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Author(s): Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah

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KHUDAI KHIDMATGARS AND THE PARTITION OF INDIA: A RE — APPRAISAL

Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah

In my presentation on the Khudai Khidmatgars and the partition of India I will try to elaborate on and discuss some points including the following issues and questions:

Despite being an overwhelming Muslim majority province, why did the N-WFP Muslims prefer the Hindu-dominated Congress to their co-religionists the Muslim League? What did the Congress get from its alliance with the Khudai Khidmatgars and *vice versa*? During the later years of the freedom movement, the Muslim League, which earlier had no grass-root support in the N-WFP, succeeded in establishing a foothold in various parts of the province. Did this signify any substantial change in the outlook of the Frontier Muslims? What were the reasons behind the shifting of loyalties before Partition? Why were the Khudai Khidmatgars 'abandoned' by the Congress in the final stages of the freedom struggle?

I have divided my presentation into three parts: part first deals with a brief background of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and its emphasis on particular type of Pashtoonism; part second would provide some details of the Khudai Khidmatgars affiliation with the Congress and its effects; and, the third part would discuss the Congress' 'abandonment' of their old allies the Khudai Khidmatgars on the eve of partition of India and local responses on the desertion of the Khudai Khidmatgars by the Congress.

From the British annexation of the Punjab in 1849 until 1901, the five districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan remained within the Punjab province, which held control over the adjoining border tracts. On the formation of the N-WFP in November 1901, and by separating the five settled districts from the Punjab, these areas did not experience the benefits of the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. Because of its peculiar circumstances the N-WFP was treated by the colonialists in a 'special' way. While the British introduced reforms and certain other measures required for good governance in the rest of India, the N-WFP was governed through 'Special Ordinances' implemented from time to time.

The N-WFP was an overwhelmingly Muslim majority province with 93% of the population being Muslim. Of the region's ethnic groups the Pashtoons constituted the largest, comprising more than 56% of the population in the settled districts and almost 100% in the tribal areas.¹ The specificity of the Pashtoon identity, with its combination of religion and nationalism, made it distinct from other parts of the South Asia. Ethnicity was more important in the politics of the N-WFP rather than class differences. It was one of the least economically developed provinces of the British Indian empire. There was very little industry, not much western education, and little urbanisation. The role therefore played by the Muslim intelligentsia in the development of provincial politics was less significant in comparison with provinces like Bengal and the Punjab. The Khudai Khidmatgars had established their following almost wholly in the rural population. The rural middle-landed class support-base of the Khudai Khidmatgars held good despite a growing appeal to Islam in the context of the partition agitation.

Part I:

After the bitter experience and the 'failure' of Hijrat, Abdul Ghaffar Khan concentrated on Pashtoon politics.² A group of educated Pashtoons joined him who represented various social groups. On 1 April 1921, the *Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afaghana* was formed. Its aims and objectives included: the eradication of social evils from Pashtoon society, promotion of unity amongst the Pashtoons, prevention of lavish spending on social events, encouragement of Pashto language and literature and the creation of 'real love' for Islam among the Pashtoons. Anjuman was engaged in a wide spectrum of activities including the opening of the Azad Schools in November 1921.³ Initially the Anjuman was a social reform movement but soon it developed into political movement. Its members regarded the British rule as the root cause of the pernicious poverty, backwardness, illiteracy and ignorance of the Pashtoons.⁴ They undertook tour of the rural areas and propagated the Pashtoons' cause and exhorted them to join the Anjuman and resist the British imperialism and its supporters in the N-WFP. Anjuman members decided to publish a socio-political journal in Pashto. The first issue of the *Pashtoon* came out in May 1928. Articles were published on a variety of subjects including Pashtoon patriotism, Pashto language and literature, political essays, dramas, religious writings, and official and non-official news. Initially the circulation was limited to 500 but in course of time it rose to 3,000.

Events in the neighbouring Afghanistan changed the outlook of the Frontier intelligentsia who had strong pro-Amanullah feelings. His

overthrow from power was regarded as British conspiracy. The Anjuman members were not allowed to proceed to Afghanistan to help the 'crisis-ridden' country. Before anything could be achieved by the efforts of the Anjuman members, a desperate Amanullah proceeded to Italy, and settled there permanently.

