

# ***Leftist Politics in British India: A Case Study of the Muslim Majority Provinces***

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## **Abstract**

*The paper is related with the history and political developments of the various organizations and movements that espoused a Marxist, leftist and socialist approach in their policy formulation. The approach is to study the left's political landscape within the framework of the Muslim majority provinces which comprised Pakistan after 1947. The paper would deal those political groups, parties, organizations and personalities that played significant role in the development of progressive, socialist and non-communal politics during the British rule. Majority of these parties and groups merged together in the post-1947 period to form the National Awami Party (NAP) in July 1957. It is essentially an endeavour to understand the direction of their political orientation in the pre-partition period to better comprehend their position in the post-partition Pakistan. The ranges of the study are much wide in the sense that it covers all the provinces of the present day Pakistan, including former East Pakistan. It would also take up those political figures that were influenced by socialist ideas but, at the same time, worked for the Muslim League to broaden its mass organization. In a nutshell the purpose of the article is to*

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*study the pre-partition political strategies, line of thinking and ideological orientation of the components which in the post-partition period merged into the NAP in 1957.*

### **Introduction**

In the domain of politics, leftist and rightist are two main ideological positions that demonstrate a party's or a group's position and orientation. These classifications were introduced during the French Revolution of 1789. Initially the "Left" was called "the party of movement" and the "Right" was termed as "the party of order". The anti-monarchy members of the Estate General generally used to sit to the left of the Speaker while those members who supported the king usually reserved the benches on the right of the Speaker. Since 1917, a leftist party has had some specific features that make it distinct from other competing political parties. These may be (i) well-entrenched representation in organization (ii) anti-status quo and secularism (iii) pro-Soviet Union or pro-China stand with socialist political agenda and (iv) abhorrence towards capitalism, USA and Britain.

When the Government of India Act 1935 was implemented the Indian people generally associated with Indian National Congress and All-India Muslim League. There were other factions and groups working for their particular objectives. Neither all the Hindus nor Muslims threw their weight behind these two big parties. In the Muslim majority provinces there emerged other political parties and groups which challenged the Muslim League and posed serious threats to its expansion. The Muslims' fear that they would be politically wiped out, took hold largely in the provinces where the Hindu population was dominant. In the Muslim majority provinces around which the state of Pakistan eventually was to be carved out, there was a general absence of this fear. This clearly demonstrates the Muslim League's position in those areas in which it needed support for its demand for a Pakistan. In the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), (which became Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment), and

Sindh, the Muslim League's record in parliamentary politics was poor. The Muslim League failed miserably to win a majority in the elections of 1937 and 1945-46. It was the Khudai Khidmatgar Movement (the Red Shirts), aligned with the Congress Party, who enjoyed grass-roots support in the province. In Sindh, the political situation was not much different for the League. Politics was considered a game of musical chair among the big landlords.<sup>1</sup> Similarly in Balochistan a movement called Anjuman-i-Ittehad-i-Balochistan [Movement for the Unification of Balochistan] began to develop in 1920s with the purpose to unify all the Baloch people to establish Greater Balochistan. Later on, in 1937 the movement transformed itself into the Kalat State National Party. Then there was the Communist Party of India (CPI) which followed an ambiguous and often changing course of action.<sup>2</sup>

The political and administrative system bequeathed Pakistan by the colonial power nevertheless still haunts and continues to exert a profound influence. In the areas which nowadays comprise that state, the British Raj had stressed more the requirements of law and order than those of political representation. Political participation was never encouraged and political consciousness was least developed among the masses. Direct access of the political leaders to the people was denied while the power of the civil administration was augmented by strategic alliances with big landlords and local power wielders. Describing this state of affairs, Ian Talbot states:

The [other] dominant feature of the British administration in the north-west security area was the co-option of local landed elites. This not only retarded political institutionalization, but reinforced a culture of clientalism. It also placed insuperable barriers in the way

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1 Khalid B. Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), 58.

2 The political orientation and approaches of the Communist Party of India was best analyzed and presented by Puran Chand Joshi who remained the first General Secretary of the CPI from 1935 to 1947. See for details P. C. Joshi, *For the Final Bid for Power: The Communist Plan Explained* (Bombay: Peoples Publishing House).

of future socio-economic reform by establishing the basis for a dominant landlord political interest.<sup>3</sup>

The provincial administration of the future state of Pakistan suppressed dissent voices and any opposition was subjected to ruthless punishment. In all, the traditional characteristics of the British colonial empire were authoritarianism, exhibiting tendency towards extra-constitutional measures, the personalization of political authority and deep intolerance towards opposition parties that work for class struggle and followed left ideologies. The British administration never tolerated the spread of socialist ideas among the masses and stern measures were taken against the parties involved in such activities.

Surprisingly, both before and after independence, the targets of repression were mostly those leftist political organizations which later on merged to form the NAP in 1957. These movements were popular in the areas in which they operated, and most had been aligned with the Congress. It is, therefore, useful to understand the nature and direction of the political ideologies developed by these parties in the pre-partition period. This paper is an effort to explore the history of leftist politics in the pre-partition context.

### **Left Politics in Sindh**

When the British government made Sindh a part of the Bombay Presidency, as a reaction to it a popular movement developed as early as in 1917. Although landlords and other influential leaders were at the forefront but the rural support from the general masses transformed it into a national movement for gaining more share and provincial autonomy. Slogans like *Sindhu Desh* were chanted from the platforms during this time which resulted in infusing more nationalist feelings among the masses.<sup>4</sup> New leftist political groups

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3 Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 60.

4 Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, n.d), 70.

emerged on the provincial horizon. Abdul Majid Sindhi formed Sindh Azad Party on August 18, 1932 with an objective of working for an autonomous Sindh state. Having a progressive vision, the party stood for the realization of working for the under-privileged sections of the province. It stood for minimising social inequalities among different sections of the society and establishing an egalitarian system.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, a Sindh Hari (Peasant) Committee was set up in 1931 to upgrade the situation of the poor farmers and protecting their political and social rights. Its founding leaders included Abdul Qadir, Jamshed Nasrwanji, Jethmal Parsaram, G. M. Syed and Abdul Majid Sindhi.<sup>6</sup> In the beginning, the society demonstrated its connection with all-India *Kissan Sabha* which clearly revealed its communist mark-up.<sup>7</sup> Cesar P. Pobre is of the view that the formation of the Sindh Hari Committee was not very well known. From the very beginning, the committee stood for the cause of better working conditions for the *haris*. But their clamour

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5 Monthly *Al-Wahid*, August 19, 1936. Also See Muhammad Qasim Soomro, *Muslim Politics in Sindh: 1938-1947* (Jamshoro: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Sindh, 1989), 28.

6 Comrade Abdul Qadir was born in Larkana and worked in the Karachi Port Trust. He was much active in the labourers and workers union. He was one of the founding members of the Sindh Hari Committee and later became its General Secretary. In the post-partition period, he joined the NAP and worked with G. M. Syed and died on January 21, 1961. Abdul Majid Sindhi was the son of a Hindu businessman Dewan Lilaram. He was born on July 7, 1889 in Thatta, Sindh. His Hindu name was Jethanand, which was changed to Abdul Majid after his conversion to Islam in 1908. He started his political career as a political secretary to Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgari, a Sindh nationalist freedom fighter. He took part in *Reshmi Roomal Tahreek* and joined Congress in 1914. He participated in most of the Annual Sessions of the All-India Congress. He was imprisoned for many times during the British days. The movement for the separation of Sindh from Bombay made him diverted to Muslim politics and thus he joined All India Muslim League. This sincere and humble freedom fighter breathed his last on May 24, 1978. For detailed study see Soomro, *Muslim Politics in Sindh*.

