion in India was still on their side and the British government was enjoying popular support despite the war (Bellew, 1994: 89). That is why with support of the Muslim League non-Congress ministries were formed in Assam and Sindh whereas strong Muslim League government was functioning in Bengal from 1937. In the same manner with the resignation of Dr. Khan Sahib's ministry, the Governor called on Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, the opposition leader in the assembly and asked him to form a new ministry (Grima, 1993: 165).

It may be recalled that with the demise of Sir Qayum, leadership vacuum emerged in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sardar Aurangzeb being an undisputed leader of Independent Party in the Assembly was formally invited to join the Muslim League. After thorough deliberations he joined the League and immediately started his vigorous efforts to persuade the members of the Provincial Assembly to join the League. They met in Nowshehra and reorganized the provincial Muslim League. Moulvi Shoaib from Mardan was chosen as its President and Ismail Ghaznavi as General Secretary. Mian Ziauddin and K.B. Sadullah Khan were appointed as the Vice-Presidents while Abdul Hakim Jalozi was made the treasurer. A few days after the meeting at Nowshehra, the prominent Leaguers of Peshawar were invited to attend a meeting in Islamia Club Hall, Peshawar. The meeting was addressed by Sardar Aurangzeb Khan and Mian Ziauddin and their speeches were followed by the appointment of office bearers of the Muslim League Peshawar district. Amin Mohammad was appointed as its President and Khan Bahadur Mohammad Akram Khan as Vice-President while Arbab Madad Khan was appointed as General Secretary (Pervez, 1995: 58-59). After a period of four months, more than five hundred members were enlisted in the Frontier Muslim League and the membership fee was two *annas* per head. The Peshawar city Muslim League was rapidly reorganized with Mian Ghulam Hussain as President, Allah Bakhsh Yusufi as senior Vice-President and Shah Mohammad as General Secretary. In April 1938 under the leadership of Sardar Aurangzeb and Agha Syed Lal Badshah, the provincial Muslim League celebrated the anniversary of the martyrs of 1930. The celebration of "League Week" was decided by the workers of Muslim League in June, 1938. Membership forms were circulated and the proposed League week was propagated throughout the province. Besides provincial leaders prominent speakers like Professor Yusuf Saleem Chishti, Mohammad Bakhsh Muslim, and Professor Malik Inayat were invited from the Punjab (Quaid-i-Azam Paper, 1939).

In such a favourable situation and in the absence of the powerful Congress high handedness, Quaid-i-Azam got the opportunity to contact the general masses and convey to them the programme and manifesto of the AIML. He visited various places and held discussions with various potential Muslim leaders about the targets of the AIML. Although in the elections of 1937 Jinnah accepted the League's defeat in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but afterwards the League had won all the by-elections. Consequently, the Quaid was confident enough that, if general elections were held in this province, the League would succeed (Caroe, 1980: 205).

The Frontier Muslim League formally affiliated with its central organization on 17 April 1938 at Calcutta Session of the AIML in which Ziauddin moved a resolution urging upon the Muslims of India to take special steps to combat the Congress anti-Muslim activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. That session was attended by a large number of prominent figures of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Quaid also promised to extend necessary assistance to the Frontier League in its political efforts (Shah, 2000: 106).

The Congress government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the leadership of Dr. Khan Sahib was replaced by the Governor's administration in 1939 and that was detrimental to the political interests of the Indian National Congress. But its consequence created a favourable situation for the League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sardar Aurangzeb was invited by the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to form a coalition ministry (Mujawar, 1985: 102). Aurangzeb, however, was in trouble as his party could not command a majority in the assembly. He corresponded with the Quaid in order to seek his advice. The Quaid insisted Aurangzeb 'to form ministry at any cost, even interim ministry, waverers and others would come afterward' (National Archives of Pakistan, File No.219). At that time there were fourteen Muslim Leaguers in the provincial legislature, four-Hindu-Sikh Nationalists, three independent and seven waverers while the rest supported the Congress Party (Quaid-i-Azam Paper, 1939). To avoid the Congress *Raj* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Jinnah wished that a League dominated ministry should be formed because the Muslims had bitter experience of the Congress rule and they never liked to see the Congress in power again (Mujawar, 1985: 102).