Mian Akbar Shah, a talented youth of Islamia College, Peshawar, proposed the formation of a youth league on the pattern of such organisations in Afghanistan, Turkey and Bokhara. A meeting was convened on 1 September 1929 at Utmanzai and the formation of *Zalmu Jirga* was announced. Abdul Ghaffar Khan served as host. Abdul Akbar Khan became the president and Mian Ahmad Shah its secretary.⁵ No exact age limit was fixed for its members but the name itself indicated the composition of the organisation. Its membership was open to 'every youth without any discrimination of caste, creed or religion, provided he is literate', and that he 'should not participate in any form of communalism'. Pashto was announced to be the official language of Jirga's proceeding. Other objectives included the 'attainment of independence for Hindustan by all peaceful means'.⁶

To accommodate the majority of the uneducated sympathisers of the Pashtoon nationalists and the aged members of the community, another organisation *Khudai Khidmatgars* was formed in November 1929. This new organisation superseded the former and later on became most popular and influential in the N-WFP.⁷ Both of the organisations were working on the same lines and the leaders were almost the same. A member after joining one organisation automatically became a member of the other organisation. Within a short period a network of the Khudai Khidmatgars organisation was established in the Pashtoon dominated areas of the province. Its emphasis on Pashtoon identity and values had very little appeal to the non-Pashtoos. The remarkable feature of the organisation was the solid support for it in the rural areas, which hitherto had been neglected by other political organisations. Many reasons contributed to the popularity of the Khudai Khidmatgars. Various sections of Pashtoon society interpreted the Khudai Khidmatgars programme in their own way. To the Pashtoon intelligentsia, it was a movement for the revival of Pashtoon 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 governance. Its anti-colonial stand suited the majority of the anti-establishment Ulema, who always regarded British rule in the sub-continent 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, K. B.s and big Khans.

To imbue the Khudai Khidmatgars with the capability of self-discipline and self-rule, the leaders had put great emphasis on discipline. The volunteers were organised and drilled in military formation and were given military ranks. Before joining the movement members had to pledge that they would abstain from the use of violence, intrigues, family feuds and other vices. The volunteers were trained to undertake long marches on foot. Because of the poverty of the people, any special uniform for the volunteers was not possible; therefore, they were advised to have their ordinary clothes dipped in brown or chocolate colour, which was cheap and easily available. They were called 'Red Shirts' in government communiqués, and the word became so popular that the movement itself was styled thereafter as the Red Shirt movement. The colonial government made extensive propaganda against the Khudai Khidmatgars by equating them with the Bolsheviks and dubbed them Russian agents, a charge always refuted by the Khudai Khidmatgars.

The most remarkable feature of the Khudai Khidmatgars was the adoption of non-violence as their creed and their strict adherence to it. The volunteers were taught not to resort to violence; they bore no arms and carried no weapons. Abdul Ghaffar Khan believed that 'it is the only form of force which can have a lasting effect on the life of society and man'.⁸ The main emphasis of Pashtoon reformer was on the prevention of blood-feuds. Inspiration was provided by giving examples from the lives of the Holy Prophet and other prophets, of how they faced humiliation and oppression boldly by non-violent means. The accounts of the lives of the holy men had a great impact on the minds of Pashtoons.⁹ The Pashtoons were exhausted by recurrent blood-feuds amongst themselves and were keen to remedy this situation. In adopting non-violence they were giving up a tradition that had caused immense sufferings for so many of them. They were taught that although violence could be countered by more violence but in following non-violence the Pashtoons would never be defeated. This sense of pride in registering victories over the authorities gave the Khudai Khidmatgars enormous popularity in the province.