7 Sobho Giyan Chandani and Aslam Rahil Mirza, *Sindh kai Chand Inqilabi Danishwar aur Awami Rahnuma*, [Urdu: Some Revolutionary Intellectuals and Leaders of Sindh] (Lahore: Alfaz Publications, 1992), 22. Also see Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan 1947-1958*, vol. I (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2002), 159.

could not have had more than a cold shoulder treatment.<sup>8</sup> In 1945, Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi joined Sindh Hari Committee who made strenuous struggle with leaders like Abdul Ghafoor Jan Sirhindi, Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi, Moulvi Nazir Hussain, Abdul Qadir and Ghulam Muhammad Leghari. These leaders changed it from mere a pressure group to virtually a strong political party in Sindh. Its approach was anti-*jagirdari* [Urdu: anti-feudalism] and the formation of a progressive welfare state on socialist lines. Due to its socialist leaning, the establishment always suspected it as a communist-inspired organization. Its President Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi, time and again refuted these charges but many people still believed that the Sindh Hari Committee and Sindh Communist Party were like “twin brothers”.<sup>9</sup>

In 1937, the first government of Sindh was formed with G. H. Hidayatullah as its first chief minister. Most of his ministers came from the assembly's Baloch group while its rival, the Syed group, was led by G. M. Syed. By March 1938, political opposition within the assembly increased to Hidayatullah and he abdicated the slot in favour of Allah Bakhsh Soomro. The overthrow of the ministry was mainly the work of G. M. Syed, Pir Ali Muhammad Rashidi with the support of the Hindu and the Congress groups in the Assembly.<sup>10</sup> G. M. Syed wanted to exert great influence over the policy of the new ministry but it was unacceptable for Soomro. The Land Assessment Act was a contentious issue between the two rival groups. To resolve the matter once for all, G. M. Syed even sought the help of Abul Kalam Azad and Sardar Patel. But to his utter dismay, they did not take much interest in the issue and deemed it undue interference in the Congress provincial affairs.<sup>11</sup> This political development in Sindh proved very productive for the Muslim League. Many politicians who resented this state of affairs

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8 Cesar P. Pobre, “History of Political Parties in Pakistan 1947-1958” (Karachi: Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Karachi), 82.

9 The daily *Dawn*, Karachi, September 16, 1950.

10 Pobre, “History of Political Parties in Pakistan 1947-1958”, 96.

11 Pobre, “History of Political Parties in Pakistan 1947-1958”.

joined the League. For example Abdullah Haroon, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and Bandeh Ali Talpur were among some prominent leaders who switched over to the League. Later on G. M. Syed along with his supporters Pir Ali Rashidi, Miran Muhammad, Muhammad Ali Shah and Ghulam Hyder Shah also joined the League. G. M. Syed's joining the League proved successful for the party as he struggled hard for making it a mass organization in the province. He had considerable influence among the *haris*, *zamindars* [Urdu: landlords], *pirs* [Urdu: spiritual leaders] and Syed members of the Sindh society.

The historic session of the Sindh Provincial Muslim League was called from October 8 to 10, 1938 by Sir Abdullah Haroon. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, A. K. Fazl-ul-Haq, Allah Bakhsh Soomro and Saadullah Khan, premiers of the Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and Assam respectively participated in the conference. Sindh was represented in addition to its premier by Pir Ilahi Bakhsh, Abdullah Haroon, G. M. Syed and Muhammad Jamal Khan Leghari. At that time there were four major groups in the Sindh Assembly: Allah Bakhsh Soomro and his supporters Pir Ilahi Bakhsh with six members, Hidayatullah group consisted of thirteen members, Mir Bandeh Ali, the leader of the Baloch group had the support of seven members and G. M. Syed who led the Syed group with the support of six members. In March 1940, the Soomro government collapsed due to the incident of Masjid Mazilgah and the large-scale communal riots in Sukkur.<sup>12</sup> On March 18, 1940 Bandeh Ali, leader of the Sindh Nationalist Party formed the new ministry in Sindh. Nehachaldas Vazirani, Muhammad Ayub Khurho, Abdul Majid Sindhi and G. M. Syed were taken as ministers. Besides, Jinnah elevated him to the position of Chairman of the Sindh Muslim League Organizing Committee which he set up during the last month of 1940. The relationship of G. M. Syed with the All-India Muslim League was quite friendly in those days as he presented the Pakistan Resolution in the

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12 Sherbaz Khan Mazari, *A Journey to Disillusionment* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 40.

Sindh Assembly on March 3, 1943. He was also instrumental in consolidating the League in Sindh. It was mainly due to his efforts that the League was able to establish its strong presence in the province during the annual session held in Karachi on December 24-26, 1943.<sup>13</sup>

After some time, differences emerged between G. M. Syed, and G. H. Hidayatullah, premier of Sindh. G. M. Syed influenced the Provincial Working Committee which demanded the resignation of the ministry on July 7, 1944. The issue of the poor *haris* was also raised in the subsequent development by the progressive section in the League headed by G. M. Syed. Efforts were then made by him to win the confidence of the downtrodden sections of the society so as to maximise his influence in the League. Meanwhile, G. M. Syed was nominated for membership in the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League. After World War II, developments took a new turn in India. The Communist Party of India started supporting Muslim self-determination.

Against this backdrop, the Sindh Hari Committee also exhibited support for the Pakistan Movement. The committee was of the view that the poor *haris* would get relief in the new dispensation from cruel Hindu *mahajans* [Hindi: moneylenders]. Moreover, they would be able to get some land and a new era of prosperity would open, free from feudal exploitation.<sup>14</sup>

The struggle for power between the president of the Muslim League and the premier was also increasing in bitterness, tinged by a shadow of traditional rivalry between Mirs and Syeds. G. H. Hidayatullah enjoyed the support of Khurho, Yusuf Haroon and the Mir group, whereas the Syed group was well-entrenched in the Sindh Muslim League Committee. G. M. Syed was also supported by Hashim Gazdar and Abdul Majid Sindhi. To minimise the strength of his rival group, G. M. Syed openly supported his progressive

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13 Somroo, *Muslim Politics in Sindh*, 78.

14 The daily *Dawn*, Karachi, August 28, 1948.

and socialist nominees for election to the League Council. It is an established fact that the League expanded its tentacles in the province and fully exploited the abilities of G. M. Syed. The party was able to set up its offices in all the big cities of the province. The Muslim League established some 547 branches across the province. This was a swift increase of its performance over the preceding years, when it had only 474 branches.

G. M. Syed frequently criticised the provincial ministry in the working committee meetings. Quaid-i-Azam, however, always scolded him and expressed resentment over his haughty behaviour. Despite this, Syed bypassed the instructions of Jinnah and tried to upset the provincial Sindh Muslim League ministry.<sup>15</sup> Sir Francis Mudie, governor of Sindh, was eyewitness to these developments and was greatly concerned about the political intrigues in the province. His observation regarding this state of affairs is worthy of mention here:

I don't know what will happen when our Assembly meets at the end of this month or in July. There are the usual stories that Khurho, in league with Sayed, will try to upset Sir Ghulam. On the other hand, Khurho is afraid that Sir Ghulam will intrigue with Sayed and the Hindus of his party to oust him. It is possible, too, that Bendeh Ali will try some more of his tricks as he is dissatisfied at not being Home Minister.<sup>16</sup>

The announcement of the elections of 1946 provided an opportunity for both factions to show their importance and strength. However, this time the situation was set against the Syed group as it had alienated itself from the central leadership of the Muslim League. Even before the election, the issue of allocating place on the party ticket to deserving candidates remained a bone of contention between the two groups. This issue eventually affected the Provincial League Council. G. M. Syed lost his post as president of Sindh chapter of the Muslim League and he was expelled from the primary membership of the All-India Muslim League. He

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15 The daily *Dawn*, Karachi, August 28, 1948.

16 Sir Francis Moudie's letter to Lord Wavell dated June 11, 1946.

responded by tendering his resignation from the Working Committee on December 26, 1945. Having parted ways with the parent organization, he decided to contest the election on his own under the banner of Progressive League. In the elections to be held on January 21, 1946 all 16 seats were contested by his dissident group.<sup>17</sup> The Sindh Muslim League contested all 35 Muslim seats, whereas the pro-Congress Muslims, under the leadership of Haji Maula Bakhsh, also put up candidates. The results are shown in the Table 1.