Although Aurangzeb remained engaged in manoeuvring towards the formation of League's ministry yet he did not succeed in bringing together a working majority. He informed the Quaid that "local League and party opinion was not in favour of accepting office" (Quaid-i-Azam Paper, 1939). In the provincial assembly neither Aurangzeb nor any other leader was in a position to command a majority of more than twenty members in a house of fifty members. The League Central Command started endeavours in March 1940 and deputed Sikandar Hayat, the Punjab Premier and Akbar Hydari, member for Information and Broadcasting in the Viceroy's Executive Council, to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in order to assist the provincial League leaders achieving a decisive position on the question of making a ministry in the province. That delegation reached Peshawar on 9 March and held negotiations with the non-Congress Muslim members of the legislature. Sikandar Hayat was of the view that if Khuda Bakhsh, Pir Badshah and Sardar Nishtar, the three independent members, could be induced to join the League then it would be possible to achieve a coalition with a bare majority. Though the delegation remained for a couple of days but their endeavours resulted into a failure (Hart, 1985: 191).

The Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa proclaimed Governor's rule in the province as no political leadership succeeded to form a ministry. In 1940 the Congress launched Civil Disobedience Movement which was virtually ineffective in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Quit India Movement in 1942 was also quelled by the British Government without any major difficulty. This policy placed the Congress outside the mainstream of political events and provided the League an opportunity to accelerate its campaign in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, many hurdles were there in the way of forming a League ministry. The Frontier League needed support from the Hindu-Sikh Nationalist MLAs, who did not wish to ally themselves with an organization representing the Muslims of India. After the passage of Lahore Resolution their antipathy increased. The factionalism prevailing within the Frontier League was too a big obstacle. A tug of war for power between Sardar Aurangzeb and K.B. Sadullah Khan was going on. Both of them were rivals for the premiership and each of them considered himself as the national choice for the Frontier League's leadership (Parvez, 1995: 55).

Meanwhile, Quaid-i-Azam was fully aware of the political situation prevailing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and had much knowledge about the political rivalries among the provincial leaders. But it was not the proper time to put ban on the entrance of such individuals in the League. His main purpose at that juncture was to bring all the Muslims under the AIML's flag. The Quaid did not favour that such individuals should be given power or any such responsibility that could create disintegration in the League. According to Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, "Mr. Jinnah told me that he would not give power to such selfish people, but he wanted to bring all the Muslims under the banner of AIML. He advised me that the province should not be given in the hands of those peoples who were disloyal and insincere. He was of the opinion that in case such leaders came into power it would be difficult to get rid of them" (Mujawar, 1985: 95).

At this juncture Sardar Aurangzeb again approached Jinnah and discussed the matter in Delhi who after much considerations provided his approval. While returning from Delhi, Aurangzeb made a whirlwind visit of the province. He was supported by the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and two other bureaucrats, Iskandar Mirza and Sheikh Mehboob Ali. The Central Government was also interested in the formation of a League ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In September Feroz Khan Noon, member of the Viceroy Executive Council, was deputed in order to discuss the matter with George Cunningham. The total strength of the provincial legislature remained forty till January, 1943 because five members had died, three had accepted services under the Crown and two were in prison. So, for the formation of a League ministry the support of at least twenty out of forty was essential (Shah, 2000: 141-142).

Sardar Aurangzeb was of the view that he could endure a ministry so long as the Congress members remained in prison. He then began to negotiate with the members of the assembly as part of his constant efforts. As a result of war he was enjoying full assistance from Sir George Cunningham and the deputy commissioners of various districts. The formula or strategy of give and take was applied for the sake of forming the ministry. Abdul Ghafur of Prang, a Congress member in the legislature, was provided with a job in Bhopal and left the province. Pir Bakhsh was appointed public prosecutor at Peshawar and resigned his seat. Some other members were either promised ministries or parliamentary secretaryships. Aurangzeb asked Nishtar to join the ministry. But Nishtar was not in favour of forming a ministry with the help of Hindus-Sikh Nationalists. He perceived that such a ministry would meet the same fate as that of Sir Qayum. (Schofield, 1984: 141).

According to Nishtar, "I opposed the idea of forming a Muslim League dominated ministry because of the unfavourable circumstances like high prices and shortage of food and cloth etc." (Mujawar, 1985: 104) However, Nishtar was convinced by Sardar Aurangzeb to join the ministry. Ajit Singh of Kohat, a Sikh member in the assembly, was attracted by providing a ministry. Moreover, it was resolved to safeguard the rights of the ministries. The winter of 1942-43 was spent by Sardar Aurangzeb in travelling up and down in the province, collecting supporters for the League. Sardar Ajit Singh of Akali Dal, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, an independent member and Samin Jan, a staunch Congressite, were promised ministries by Sardar Aurangzeb Khan.