Part Two:

In December 1929, the Congress pledged itself to the attainment of complete independence for India. About 200 people, Congress members, social workers and volunteers from the N-WFP including prominent Khudai Khidmatgars also attended the Lahore meeting.¹⁰ Abdul Ghaffar Khan endorsed the Congress programme and toured the N-WFP and urged the Khudai Khidmatgars to organise themselves

on the pattern of Congress. A network of *Jirgas* was established in most parts of the province, followed by Committees for *tappas*. Next came the tahsil and district Committees and then the provincial *Jirga*. All were elected bodies.

Following Gandhi's call, the local Congress volunteers decided to observe *hartal*. A branch of N-WFP Congress had been in existence since 1922. Owing to a lack of the numbers required for a Congress Committee, it had been amalgamated with the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. By June 1930 the Congress members in the N-WFP were 108.¹¹ They requested Abdul Ghaffar Khan to utilise his influence in the rural area to support the intended civil disobedience movement of Congress to which he consented.

On 23 April 1930 a peaceful gathering of the Congress/Khudai Khidmatgar volunteers was fired upon in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar (Peshawar) which resulted in the death of about two hundred persons; followed by another shooting incident at Peshawar on 31 May; on 16 May Utmanzai was ravaged by troops and the sympathisers of the Khudai Khidmatgars were incarcerated; on 25 May Takkar, a village in Mardan was targeted; on 24 August a protest meeting at Hathi Khel (Bannu) was fired upon, 70 persons killed. Frequent firings on non-violent Khudai Khidmatgars and lathi-charges became a routine. The Khudai Khidmatgars were beaten, their clothes were torn to pieces, their property was looted and houses set ablaze, the 'sanctity of the four walls' was violated, many were stripped naked the worst insult to a Pashtoon, and many more were roughly handled in their private parts.¹² A ban was put on the Khudai Khidmatgars, Zalmo Jirga, FPCC and Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Frontier branch). On 16 August Martial Law was declared in the province. For the time being the N-WFP was cut off from the rest of India; visits to and from the province were not allowed and communications were strictly censored.

The government was trying to prove the Khudai Khidmatgars connections with the Bolsheviks. The Khudai Khidmatgars were accused of being Bolshevik agents, trained in Russia and sent back to the N-WFP 'to take advantage of the economic or other unrest in the Frontier'.¹³ Mian Jaffar Shah and Abdullah Shah, two underground leaders of the Khudai Khidmatgars, found their way to Gujrat Jail and apprised Abdul Ghaffar Khan of the latest Frontier situation. After prolonged secret discussions it was decided to affiliate the organisation with one of the national organisations of India. Muslim leaders refused their support against the British government,¹⁴ and, Congress welcomed the Khudai Khidmatgars as both were fighting against the imperialism and were undergoing government repression.¹⁵ After his release under

the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (March 1931), on 30 March Abdul Ghaffar Khan openly declared his affiliation with the Congress in its Karachi session.¹⁶ On 9 August 1931 the Zalmu Jirga and the Khudai Khidmatgars were formally federated with the Congress, retaining their separate identity.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan was criticised by a section of the Frontier Muslims for merging the Khudai Khidmatgars with the Hindu-dominated Congress. Some of his close associates, including Ahmad Shah, Khadim and Abdul Akbar Khan, saw the Khudai Khidmatgars losing their separate identity in the merger with Congress.¹⁷ Abdul Ghaffar Khan responded to the allegations and said that he did it as a last resort because the Pashtoons needed help from outside the province in view of the atrocities and imprisonment that they were subjected to by the colonial government. He could see no harm to Pashtoon interests in joining with Congress. He cited examples from the life of the Holy Prophet, who made certain alliances with Jews and Christians to safeguard the interests of Muslims.¹⁸ The Khudai Khidmatgars, a regional organisation, became part of the national stream of politics after its affiliation with the Congress. It gained popularity on an all-India level and its leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, due to his dedication to the cause of Indian freedom struggle and his adoption of non-violence as a creed, was bestowed the title of 'Frontier Gandhi' by the like-minded Indian people. Moreover, for the time being, it made it impossible to call them foreign (Bolshevik) agents. Having the firm support of the Khudai Khidmatgars, Congress was able to prove to its opponents, particularly to the AIML during the last decade before partition, that it was not just a Hindu organisation. Before that alliance, the number of Congress members in the N-WFP was less than that formally required for a separate Congress Committee; after the alliance with Khudai Khidmatgars the number reached about eighty thousand.