**Table 1: Election 1946 Results**

<b>Parties</b>	<b>Seats</b>
Muslim League	27
Congress	21
Progressive League	4
Nationalist Muslims	4
European	3
Labour	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

During subsequent political developments, the Syed group joined with the Congress and nationalist Muslim members of the assembly to successfully form a coalition party under the leadership of G. M. Syed. The Muslim League tried to form government with the support of the Congress. But at the end of negotiations, the latter proposed an all-parties coalition government. Jinnah, however, refused to have any truck or trade with the Syed group unless he repented and surrendered unconditionally. Political chaos in the Sindh Assembly mounted to such an extent that the Governor dissolved the Assembly and appointed a caretaker government of the Muslim League and announced future elections to be held in December 1946.

17 G. M. Syed, *Awaz-i-Sindh*, [Urdu: Voice of Sindh] Urdu translation from Sindhi by Mujeeb Inqilabee (Karachi: Indus Publications, 2003), 107.

In the December elections the Sindh Muslim League exploited all the recourses on its disposal to defeat the Syed group. The result of the elections revealed startling fact in the sense that Muslim League won 33 out of 35 Muslim seats while Syed group was defeated on all except one seat. In the following days, controversies emanated about the alleged involvement of the Muslim League members in the unfair means to get the desired results. The rigging charges against the League members were put up by a tribunal on the petition of G. M. Syed after the creation of Pakistan. The tribunal later on decided in favour of G. M. Syed and declared him successful in his election constituency.<sup>18</sup> It was the time, when the Pakistan Movement intensified in the Muslim majority provinces due to large-scale massacre of the Muslims by Hindu and Sikh extremists, a situation that forced the Progressive League to back the League's demand for a separate state; Pakistan. This decision was probably influenced by Jinnah's assurance that in Pakistan every province would have complete autonomy. Meanwhile, the Sindh Provincial Assembly convened a special session on June 26, 1947 which decided in favour of Pakistan.

Later, G. M. Syed stood for an autonomous Sindh and not for Pakistan. He alleged the leadership of the Muslim League was working for a highly dictatorial and unitary political setup with little or no room for provincial autonomy. Considering the Pakistan Movement to be a product of irrational emotionalism, he favoured an "Independent Peoples' Republic of Sindh."<sup>19</sup> He argued that Islam was being used by the Muslim League to maintain a reactionary

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18 Syed, *Awaz-i-Sindh*, 107.

19 Ibrahim Joyo, *Save Sindh, Save the Continent* (Karachi: Agtae Kadam Printers, 1947), 4; also see Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, ed., *Foundations of Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1970), 73, Syed Mussaver Hussain Bokhari, "Pakistan Ethnic Nationalism and Politics of Integration" (Bahawalpur: Unpublished PhD Thesis, Islamia University Bahawalpur, 1999), 71, and Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, n.d.), 70.

and corrupt social and political system in Sindh and remarked:

Do not forget that Islamic society actually in existence is that in which its religious head is an ignorant *mullah*, spiritual leader an immoral *pir*, political guide a power intoxicated feudal lord and whose helpless members are subjected to all the worldly forces of money and influence. If the really important question about the abolition of *jagirdari* and *zamindari* crops up or the prohibition of intoxicants becomes the issue of the day, what would not a rich *jagirdar* or an aristocratic member of a sophisticated do to use his influence, as also that of the *mullah* and the *pir*, to resist this threat to what is essentially an immoral and un-Islamic cause.<sup>20</sup>

### **Emergence of Khudai Khidmatgar Organization in NWFP**

Although NWFP had an overwhelming Muslim majority population, there existed no organized Muslim League in the province at the time of the 1937 elections. The election barely revealed the League's standing in the province where it fielded no candidate to contest the elections. On the other hand, a provincial Congress Committee had been formed as early as 1928. Its members were either Hindus or urban Muslims. However, the party never enjoyed mass support in the countryside. It was when Abdul Ghaffar Khan brought his *Khudai Khidmatgar* organization into the Congress fold that it received mass support from the Pakhtun population. The dynamic success of Abdul Ghaffar Khan should be understood from his emphasis on ethnic Pakhtun identity and the articulation of Pakhtunwali [Pushto: The way of the Pathans] in the *Khudai Khidmatgar* political manifestation.

Abdul Ghaffar was an outstanding nationalist leader who established *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement in 1929. The idea of Pakhtun nationalism was propagated in the monthly *Pakhtun* magazine which he launched in 1928. The *Khudai Khidmatgar* came into prominence in connection with the Congress-led Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 which became very dramatic in NWFP due to their active participation. Most of the supporters of this movement were small khans who wielded great influence in the rural areas of

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20 G. M. Sayed, *Struggle for New Sindh* (Karachi: n.p., 1949), 216.

the province. The small khans' support of the movement was because of the negligence of their interest by the British Government. This, however, became a major weakness of the government during the 1930s unrest in the province. The big khan's failure to control the mass uprising was a big challenge for the British Government. Faced with acute political unrest in the province, the administration resorted to open indiscriminate fire on the unarmed followers of *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Within a short span of time, the *Khudai Khidmatgar* made a considerable headway among the rural Pakhtuns, although, thanks to its emphasis on Pakhtun identity which had very little effect on the non-Pakhtuns, who largely remained outside from its political orbit.<sup>21</sup> The social base of the organization, however, was confined to the rural Pakhtun-dominated areas. Its secular outlook in political matters and its cross-communal claim brought it too close to the Congress leaders who were eager to enlist its support for strengthening their position in such an important Muslim majority province. According to Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah different people interpreted *Khudai Khidmatgar* differently:

To the Pakhtun intelligentsia, it was a movement for the revival of Pakhtun culture with its distinct identity. To the smaller Khans, it was a movement that demanded political reforms for the province that would enfranchise them and give them a greater role in the governance. Its anti-colonial stand suited the majority of anti-establishment ulema, who always regarded British rule in the subcontinent as a curse. For the peasants and other poor classes it was against their economic oppressors: British imperialism and its agents, the pro-British Nawabs, Khan Bahadurs and the big Khans.<sup>22</sup>

In 1931, the formal affiliation of the organization with the Congress brought Abdul Ghaffar Khan on the larger scene of

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21 Once Abdul Ghaffar Khan outraged non-Pakhtun population of the Hazara in a speech. He declared while speaking in a political gathering that "when we have self-government we will have everything in Pashto". S. Rittenburg "The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province: 1901-1947" (Colombia: Unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University), 176.

22 Syed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Province 1937-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28.

the Indian politics. He started province-wide agitation against the policies of the British government. Hundreds of activists lost their lives in demonstrations. A ban on the political activities was imposed and martial law was declared. Apart from many other causes of agitation in the province during 1930, one basic reason was the absence of political reforms in the province.<sup>23</sup>

In the elections of 1937, the Congress won a dominant position winning 19 seats in an Assembly of 50. The Muslim League had been unable to field a single candidate but there was a group of 21 Muslim independent members who opposed the political views of the Congress and were close to the British authorities. With the support of the British governor of the province, they formed a short-lived ministry with Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan as Chief Minister.<sup>24</sup> However, it was toppled and a Congress-led coalition ministry was formed under the leadership of Dr. Khan Sahib, brother of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The Congress Civil Disobedience of 1940 and the subsequent Quit India Movement of 1942 brought some serious repercussions for the *Khudai Khidmatgar* organization in the province. It was left almost leaderless after the internment of most of its high-profile members. It was not until 1943, that Aurangzeb Khan, the Muslim League leader in the provincial assembly, managed to form a ministry. Owing to the absence of a real party organization and comprehensive political programme, the ministry could not hold together for long. Performance of the League in the province was thus miserable which was also recognized by the central League organization. The Muslim League members had often fought as much among themselves as against the Congress. Qazi Isa of the Balochistan Muslim League was entrusted with the task of

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23 Himayatullah, "Jinnah, Muslim League and Constitutional Reforms in the NWFP", in *Pakistan Historical Society LV* (January-June 2007): 152.