The Governor George Cunningham was demanding a list of twenty-two staunch supporters of Aurangzeb while he had only sixteen firm supporters by that time. On the advice of Viceroy, Cunningham made his mind flexible and agreed to be contented with those sixteen supporters with the hope that five more members would be joining his group in due course. An extra-ordinary meeting between Aurangzeb and Cunningham was held on 24 May 1943 in which the former assured the latter of his wholehearted assistance on the question of war and promised to accept the already authorised budget. Consequently, the Governor formally invited Aurganzeb to form the ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As a result on 25 May 1943 a Muslim League ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was sworn in under the Chief Ministership of Sardar Aurangzeb Khan. His Cabinet included Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar (Finance), Mohammad Samin Jan (Education), Abdur Rahman Khan (Information) and Sardar Ajit Singh (Public Works).

### **The Performance of the Ministry**

As a matter of fact, under the premiership of Sardar Aurangzeb Khan the first Muslim League Ministry, thus came into power as a result of prolonged and hectic political efforts on behalf of both the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muslim League and the AIML especially the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Thus, the Muslim League ultimately succeeded in weaning Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from the yoke of the Congress. The formation of this ministry was regarded as a new ray of hope for the Muslims of India in general and for the Muslims of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. The Congress blamed the authorities of conspiring against the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by installing the League ministry without popular support. It was termed as a reactionary and puppet ministry by the Congress.

The first concern of the League ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the forthcoming by-elections to the seven vacant seats of the provincial legislature. In July 1943 by-elections were held for four Muslims and two Hindus seats while the polling for the Sikh seat was postponed for the time being. The Muslim League High Command deputed Khaliqzaman and Jamal Mian in order to assist the Frontier League in the election campaign. During these by-elections, what Quaid-i-Azam said on 20 July 1943 signifies the emergent power and importance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muslim League. In a message the Quaid observed:

All India's eyes are today towards you. If you fail in your duty you will shock all the Musalmans of India. The Musalmans of India have great faith and hopes in you and believe that you will be unconquerable soldiers of Islam like your unconquerable rocks and through you Islam in India will be able to revive the glorious past (National Archives of Pakistan, File No. 221).

On the other hand the Congress in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was divided into two groups on the question of participation in the by-elections. The group led by Dr. Khan Sahib was in favour of contesting the election while the other group led by Sher Ali Khan thought that after the Congress declaration of complete independence during Quit India Movement, it should not participate in the by-elections. Consequently, all the four Muslim seats were won by the League's nominees while the Hindu seats went to the Congress.

The Muslim League ministry made continuous efforts through such policies that could satisfy the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and make the province prosperous during the fragile situation of war. The ministry took legislative measures ensuring liberal financial measures. After a lapse of three years and eight months the provincial legislature met for the first time on 17 August 1943. Immediately the ministry introduced and passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister's salaries and the Speaker's and Deputy Speakers Salaries (Amendment) Bills. During this period only ten Acts were passed which carried little significance.

The historic Lahore Resolution brought about a major change in the minds of the Muslims of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and that situation helped the provincial Muslim League in strengthening its base though growing public support. The Frontier League had already participated in large number in the Lahore session of AIML in 1940. The historic resolution demanding a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent was seconded by Sardar Aurangzeb Khan. The Frontier Leaguers conveyed to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the new policy and future programme of the AIML. They urged the people to join the League and provide their full support to the idea of Pakistan. It seems to be pertinent here that before the passage of the Lahore Resolution in 1940, the Frontier League was generally considered as an organization established in the reaction of Frontier Congress. But after the adoption of the Lahore Resolution the future course of action of AIML became obvious to everyone that this very political organization of the Muslims of India would not accept anything less than a separate homeland for themselves. As a result with rejuvenated enthusiasm the members of the League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa began to approach the Muslim masses directly in the pursuit of a separate homeland for the Muslims (GoP, National Archives, 1901).