Part Three:

During the mid-thirties the AIML tried to establish itself in the N-WFP. Jinnah, the League president visited the province in October 1936. He tried to bring the various sections of the Frontier Muslims under the banner of the League, but did not succeed even in getting a single nomination from the Frontier Muslims to stand on the League's ticket.¹⁹ In the popular perception, the League was viewed as a party of the elite — of K. B.s, Jagirdars, various other title-holders, some big Khans — and as pro-British in its politics. Therefore the party was never able to gather mass support in this period.

The big Khans were divided amongst themselves. Always engaged in faction-fighting, they found very little time to organise themselves as a political body. However, alarmed by the anti-Khan measures of the Khan Sahib's Congress ministry, in the absence of any other strong bulwark to combat Congress attacks, they rallied around the banner of the League. 'The old-fashioned Khans', reported Cunningham, the N-WFP Governor, 'who had hardly heard the name of the League six months ago, now refer to it freely as an ordinary topic of conversation'.²⁰ The big Khans used to travel in motor cars. Such a large number of big Khans with their motor cars earned for the organisation the title 'Motor League', and it was often referred to as the 'drawing-room' organisation of some important Muslims.²¹ The main task of the leaders seemed to be 'travelling by car to the places where the meetings are convened, taking tea, and returning to their houses'.²²

As there was no fear of 'Islam in danger' in the N-WFP, initially the League failed in mobilising the majority of Muslims to its fold. In the Frontier, it lacked a specific ideology and programme and came into existence in reaction against the Congress ministry; it benefited from the so-called wrong steps of the ministry and exploited every move of the ministers in its own interests. The Muslims of the N-WFP were reminded time and again that they 'should receive their orders from Madina and not from Wardha'.²³ The Congressites were accused of denigrating the 'Muslim turban which was the sign of the Holy Prophet' and of replacing it with a Gandhi cap.²⁴ Abdul Ghaffar Khan was accused of introducing the Congress flag with its *charka*, to replace the Islamic flag with the 'Crescent and Star'.²⁵ Furthermore, to prove their allegations against Abdul Ghaffar Khan of leaning towards Hinduism, photographs of him were shown to the people in which he was sitting with the members of the CWC at Wardha taking food in 'Hindu utensils' and in what was constructed as their manner. Time and again the Leaguers gave their clarion call to defend the 'bastion of Islam' — the Frontier Province — which they considered to be at stake because of the collaboration of the Khan Brothers with the Hindu-dominated Congress. Probably the importance of the N-WFP to the ML was due to the fact that it was the only Muslim majority province which had a Congress ministry. This fact was disturbing for the ML: despite a 93% Muslim majority, the N-WFP stood firm behind the Congress in its struggle to get rid of imperialism, rather than to be with their co-religionists of the ML, who claimed to be the only representatives of the Muslims in India.

After the passage of the Lahore Resolution in March 1940 the local Leaguers approached the Muslim masses directly in pursuit of a

separate homeland for the Muslims. As most of the provincial Congress leaders were away from the political scene, either in prison or outside the province, it was the best opportunity for the PML to popularise itself amongst the Frontier Muslims using the idea of Pakistan.

The few Congress leaders who were out of prison started a well organised programme against the League's demand of Pakistan. Abdul Qaiyum condemned the Pakistan scheme and termed it impracticable, accusing the Leaguers of creating communalism.²⁶ Master Abdul Karim viewed Pakistan as the domination of Punjab over Sindh, Balochistan and the N-WFP. He was worried about the desecration and destruction of the historical heritage of Muslims in India at the hands of extremist Hindus, if Pakistan was granted.²⁷

While Muslims in every province of what later became Pakistan were ethnically distinct from each other, and generally aspired to local autonomy, the Muslim League sought to subordinate them to a more centralised control. The primary resource mobilised by the Muslim League to establish its ascendancy over local movements for autonomy in the Muslim majority provinces was the slogan of 'Islam in danger', and hostility towards the Hindus. While this strategy succeeded in Sindh, Punjab, and Bengal, it did not get very far in the N-WFP simply because there were few Hindus in the province. While Hindus in Bengal and Sindh, and Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab were in a substantial numbers, enough to constitute a threat to the League's design, in the Frontier they could be ignored. For the Muslim League it was vital to enlist the Muslim majority provinces, especially in the north-west, to the cause of Pakistan if any one of them were to opt out there could be no Pakistan. Hence the League sought ferociously to overcome political opposition in these provinces.