24 Sir Shaibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan was a pro-British Pakhtun reformist who, like Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan, was the champion of educational reformation among the inhabitants of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He founded Islamia College Peshawar in 1913 with the help of British officials like Olaf Caroe, Roose Keppel etc.

reorganizing the party in the province. He was unable to transform the deteriorated League into a well-disciplined organization. Some Leaguers in the province criticized him for misleading Jinnah about the actual situation.<sup>25</sup> The parochial interest and lust for power of most of the League members thus hindered the work of Muslim League, which was at that time unable to match the social base of its rival i.e. the *Khudai Khidmatgar*. In the spring of 1945, Dr Khan Sahib once again took over as the Chief Minister of the province. In the elections held in the beginning of 1946, Congress improved its position in the assembly by winning 30 out of 50 seats. This electoral victory in a Muslim majority province was gained largely due to the support of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his movement.

The position of the Congress seemed strong after 1946 elections but the political atmosphere of India had undergone a fundamental change. Indian politics no longer focused on the struggle for freedom. A drastically new situation arose, a realignment of political forces in the province occurred and people who hitherto had taken no interest in politics now found them in the midst of the partition. Several prominent Congress leaders switched over to the Muslim League. Very important role in this regard was played by Amin ul-Hasanat, Pir of Manki Sharif, by organizing Pakistan Conferences in different places. Further boost was provided to the League by almost daily influx of the Congress dissenters including Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, Deputy Parliamentary leader of the Congress in the Central Legislature, Ghulam Muhammad Khan, former Congress President NWFP and Arbab Abdul Ghaffur, one of the organizers of the *Afghan Jirga* in Peshawar. In October 1945, Lord Cunningham reported to the Secretary of State in London: "Well-educated Muslims of the senior official type, who never took much interest in politics before, are

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25 Letter of Ghulam Rab Khan to Jinnah, August 29, 1945 Shamsul Hasan Collection NWFP, 1:58.

becoming almost rapidly anti-Hindu, and therefore pro-Muslim League".<sup>26</sup>

When the Pakistan issue came at the forefront, the situation changed and religious figures assumed powerful position with a crucial role to play. On the other hand, the tribal areas became more and more involved on the side of the Muslim League. The public mood in the province swung away from the idea of inclusion in a Hindu-dominated polity while the communal frenzy in Bihar also heightened tension among the Pakhtun population. In the autumn of 1946, the Muslim League ordered its followers to resort to Direct Action and abandon its constitutionalist approach to politics. On February 20, 1947 Abdul Qayyum Khan was arrested in Mardan where Muslim League had just won a bi-election. This opportunity was largely exploited by the League in deteriorating law and order situation. They launched a Civil Disobedience Movement against the Congress ministry. About 2500 Leaguers had been arrested. The Muslim League politicians intensified their propaganda campaign when the news of the communal riots reached in the province. Meanwhile, the British announced their plan of withdrawal by June 1948.<sup>27</sup>

The newly appointed Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, attempted to resolve the problems himself by visiting the province. He was under the impression that the province either would join Pakistan or opt for India. After thorough deliberation he launched the idea of a referendum in the province. The two alternatives offered to the people were joining either India or Pakistan. The idea was accepted by both Nehru and Gandhi but Ghaffar Khan was absolutely furious. His argument in this regard was that when the political future of the provinces of Punjab and Bengal were given to their respective legislative assemblies, there was no reason why the Frontier Assembly should not have the same

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26 Governor's Report, October 9, 1945, India Office Library and Records, L/P and J/5.

27 Khalid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change* (New York: Praeger Publication, 1980), 23.

right. Instead, he demanded that a third option of an independent Pakhtunistan should be included in the referendum. Three weeks before the referendum, Abdul Ghaffar Khan declared in a public meeting at Bannu that the Congress party would boycott the referendum, and would continue to struggle peacefully for an independent Pakhtunistan.<sup>28</sup> This demand was unacceptable to the British, the Muslim League and the Congress alike, as there was fear of other ethnic groups making similar demands.

The referendum was held in the first half of July. Dr Khan Sahib had promised to resign if the result of the referendum went in favour of Pakistan. The result of the referendum dashed their expectations as the people voted to join Pakistan by 289,244 votes against 2874 for India. When it resulted in an overwhelming victory for Pakistan, Dr Khan Sahib went back on his words. Jinnah then approached Mountbatten for dissolving the ministry but the viceroy found this course difficult for fear of Congress retaliation.<sup>29</sup> However, serious questions were raised about the nature of referendum. As Erland Jansson observed:

The referendum was held under the supervision of the army. But the British officers available were not sufficient to supervise the actual conduct of the polling. That was done instead by the ordinary election staff and they were by and large for the Muslim League. In the absence of election agents representing the Congress, they were on the whole free to do as they wished.<sup>30</sup>

### Left Politics in Bengal

The seeds of Muslim separatism first germinated in the province of Bengal. Historically, the province had close association with the Muslim politics as the All-India Muslim League had been inaugurated in Dhaka in 1906. The Muslim League's performance in the 1937 elections was markedly

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28 Abdul Ghaffar, *Zama Jond aw Jadd-o-Juhad* [Pashto: My Youth and Struggle] (Peshawar: University Book Agency, n.d), 738. Also see Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, 86.

29 Mazari, *A Journey to Disillusionment*, 50.

30 Erland Jansson, "The Frontier Province: The Khudai Khidmatgars and the Muslim League", in *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan*, ed. D. A. Low (London: Macmillan, 1991), 216.

superior to that in any other Muslim majority province. It had greatly consolidated its position during the coalition ministry headed by Fazlul Haq of Krishak Praja Party (KPP). The Muslim League gained quick strides and it came to be regarded as a political force to be reckoned in provincial politics. Fazlul Haq's alliance with the Muslim League led to a closing of ranks among the Bengali Muslims, be they progressives or conservatives. As a result of implementing various reforms schemes, the Muslim League appeared to gain a radical flavour that it never really possessed, and this aided its image as a friend of the impoverished Muslim tenants.<sup>31</sup>

The political landscape in Bengal was much different from other areas in the sense that most of the people who were progressive and liberal in outlook also joined the League. It expanded its tentacles in the rural areas and created a potentially strong cadre of dedicated political workers. Enthusiasm among League workers has been hailed as a clear manifestation of a revolutionary type mass movement. The rising tide of the Muslim intelligentsia posed a threat to dominance by traditionalists like the Khwaja faction of the *Nawab* of Dhaka family. In May 1943 the Muslim League, with Nazim-ud-Din as Premier, was in full command and Bengal came into line with the All-India Muslim League. In the elections of 1946, the Muslim League, basing its campaign on the All-India Muslim League demand for Pakistan, won all the six Muslim seats from Bengal in the central assembly, and 113 out of 121 territorial Muslim seats in the provincial assembly. Shila Sen has thus argued: "The election results also proved that in Bengal, the Pakistan Movement was mass based and democratic. They reflected

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31 Though the League had 43 seats, and the Congress 52, Fazlul Haq, with 36 KPP seats, was best placed to lead a coalition either in alliance with one of the above or with support from the 108 Independents and some other members. Statistics of results from Humaira Momen, *Muslim Politics in Bengal: A Study of the KPP and the Elections of 1937* (Dacca: Sunny House, 1972), 77.

the aspirations of Bengali Muslims for a Muslim majority state in northern India”<sup>32</sup>.

Coincided with all this was the ascendancy of the progressive elements with full control on League organization in the province. In 1943, Bengal Muslim League came under the commanding leadership of Abul Hashim.<sup>33</sup> He aimed at building up into a strong democratic force based on clarity of purpose and capable of fighting the liberation struggle to the very end. He came up with the strategy of training full-time workers which resulted in a rapid increase in League membership. Proper elections at all levels were arranged in the organization. The powers of the provincial president to nominate members to the League Council and Working Committee were slashed. These measures seriously damaged the influence of the Khwaja faction within the League organization. In editorials of *Azad*, a paper owned by the Khwaja faction, Abul Hashim was dubbed as a Communist.<sup>34</sup> It was the time when the Bengal Muslim

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32 Shila Sen, *Some Aspects of Muslim Politics in Bengal: 1937-1946* (New Delhi: Impex India 1976), 197-98.