In this context the most sensitive question for Aurangzeb's ministry was to pass a resolution in favour of Pakistan. This question was bound to cause problems with the minorities in general and Sardar Ajit

Singh in particular. So, Aurangzeb tried to keep low but K.B. Sadullah Khan, a prominent Leaguer was not in a mood to compromise. Hence, thereafter he urged the ministers to declare their policy about Pakistan. He further expressed the view that Aurangzeb had been given the name as "Lion of the Frontiers" and had been heard roaring whenever there was a meeting he pleaded the cause of Pakistan and that is why I (Sadullah Khan) wished that he should declare his policy on this point"(National Archives of Pakistan, 1901: File No. 219).

In the meanwhile, there emerged uproars in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and that hampered the smooth running of the legislature. Although from September 1943 Aurangzeb's ministry released more than thousand Congress members detained in different jails of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa yet no Congress member of legislature was released. Some noteworthy of the province approached the Governor, George Cunningham to release the Congress members of the assembly. The government decided to release the detainees but in different phases in order to keep the number of the opposition less than ministerial party in the legislature. When the government released six members of the assembly it brought the total strength of the opposition members to twenty. Thus the opposition demanded the Governor to convene the session of the assembly but he rejected the demand on the plea that there was not enough legislative business to be carried out.

The decision not to convene the session of the assembly demonstrated obviously that the Governor was sure of a no-confidence motion by the opposition (Shah, 2000: 145). Aurangzeb left no stone unturned and managed to side-track the issue raised by his rivals. On the other hand, clear factionalism existed within the fold of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muslim League on different issues especially on the question of a clear cut resolve on the demand for Pakistan. The matter took such a serious turn that in November 1944 Sadullah Khan wrote a detailed letter to Quaid-i-Azam complaining the attitude of Sardar Aurangzeb towards him and the organization. Sadullah Khan expressed, "I know Aurangzeb very well and his so-called sincerity to the organization, but still I will follow him because the party discipline requires it. But throughout his period of premiership Aurangzeb has never spared me and my family members in putting us in all sorts of disgrace and trouble". Criticising Aurangzeb further, he said that after the formation of the ministry no meeting was held and no member of Muslim League was taken into confidence regarding the policies of the government (National Archives of Pakistan, File No. 219).

Thus the position of Aurangzeb became weak not only in the provincial legislature but also in the Frontier Muslim League fold. On 24 October 1943 a meeting of the provincial League Council was held in which a resolution was tabled by a very prominent Leaguer expressing no-confidence in the ministry. But at the end of the session it was agreed upon to withdraw the motion and request the Quaid to come to the province to deal with the fragile situation prevailing in the province with particular reference to the matter related with the functioning of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muslim League.

Reports about the factionalism and mismanagement within the Muslim League fold were also extended up to the high command level of the AIML by others as well. For instance, the editor of the weekly "*Mazloom Dunya*" of Peshawar, Abdur Rehman Riya and Taj Ali Khan, a firm supporter of Aurangzeb wrote to the Quaid about the political crisis of the Frontier League. While replying to that letter what the Quaid said that seems to be worth reproducing:

The centre is doing its best to help and guide, but the root is in the province itself, and it is therefore, upto you all to work selflessly for the cause and establish solidarity amongst those who understand better, to begin with, and create complete unity and discipline amongst our people (Quaid-i-Azam Paper, 1939).

Consequently at the beginning of 1944, a Committee of Action was formed on behalf of the AIML for solving the organizational conflict in Frontier Muslim League. In June the Committee of Action arrived in

Peshawar. The Committee included Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawab of Mamdot, Qazi Mohammad Isa, Nawab Ismail Khan, Haji Sattar Essack Sait and G.M. Syed. The members of the Committee visited the whole province but organizational disunity and conflict persisted continuously (Easwaran, 1985: 221). The Finance Minister of Aurangzeb's Cabinet, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar was also dissatisfied about the working of the ministry. In January 1944, when the Working Committee of the AIML was formed, Nishtar was nominated by the Quaid as its member. During the course of correspondence with the Quaid he convinced him that the ministry had damaged the League's image in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and it would continue to do more harm if it existed any longer. Nishtar proposed that the ministry should resign without any delay. All this sort of problems forced the Quaid to take a strong action. Hence, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet along with its premier was called by the Quaid to Delhi in December 1944 and asked them all to resign. The premier requested the Quaid to provide another opportunity to his ministry to continue (Mujawar, 1985). Though the ministry continued its work with the permission of the Quaid but the factionalism within the party still continued.