During the elections of 1945-46, the Congress succeeded in getting an absolute majority in the N-WFP. In a House of 50, Congress got 30 and its allies received 3 more seats and the remaining 17 went to the Muslim League. As any change within the legislative assembly was impossible and the next elections were at least four years away, the FPML started preparations to devise ways and means for unconstitutional methods to be used against the Frontier Congress ministry. The PML leaders started talking of using 'swords and knives' if Pakistan was not granted.²⁸

A similar movement was launched in the neighbouring Punjab against the Khizar ministry. Moreover, exclusion from power at a most critical time when there were plans for the partition of India presented more frustrations to League. In both cases the ML resorted to civil disobedience against elected government to prove that the

overwhelming majority of the Muslim population was supporting the League demand for Pakistan.

The fall of the Unionist ministry in the Punjab on 2 March put an intolerable strain on the Congress ministry. After the League's triumph in the Punjab, the N-WFP became the main focus of attention for the League. As it was the only province of proposed Pakistan where the League was not in power, it was essential for the League to wrest it from Congress. During the whole time Jinnah was engaged in persuading the Viceroy to dissolve the Congress ministry in the Frontier, but the Viceroy refused bluntly. Mountbatten was aware of Congress pressure on him if he dissolved its ministry in the Frontier without any valid reason. He considered dissolution not only 'wrong morally and legally' but also, according to him, it would 'shake the confidence of Congress' in Mountbatten's impartiality and might 'well invite violence in other parts of India leading to further attempts to overthrow legally constituted and popularly elected Governments'. Mountbatten's own choice was for a referendum, as this would cost the government less and would spare a lot of time and energy. Nehru consented to holding a referendum on the simple issue of Pakistan and Hindustan. Jinnah also endorsed the Viceroy's views on holding of a referendum in the N-WFP.²⁹ The Government's plan of 3 June announced an immediate transfer of power to Indian hands. 15 August was chosen as the earliest possible date for that purpose. It also recommended holding of a referendum in the N-WFP on the issue of joining Hindustan or Pakistan. Nehru confirmed the acceptance of the partition plan. The AICC met at Delhi on 14 June and approved the proposed partition plan.³⁰

The drastic changes in Delhi aroused mixed feelings in the N-WFP. While the League was jubilant, and satisfied by the announcement of the holding of plebiscite on the choice of India or Pakistan, the Khudai Khidmatgars were indignant. With the announcement of the British withdrawal from India one of the main objectives of the Khudai Khidmatgars seemed to be fulfilled. However, on the division of the subcontinent into Hindustan and Pakistan, the Frontier nationalists were not happy. To their chagrin, the Congress had accepted the partition plan, including a referendum in the N-WFP, without even consulting the Frontier leaders. There was only a token protest from J. Kripalani, the Congress president, who showed his dissent and protested at the holding of the referendum without the Frontier Congress being given the choice to offer a third option i.e an independent Pashtoonistan. Mountbatten replied that it was at Nehru's request that a proposal to allow every province to vote for Pakistan,

Hindustan or independence had been dropped, and that they could hardly accept him to reintroduce it at this stage.³¹ This was simply to show the Frontier leadership that the Congress high command had tried its best to convince the central government of the validity of their demand and exhausted every avenue of recourse on behalf of the Frontier Congress. Actually they regarded the Viceroy's proposals as the best available under the circumstances and they were not going to risk the future of India on the Frontier issue.³² On the Viceroy's negative reply regarding the inclusion of the third option, Congress withdrew its suggestion without the slightest protest and dropped the issue for ever.