33 The political ideal of Abul Hashim was to struggle for a sovereign East Pakistan state. It has been stated that he feared the imposition of Urdu and an alien bureaucracy in a united Pakistan. The vision of a sovereign Bengal was based on the Lahore Resolution of 1940. Besides, Bengali identity was a sensitive issue for all progressive elements while it was the Urdu-speaking elite which had direct links with Jinnah. Jinnah never nominated Abul Hashim or Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy as the member of the Working Committee. He was more inclined towards Hasan and Ahmad Ispahani who opposed the political strategy of the Bengali-speaking leadership. Both the language issue and the marginalization of Bengali political influence were to subsequently dominate East and West Pakistan relations. Suhrawardy who floated the idea of an independent united Bengal in 1947, and Shaikh Mujib, who led Bangladesh independence movement, were the patrons and close associates of Abul Hashim. A. Samad, *A Nation in Turmoil: Nationalism and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1937-1958* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995), 197 and Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, 89.

34 Communist elements among different parties are factual phenomena which can never be set aside. For the present study it is important to give them proper attention because most of the socialists and communists later on joined the National Awami Party in 1957. Abul Hashim was not alone in being categorized as a Communist or socialist. There were also other leaders among the League who had been suspected of working for Communism. Prominent Muslim Communists who joined the League were

League was in the control of the progressive elements. They claimed the membership of over one million workers and of having the largest grassroots support than any other political organization. Abul Hashim then transferred power to the Calcutta based politician Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy.<sup>35</sup>

The strength of the Muslim League was demonstrated by its sweeping electoral success in Bengal in the elections of 1946. Its performance in the rural areas was impressive and it captured 104 out of 111 seats. Suhrawardy, who succeeded Nazim-ud-Din as premier in April 1946, had a vision of Bengal as an independent sovereign unit. He was supported in this project by the majority of Bengali progressive Muslim politicians such as Abul Hashim and Fazlur Rahman, and backed by popular enthusiasm. A document was drawn up – a blueprint – for a “Socialist Republic in Bengal”, which implied that they had more than a “dominion” status in mind for the proposed unit.<sup>36</sup> The views of the Bengali-speaking Muslim Leaguers were diametrically opposed to that of Urdu-speaking politicians. They were involved in the East Pakistan Renaissance Society, formed in 1942, to cultivate the idea of Pakistan in general and Eastern Pakistan in particular. Abul Mansur Ahmed, the Muslim League journalist *cum* politician, maintained in one of his speeches in 1944:

Religion and culture are not the same thing. Religion transgresses the geographical boundary but *tammadun* (culture) cannot go beyond the geographical boundary. Here only lie the differences between *purba* Eastern Pakistan and Pakistan. For this reason the people of *purba* Pakistan are a different nation from the people of

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Danyal Latifi, Attaullah Jahania, Abdullah Malik, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, Chowdhry Rehamtullah Aslam, Anis Hashmi and Ghulam Nabi Bhullar; see Iqbal Leghari, “The Socialist Movement in Pakistan” (unpublished PhD thesis, Laval University, Montreal, 1979), 28. Also see Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, 53.

35 Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, 88.

36 Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhry, “The Roots of Bengal National Identity: The Impact on State Behavior”, (Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, June 2009), *working paper* no. 36: 9.

other provinces of India and from the “religious brothers” of Pakistan.<sup>37</sup>

The Bengali-speaking elements within the League were very much perturbed with the idea of the division of Bengal. Suhrawardy was its most vocal supporter which earned him the anger of the party's high command. He was even identified with drafting the United Bengal scheme which it is said, would have produced two separate Pakistans, not one. Lawrence Ziring is of the view that Suhrawardy considered himself a Bengali Quaid-i-Azam. Therefore Jinnah had sufficient reasons to ignore him in the party affairs.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, some other important political figures were side-tracked by the Dhaka-based Khwaja faction. These included Fazlul Haq, who had moved the Lahore Resolution in 1940 and Maulana Bhashani who represented the Bengali peasants. Both these men, like Suhrawardy, worked day and night in the freedom struggle of Pakistan. They disapproved of the Islamic orientation of the League on the plea that it would make the Hindu population of East Bengal second-class citizens of the state. Their argument was that the state represents each and every citizen without the distinction of caste and creed. They viewed themselves as the true representatives of all segments of the Bengali population. In the middle of this process, they developed significant ideological as well as practical differences with the Muslim League, even before the dawn of partition.

### **Left Politics and the Punjab Muslim League**

In the Punjab there was a small group of educated people within the All-India Muslim League who was under the influence of socialist ideology. At the outset their hopes were raised by some of the verses of Allama Iqbal in which he supported the cause of peasants and poor classes of the society. Besides, he asserted that social democracy is compatible with the original purity of Islam.<sup>39</sup> Some of the

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37 Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, 90.

38 Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century: A Political History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 77.

39 Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, 52.

League workers were also attracted by the Soviet experiment in Marxist economic planning designed to bring about a better distribution of wealth. Though they rejected Marxian materialist dialectics as antithetical to Islam but were not disturbed by Soviet totalitarianism. Similarly, Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, who remained minister of education in Pakistan, took great deal of references from the Russian's know-how in economic and democratic development. "The Russian experiment", he wrote in a Muslim League publication, "has a great deal to teach us in the methods of increasing our industrial and material power in spite of lack of capital.... All our population will have to be regimented for the purpose of reconstruction which will have to be planned".<sup>40</sup>

It was after the start of World War II that the Communist leaders in CPI felt the polarization of the Indian masses on communal lines. The earlier stance of the Communists was to support the Congress in its struggle against the colonial government. It was due to the perception that most of the people considered Congress as a secular and anti-imperial organization. The CPI changed its earlier position after the large-scale transformation of Muslim public opinion in favour of the League and its demand of Pakistan. A new thesis was presented which accommodated the position of Jinnah *vis-à-vis* the Congress. Under the new strategy they placed All-India Muslim League at par with the Congress:

A belief continues to be held that the League is a communal organization and that Mr. Jinnah is pro-British. But what is the reality? Mr. Jinnah is to the freedom loving League masses what Gandiji is to the Congress masses. They revere their Quaid-i-Azam as much as the Congress does the Mahatma. They regard the League as their patriotic organization as we regard the Congress. This is so because Mr. Jinnah has done to the League what Gandhi did to the Congress in 1919-20 i.e. made it a mass organization.<sup>41</sup>

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40 Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, *The Future Development of Islamic Polity* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1946), 23.

41 P. C. Joshi, *Congress and the Communists* (Bombay: People Publishing House, 1944), 5.

Coupled with these ground realities was the CPI's tough stance against the Unionist Party in the Punjab. The Unionist ministry was regarded as a big hurdle in the spreading of mass consciousness in the province. The Communists' overture in the Punjab politics was aimed at securing a strong foothold and to replace the Unionist ministry by a peoples' ministry supported by the Muslim League, Congress, *Akali* and the Communists. This probable political perspective is best illustrated by one of Sajjad Zaheer's articles. "The task of every patriot is to welcome and help this democratic growth which at long last is now taking place among the Muslims of Punjab," he wrote. "The last stronghold of imperialist bureaucracy in India is invaded by the League. Let's all help the people of Punjab to capture it".<sup>42</sup>

When the Pakistan Movement attracted popular attention, some of the Muslim socialists and leftists joined the League after disbanding their respective political groups. For instance Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, who was a famous socialist, left the Congress due to mounting Hindu-Muslim antagonism. To these socialists economic planning, nationalization of key industries, land reforms, and a more equitable distribution of wealth were more relevant and vital for the future of Pakistan than was the issue of an Islamic state.<sup>43</sup> In July 1945, the provincial Communist leadership issued instructions to all district committees to hold joint Communist-League meetings for the purpose of defeating the Unionists. The CPI had also endorsed this idea to permeate the Muslim League as to broaden its secular front among the masses. The "national unity week" was observed from November 1 to 7, 1945 with the active support of the Communists. A joint student demonstration was organized by Muslim Students Federation and the Punjab Students Federation. Under this policy Danyal Latifi, Attaullah Jahania, Abdullah Malik, Choudhury Rehamtullah Aslam (C.