On the other hand, George Cunningham was well aware of the weak position of Aurangzeb in the assembly, hence, the former informed the Viceroy Lord Wavell about the insecure position of the League ministry, which was in all probability to be defeated in the forthcoming session of the assembly on the question of budget. Further it was difficult to keep the League ministry in office because another session of the provincial legislature could not be postponed any longer. The session of the assembly was called in March 1945. The budget session was held on 9 March and following the presentation of the budget for the year 1945-46, a no-confidence motion was tabled against Aurangzeb's ministry. Dr. Khan Sahib, the mover, blamed the ministry of deliberately keeping the Congress members of the provincial legislature in prison to perpetuate their rule and also charged the ministry with gross misconduct and corruption.

Aurangzeb refuted the charges levelled against him and about corruption he stated that corruption started with Adam and will end on doomsday. He drew the attention of the legislature towards the work conducted during his tenure and expressed that the government had deeds and no words to justify his government. The no-confidence motion was carried out in the legislature by twenty-three to eighteen. Among these twenty three members, three were from the League who supported the motion. The ministers formally tender their resignation and on 16 March the Governor invited Dr. Khan Sahib to form his ministry (Quaid-i-Azam Paper, 1939). As a result, once again Dr. Khan Sahib formed his ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The most prominent figure of the Frontier League, K.B. Sadullah Khan also voted against Sardar Aurangzeb's ministry. He stated in detail why he cast the vote of no-confidence against the ministry. He expressed that Aurangzeb and his colleagues in the Cabinet were abusing the Muslim League and were committing fraud upon the Muslim population and upon the Leaguers of the province. They were involved in different sorts of corruption and mismanagement. Nepotism was the rule of the day. To serve the people and promote the League's interest was a remote possibility.

Since then the Muslim League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was divided into two groups. The first one led by Sardar Aurangzeb Khan while the other group was headed by Khan Sadullah Khan. Quaid-i-Azam considered that it would be in the interest of Frontier League, if Sardar Aurangzeb was replaced by Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar as the party leader. When the Quaid intimated Nishtar about the circumstances and his conclusion he (Nishtar) did not agree with this idea for the Congress was a well-organized party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the League in Frontier was already divided into two groups. He opened that if Sardar Aurangzeb was removed from the party leadership at this stage, it would create further disintegration.

The Quaid wanted to replace Aurangzeb as he considered his leadership harmful for the Muslim League from a national point of view. But Nishtar requested him to forego his plan and wait for the ripe time to implement it. Thus Aurangzeb remained the party leader. Nishtar was anxious for the unity among the Muslims as well as in the Muslim League. From the aforementioned discourse it can be safely concluded that



selfishness was mainly responsible for the ultimate termination of the first Muslim League ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, the Muslim League somehow sustained as a result of the sincere efforts and sacrifices of the AIML leadership and Abdur Rab Nishtar's sincere approach.

### Conclusion

The First Ministry of the Muslim League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa came into existence on 25 May 1943 under the premiership of Sardar Aurangzeb Khan. The ministry worked for about two years. During this period many ups and downs were visible in the political arena of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general, and the Frontier Muslim League in particular. The League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa found a favourable political environment for propagating its ideology and party programme when the relationship between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the British government deteriorated on the question of war (Second World War). The Congress ministries ultimately resigned and launched agitation against the British Raj. That deadlock between the two paved the way for the All-India Muslim League (AIML) to popularise its manifesto in the Muslim majority provinces of the British India.

As a matter of fact Muslim League's ascendancy was not a sudden phenomenon in the province rather the popularity of the League owes to the prolonged efforts and endeavours of the founding fathers of the frontier Muslim League. In that respect the especial attention towards the province paid by the high ups of the All-India Muslim League before the creation of Pakistan contributed enormously in the progress. Such solid foundation played a pivotal role in undoing the fame of the local political forces on the one hand and cultivating fame for the Muslim League on the other.

Though Sardar Aurangzeb formed the first Muslim League ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but after a little while a rift which already existed between Sardar Aurangzeb and K.B. Sadullah Khan on the question of premiership, reached to its peak. Soon the ministry became the target of multi-dimensional criticism, due to certain alleged malpractices such as corruption, misuse of power and nepotism which negatively affected the Muslim League in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Time and again the AIML under the charismatic and dynamic leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah endeavoured to induce harmony and integration in the Frontier Muslim League but with limited success. Ultimately the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Aurangzeb and his Cabinet met their due fate when the ministry was dissolved through a successful vote of no-confidence in the provincial assembly.

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