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42 Sajjad Zaheer, *Light on League-Unionist Conflict* (Bombay: Peoples' Publishing House, 1944), 26.

43 Zaheer, *Light on League-Unionist Conflict*, 26.

R. Aslam), Anis Hashim, Ghulam Nabi Bhullar, and a number of other Communists worked closely with the League. They strengthened the League's publicity campaign through working with the Muslim intelligentsia and peasantry. On September 29 and 30, 1945 a big conference of *Kissan Sabha* was organized with the active participation of the League workers in Lahore. C. R. Aslam was at that time president of the Lahore Muslim League. He toured the whole province to make the conference a success. Danyal Latifi was also closely associated with the Muslim League leadership. He wrote the election manifesto of the Punjab Muslim League for the 1946 elections and supported Daultana for the post of secretary of the Punjab League. Daultana was popular as a red Muslim Leaguer due to his closeness with the leftist elements. Ferozuddin Mansur wrote a number of pamphlets and coined slogans such as "*Pakistan Paidaishi Haq Hai*" [Urdu: Pakistan is a birth right] and "The Sixteen Nations of India". Attaullah Jahania was an able social organizer who was utilized by Daultana. A salt miners' conference was held at Khewra at which the miners appreciated and lent support to the manifesto of the Punjab Muslim League.

However, some of the Communist leaders considered it their mistake to forge alliance with the League. This was probably due to the fact that the Communists did not work as an organized political group within the League. They followed the strategy prepared by the landlords who were at the helm of affairs. The entrance of some of the Communists was not manifest in the changing of overall public policy in the League echelon. The study of the Communist movement reveals the stark reality of the association of the Communists with different provincial organizations. They operated here and there in an individual capacity with the hope of influencing the political trends. Often they worked without control from CPI or any other strong centre. In this regard the views of the Communist elements were presented by Eric Cyprian in the following words:

We were used by the Muslim League. We were their errand boys at their calls, and did all their dirty work. We could not hope to

influence the Muslim League. We were too few and politically too weak. And, helping the Muslim League secure a base amongst the workers and peasants only resulted in our helping a reactionary organization strengthen its mass base. Furthermore the Muslim League always held us in suspicion. During the elections, they did not give our boys any ticket. Attaullah Jahania was in tears over it.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Left in the Political Landscape of Balochistan**

In 1920, an underground organization called Young Baloch was formed by a group of Baloch nationalists under the leadership of Yusuf A. H. Magsi and Abdul Aziz Kurd, son of a Kalat state official. A few years later, the movement changed its name to the *Anjuman-i-Ittehad-i-Balochistan* [Urdu: Organization for the Unity of Balochistan]. Its nature underwent a change from being a clandestine organization into an open political party under Magsi leadership in 1931. Javed Haider Syed is of the view that it was in 1931, after the release of Abdul Aziz Magsi that some of its leaders approached him and they renamed the party as *Anjuman-i-Ittehad-e-Balochan wa Balochistan* [Urdu: Organization for the Unity of the Baloch and Balochistan].<sup>45</sup> In many ways the *Anjuman* marked the beginning of a new force in Balochistan, the secular, non-tribal nationalist movement organized in a political party. It called for political and constitutional reforms within the Khanate, and ultimate unification of all Baloch lands into an independent state. From 1931, the *Anjuman* started to work openly, propagating different ideas and reforms within the state, and advocating the need for more representative institutions.<sup>46</sup> Thus politics in the region assumed an all-Balochistan dimension. The political maturity shown by the people alarmed the British authorities who had clamped a total ban on any kind of political activity in British Balochistan. With these developments and the sudden death of Magsi, the radical

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44 Iqbal Leghari, *The Socialist Movement in Pakistan*, 31.

45 Javed Haider Syed, "The Political Development in Baluchistan in the Last Decade of the British Raj" (Islamabad: Unpublished PhD thesis, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, 2005), 107.

46 Tahir Bizenjo, *Balochistan: Kia Howa Kia Hoga*, [Urdu: Balochistan: What Has Happened, What Will Happen] 121.

elements within the *Anjuman-i-Ittehad-e-Balochan wa Balochistan* met at Sibi and deliberated over the new course of action. Consequently, they agreed to rename the *Anjuman* as the Kalat State National Party (KSNP). The new party was founded under the leadership of Abdul Aziz Kurd in a convention held in Sibi on February 5, 1937 with Kurd as president and Malik Faiz Muhammad as general secretary.<sup>47</sup>

Balochistan was politically the most backward part of Muslim India. During the colonial period, Balochistan was a complex mixture of administrative units: Kalat State, British Balochistan, and areas taken by the British on lease from Kalat. British Balochistan (which was made up of Pakhtun areas that Afghanistan had ceded to the British in the 1879 Treaty of Gandamak and the Mari-Bugti tribal zone). The leased areas were directly administered by the British Indian government through an Agent to Governor-General. Ruled by a Khan, Kalat was nominally independent, though as in other princely states, the British exerted their dominance by various means. These included vetting the Khan's officials and paying subsidies to tribal leaders. The people of Balochistan had been dominated largely by tribal allegiance which espoused Baloch nationalism in the Baloch populated areas while the sentiment of Pakhtun nationalism was strong in British Balochistan. The relations between the British Government and the Kalat state were governed by a series of treaties concluded in 1839, 1841, 1854, 1863, 1876, and many more. The colonial encroachment continued redrawing the boundaries of Balochistan on various pretexts. The Baloch governorates of Quetta, Nushki and Nasirabad were taken on lease from Kalat. The districts of Loralai, Pishin, Chaman and Sibi were taken from Afghanistan under the treaty of Gandamak in 1879. The Mari-Bugti tribal area was constituted into what was called British Balochistan.

With the promulgation of the Government of India Act 1935, it was hoped that the government would not further curtail political activities. For the first time in the history of

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47 Syed, *The Political Development in Baluchistan*, 128.

Balochistan, political gatherings were arranged and more political organizations came into the limelight. Apart from the KSNP, *Anjuman-i-Watan* [Urdu: Organization of the Homeland] was established by Abdus Samad Achakzai. He was an ardent Pakhtun nationalist who worked for the unification of the Pakhtuns and the establishment of a single Pakhtun province for all Pakhtuns. Like Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Abdus Samad Achakzai was known for his insistence on non-violence as a political weapon. He was dubbed as Balochistan Gandhi in political circles. He was very active in the politics from school days when he led a procession of boys in support of the Khilafat Movement launched in 1919. In 1929 he went to Lahore to attend a meeting of the Indian National Congress which further opened up his mind as to his future role in politics. He had persuaded Yusuf Magsi to consolidate his group's activities in the state with other nationalist elements. In 1939 *Anjuman-i-Watan* chalked out a policy of non-cooperation with the British Government. In the following year it participated in Azad Muslim Conference of nationalist Muslims parties such as Indian Muslim *Majlis*, *Khudai Khidmatgar* and Krishak Praja Party. The conference declared India as the common homeland of all its citizens, irrespective of race and religion. They delivered speeches against the partition of the Subcontinent and the idea of Pakistan.<sup>48</sup>

The aim and objectives of both organizations was the struggle against imperialism, as well as against the oppressive hegemony of the *sardars* and for the elevation of British Balochistan to the status of a province. With this aim, it was clear that these organizations would anger the tribal *sardars* and the Khan of Kalat, because the surge of nationalist sentiment went against their interests. They retaliated through harsh measures and arrested prominent

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48 For a detailed study of Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai see Abdul Ghani Ghano, *Baba-i-Pashtoon wa Pashtoonkhwa*, [Pushto: The leader of Pashtoons and Pashtoonkhwa] (Quetta: 1990). Also see Richard Sisson, Stanley Wolpert, eds. *Congress and the Indian Nationalism* (California: California University Press, 1988), 121.

members of the KSNP. It was around this time that a troika of British Political Agent, the Khan of Kalat and the *sardars* was formed for the purpose of curbing the increasing influence of the KSNP. Consequently on July 20, 1939 the KSNP was declared illegal and orders were issued to expel prominent leaders of the party from the state's jurisdiction. In this hour of trial, the leadership of *Anjuman-i-Watan* extended a hand of friendship to the exiled leaders. On national level, both the organizations came closer with the policies of the Congress. Abdus Samad was held in high esteem by the Congress high command in Delhi. In mid-1945 the KSNP propelled itself into the limelight of Indian politics. Then it formally affiliated itself with All-India States People's Conference (AISPC) with Jawaharlal Nehru as its president. It had become a component of a political institution that was largely controlled by the Congress. Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo became the member of the Working Committee of the AISPC.<sup>49</sup> Contrary to the views of the KSNP leadership, the Khan of Kalat developed good relations with the leadership of the Muslim League. He was a great admirer of Jinnah and he once sought the latter's legal opinion regarding the state matters and its relations with the British Government. Describing one of his meetings with Jinnah, he wrote that "once I got a chance to meet Quaid-i-Azam, I was deeply impressed by the truthfulness, sincerity, and devotion to the cause of the service of the Indian Muslims. His faithfulness to the cause further caught me closer to him and I choose him as my leader and wholeheartedly started serving and supporting Muslim League". It has been stated that Khan also financed the League's expansion in Balochistan.<sup>50</sup>

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49 B. M. Kutty, ed., *In Search of Solutions, An Autobiography of Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo* (Karachi: Pakistan Labour Trust and Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, 2009), 60.

50 Naudir Bakht, "Role of Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo in the Politics of Balochistan" (Quetta: Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Baluchistan, 1999), 67.

Initially the KSNP subscribed to the idea that in the post-British scenario, Balochistan might consider joining the independent and sovereign federation of India as an autonomous and equal federating unit. But the political situation that was emerging at the all-India level required a fresh look at the party's previous objectives. A meeting of the Working Committee of the party was convened which passed a resolution favouring an independent state of Balochistan. Furthermore, the party leadership opposed the merger of Balochistan with Pakistan. Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, one of prominent leaders of the party, commented on the issue in the *Darul Awam* [Urdu: Lower House] of the Kalat state as follows:

The British Government, by force of arms, enslaved most parts of Asia. [The] British Government was tyrannical, oppressive. It robbed us of our independence. We had never been a part of Hindustan. Pakistan's demand that Kalat, which had earlier been known as Balochistan and had been the national homeland of the Baloch, should merge with Pakistan is unacceptable.....Pakistan's condition is that until and unless the government of [the] Baloch went to them with bowed heads and in humility, Pakistan would not talk. We are ready for friendship with honour not in indignity. We are not ready to merge within the frontiers of Pakistan.<sup>51</sup>

On the eve of independence, Jinnah proposed to the British Government that an electoral college of either the ration card holders (about 2000 persons), or all the *maliks* and *mutabars* [Urdu: The elders] (500 persons) or all members of the district *jirgas* (400 persons) should decide the fate of Balochistan. However, the Viceroy rejected his proposals and assigned the task to the *Shahi Jirga* (52 members) and non-official members of Quetta Municipality (10 members). At the end the verdict came in favour of joining Pakistan. It was a unique development for the state of Kalat and its Baloch nationalist elements. The Khan of Kalat then entered into negotiations with the Government of Pakistan and signed a standstill agreement with Pakistani officials. There was a deadlock on the two important issues

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51 Kutty, ed., In Search of Solutions, *An Autobiography of Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo*, 62.

of Kalat's merger with Pakistan, and the question of the leased areas. The Khan of Kalat was not in the position to take any step regarding the political future of his state due to pressure from the nationalist elements. The KSNP was in majority in the *Darul Awam* headed by Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo who had 39 seats out of 52. To complicate matters further, the *Darul Awam* debated the issue of merging the states and passed a resolution in favour of an independent Balochistan on December 14, 1947.<sup>52</sup>

### **Politics of the Communist Party of India**

As far as the Communist Party of India was concerned, it clearly supported Congress' claim in its initial years on the ground that it was regarded as an anti-imperial and secular party. Communist and leftist trends in British India made much of its way due to strong influence of Russian revolution.<sup>53</sup> Communists' association with the Congress was also due to Jawaharlal Nehru's socialist ideas which he manifested in his early political career. Till 1937, most of the Communists considered the Muslim League to be a creation of the British Government intended to divide the growing nationalist movement and weaken its strength. It was due to the reactionary posture of the Muslim League that most of the socialists, along with the CPI, wanted to form a united front with the Congress for attaining independence. The majority of CPI members were both Hindus and Sikhs. However, a separate group of Muslim Communists emerged from among those refugees who had migrated to Afghanistan, and then visited the Soviet Union after the Hijrat Movement. These Communists were comprised of various social strata belonging to different provinces of India. A good number of them joined refugees from NWFP thanks to its close proximity with Afghanistan. Generally, the Pakhtuns of the Frontier came very early under the influence of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Yet their contribution has

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52 M. Rafique Afzal, *Pakistan: History and Politics 1947-1971* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.

53 Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d), 49.

not received proper attention from scholars of leftist politics. In studies of progressive and left politics, the trend has been searched for its roots in other provinces. Before the Hijrat Movement, Mian Akbar Shah was associated with *Khudai Khidmatgar* and crossed over to Afghanistan. Along with Haji Miraj-ud-Din and Shahab-ud Din of Lahore, as well as, some other Pakhtun comrades he decided to go to the Soviet Union and then on to Anatolia. Later on, a majority of them stayed in the Soviet Union so as to coordinate with other revolutionaries. There they met with M. N. Roy and Maulana Abdur Rab in Tashkent.

Mian Akbar Shah and his friends studied in Lenin Academy in Turkistan. They learnt to fly aircraft, to organize subversive activities and become Indian revolutionaries. Subsequently they were sent to the University of the East in Moscow.<sup>54</sup> In particular, they were influenced by the quick boost in Soviet economy and the infrastructural development in the country. Akbar Shah was then invited to participate in the different Communist gatherings; the most important among them was the Baku Conference 1920 in which he represented the Indian youth. In the following years he was instructed to return to India and organize Communist activities. On their way back to India, most of these early Communists were arrested and subsequently tried under 121-A of the Defence of India Rules in four successive Communist conspiracy cases in Peshawar between 1912 and 1924. Prominent among them were Ferozuddin Mansur, Abdul Majid, Mian Akbar Shah, Akbar Khan, Fazal Ilahi Qurban, Habib Ahmad, Rafiq Ahmad, Sultan, Abdul Qadir Sehrai and Gohar Rahman etc.<sup>55</sup>

In 1920 M. N. Roy founded the CPI with the help of the refugees who were present with him in Tashkent. Of those

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54 Mian Akbar Shah, *Azadi Ki Talash*, ed., Syed Wiqar Ali Shah (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1989), 208.

55 Syed Wiqar Ali Shah, *North-West Frontier Province: History and Politics* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2007), 94. Also see Iqbal Leghari, "The Socialist Movement in Pakistan: A Historical Survey 1940-1974" (Montréal: Unpublished PhD thesis Laval University, 1979), 24.

accused in the Communist conspiracy trial, Abdul Majid, Ferozuddin Mansur and Gohar Rahman later established a Communist movement. Fazal Ilahi Qurban reached India on January 17, 1927 and was attached with the revolutionaries in Calcutta. They continued their activities and held a number of meetings regarding their future programme.<sup>56</sup> In the following years, they associated themselves with those political organizations which manifested socialist ideas. Mian Akbar Shah joined the *Anjuman-i-Islah-al-Afghana* [Darri: Organization for the betterment of Afghans] founded by Abdul Ghaffar Khan in 1921. In 1929 he and Abdul Ghaffar Khan founded *Zalmo Jirga* [Pushto: The Youth League] which later on superseded by the *Khudai Khidmatgar* organization. He subsequently developed serious political differences with Ghaffar Khan after Akbar Shah decided to support the Ghala Dher peasant uprising in 1938. In addition, he was closely associated with the Forward Bloc that the revolutionary Subhas Chandra Bose formed within the Congress. In 1941 he assisted Subhas Bose in his escape from India to Afghanistan.<sup>57</sup>

From 1936 onwards, the Communist politics in the Punjab were divided among different groups. To patch up these differences, the Punjab Congress Socialist Party was established. At that time, the CPI was comprised of a small group of Communists who wanted the larger group of *Kirtis* to dissolve its separate identity and join with the new party. The activities of these Communist groups however, merged into the mainstream of Congress activities in the countryside. As a result, it seemed difficult to distinguish strictly between the work of the Communists and nationalists. All the progressive sections of the province were united in their opposition against the Unionist ministry headed by Sikandar

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56 In 1927 Abdul Majid, Mian Akbar Shah, Akbar Khan, Gohar Rahman and Shams-ud-Din Hasan held rounds of meetings in Lahore. They deliberated on the establishment of the Communist centres in the country. Some of them played prominent part in the organization of *Kirti Kissan Party* and the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* in Punjab. Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab: 1926-47* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d.), 52.

57 Shah, *North-West Frontier Province*, 58-90.

Hayat. The most active demonstration was organized by the Lahore District *Kissan* Committee. The committee was supported by *Akalis*. On June 17, 1940 the government resolved on stern action and warned of dire consequences in the case that the organizers did not windup their protest in Lahore. Around this time 4000 persons were put behind the bars.<sup>58</sup> Most of the Communists in the Punjab had been interned when World War II started in Europe. In the months of June and July 1940 around eighty-four Communists and socialists were arrested, including five members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Of these 40 were those who had been trained in Moscow under Soviet instructors. They were dubbed as “fifth columnists” by Chief Minister Sikandar Hayat for their active support of the Soviet Union. Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din defended the Communists against the victimization of the Punjab Government, for which he was also arrested in November, 1940.<sup>59</sup>

The nature of the World War II changed on June 20, 1941 when Hitler attacked the USSR. Soviet Russia was on the side of the Allied powers that included USA, Britain, China, Australia, France, Canada, and other countries of Europe and Asia. Their rivals the Axis Powers included, among others, Japan, Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. The CPI came up with a new strategy in the aftermath of Hitler’s attack on the USSR. They put greater responsibility on the Congress leaders to accept certain demands of their Muslim brethren, and hinted at the idea that India was the motherland of more than one nationality. In this way the political unity of India would be retained and Muslims would get their legal and constitutional rights. It was against this backdrop that the Communists came closer to the Muslim intelligentsia.<sup>60</sup> They said that the nature of war had changed to “a peoples’ war” against fascism. Elaborating the policy of

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58 Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in the Punjab: 1926-47* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d), 138.

59 Josh, *Communist Movement in the Punjab*, 159.

60 Abdullah Malik, *Dastan-i-Khanwada Mian Mahmud Ali Qasuri* [Urdu: Mian Mahmud Ali Qasuri’s Family Story] (Lahore: Jung Publishers, 1995), 300.

the CPI, Puran Chand Joshi wrote a letter to Gandhi in which he delineated this view regarding World War II:

The war has split the world into two camps. On the one side are the fascist aggressors, fascism is nothing else imperialism in its worst last form. Fascists are fighting the war on the imperialist domination of the world.... On the other side are the freedom-loving peoples of the world.... In this camp is the heroic China which through its 7 years' national resistance to Jap Fascists has saved the whole East from going under the Jap heel. In this camp also stand the great U.S.S.R. where alone real freedom and democracy prevails.<sup>61</sup>

In the following years the CPI changed its stance regarding the demand for Pakistan. The criterion for defining nationality was essentially religious. This policy of the CPI is clear from a statement of Adhikari: "The demand for Pakistan if we look at its progressive essence is in reality the demand for self determination and separation of the areas of Muslim nationalities of the Punjab, Pathans, Sindh, Balochistan and of the eastern province of Bengal".<sup>62</sup>

A similar view was expressed by Puran Chand Joshi, general secretary of the CPI in his book *For the Final Bid for Power*:

We work for the adoption of a strategy of United Front against British imperialists, not only to overthrow British domination but also to realize the aim of seeing a free India emerge as a family of free nations.... The achievement of united front against British rule today is to assure the emergence of a free India as a united family of free and equal nations tomorrow.<sup>63</sup>

Due to these policy changes the Muslim League was regarded as a mass party because of the popular upsurge in Muslim politics after the Lahore Resolution in 1940. It was considered to mark the emergence of nationalist and anti-

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61 P. C. Joshi's letter to Gandhi, Bombay June 14, 1944, published in *Correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and P. C. Joshi* (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1945), 4-5.

62 G. Adhikari, *Pakistan and National Unity* (Bombay: People Publishing House, 1942), 30.

63 P. C. Joshi, *For the Final Bid for Power: Freedom Programme of Indian Communists* (Bombay: People's Publishing House, n.d), 80.

imperialist tendencies among Muslims. The CPI leadership pressed the Congress members to accept the League's demand for Muslim self-determination. The Communists' view was that the League had become a mass organization in the Punjab. And its alliance with the Unionist was regarded as a short-sighted approach. In the Punjab, the Communists wanted the total expulsion of the Unionists from the future political setup due to the latter's pro-landlord posture. The pro-League stance of the Communist workers earned them sympathies and support of the Muslim political workers.

It was in the early 1940s that a number of Communist leaders stepped into Muslim politics. Shaikh Muhammad Rasheed was a leading Communist in the Punjab. He stated in his memoir that he joined the League after realizing that most of the Communist comrades were working for the Muslim League. Danyal Latifi, Attaullah Jahania, Abdul Latif Afghani and Abdullah Malik were some of the famous Communist figures who switched over to the League around that time.<sup>64</sup> Later these leaders established a progressive workers' group within the League. The idea was to organize the League on progressive lines and give it a deep popular and strong base. The 1945-46 elections in India proved a turning point as far as the League's policy on Pakistan was concerned. In the Punjab, Congress supported the Unionist Ministry headed by Khizar Hayat Khan. However, the situation suddenly changed when the Government banned the Muslim National Guard, which provided an opportunity for the Muslims to start agitation against this decision. In Lahore the anti-Unionist agitation was initiated by the progressive group which was largely controlled by the Communists. They played an important role in the agitation due to which majority of their workers were put behind the bars. It was mainly due to the popular resentment created by the leftists who took part in the demonstrations, and

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64 Shaikh Muhammad Rasheed, *Jahd-i-Musalsal* [Urdu: Perpetual Struggle] (Lahore: Jung Publications, 2002), 60.

consequently the Unionist Premier Khizar Hayat was compelled to resign.<sup>65</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In the pre-partition era, leftists and Communists did not follow a coherent and consistent policy. In the Muslim majority provinces, their political affiliations were not strictly under the command of any central authority, or for that matter under the CPI. Very few of them adhered closely to the policy of the Communist party. A large number of them worked in other such organizations and movements which some time went against the established policy of the CPI. Very often the CPI swayed from one end of the pendulum to the other, which made a reformulation of policy of a regular exercise. Generally, all the left forces were close to the Congress circles, but the rapid changes in 1940s brought about a trend of openness in their overall strategy. Some of them became more fully involved in Muslim politics after they understood that the Muslim League had gained authority over large sections of the Muslim population. In this period, too, the CPI continued its policy of some time openly lending support to and aligning itself with the bourgeois. At other times, it clearly followed a militant line of action. The Communist leadership and policy-makers failed to adopt a line based on the socio-economic conditions and comprehensive analyses of the Indian social contradictions. In a nutshell, the left's approach to politics during the freedom struggle was confusing in as much as it did not exhibit a uniform political strategy with regard to the Muslim majority provinces.

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65 Rasheed, *Jahd-i-Musalsal*, 76-77.