Gandhi, however, opposed the referendum and regarded it as dangerous and held that it might lead to violence amongst the inhabitants of the N-WFP. According to him it would be unfair to ask the Pashtoons to choose between Hindustan and Pakistan 'without knowing what each is. They should at least know where their entity will be fully protected'.³³ Differences thus emerged between Gandhi and the Congress high command on the issue of referendum. Nehru and Patel were supporting it while Gandhi was against it.³⁴ The differences reached to such an extent that Gandhi regarded his presence in Delhi as unnecessary and decided to go to Bihar to spend more time in the rehabilitation and relief of the victims of communal strife.³⁵

Abdul Ghaffar Khan was summoned to Delhi so that the whole affair could be discussed with him. The CWC and AICC ratified the decision regarding the partition of the subcontinent and a referendum in the N-WFP. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was stunned at the decision of the CWC as the Congress leadership had always assured the Khudai Khidmatgars that it would not accept the partition of India under any circumstances.³⁶ Reminding the members of the long affiliation of the Khudai Khidmatgars with the INC, Abdul Ghaffar Khan regarded it as an act of treachery that the Congress had accepted the plan without even consulting their Frontier colleagues. 'We Pakhtuns stood by you and had undergone great sacrifices for attaining freedom', complained Abdul Ghaffar Khan 'but you have now deserted us and thrown us to the wolves'. Speaking on the referendum issue, he stated that 'we shall not agree to hold referendum because we had decisively won the elections on the issue of Hindustan versus Pakistan and proclaimed the Pakhtun view on it to the world. Now, as India has disowned us, why should we have a referendum on Hindustan and Pakistan? Let it be on Pakhtunistan or Pakistan'.³⁷

On 14-15 June the AICC met in Delhi and endorsed the CWC decision. Neither Abdul Ghaffar Khan nor Dr. Khan Sahib was invited

from the N-WFP. A resolution endorsing the CWC step was passed. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was authorised to negotiate with League for a honourable settlement of the Frontier issue. But by then it was too late for them to reach an amicable settlement with Jinnah and the League.³⁸

On 18 June, a meeting was arranged between Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Jinnah. Abdul Ghaffar Khan informed Jinnah of the readiness of the Khudai Khidmatgars to join Pakistan provided Jinnah accepted: (a) complete provincial autonomy, (b) the right for the province to secede from Pakistan if it so desired, and (c) the right to admission to the N-WFP of contiguous territories inhabited by Pashtoons. Jinnah asked them first to join the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and then to decide there all these matters with mutual understanding. Abdul Ghaffar Khan replied that after attending his party meeting at Bannu on 21 June he would inform Jinnah of the outcome.³⁹

On 21 June, a joint meeting of the FPCC, the Congress Parliamentary Party and the Khudai Khidmatgars was held at Bannu. The members were informed of the acceptance of the partition plan by the AICC. It had caused deep disappointment and resentment amongst them. They were asked about their opinion on the matter. It was unanimously agreed that after the holding of the last general elections a year before, there was no need of fresh elections on the issue of Hindustan and Pakistan. However, if the central government insisted upon new elections, they should be on Pashtoonistan vs. Pakistan. The establishment of a separate Pashtoon State was demanded, which would have its own constitution, based on the traditional Pashtoon culture and values, and would be framed on the basis of Islamic conception of democracy, equality and social justice. It was further decided to boycott the referendum because it did not include the option for Pashtoonistan.⁴⁰

Jinnah reacted sharply to the decision of the FPCC and regarded it as 'a direct breach of the acceptance by the Congress of HMG's Plan of June 3'. According to Jinnah, after the AICC acceptance of the 3 June Plan, which provided for a referendum in the N-WFP, the FPCC was bound to honour the agreement. He appealed to the Muslims of the N-WFP to work wholeheartedly for and support the referendum in favour of Pakistan, as they were Muslims first and Pashtoons afterwards.⁴¹

The referendum was held between 6 and 17 July and the referendum results were announced on 20 July. As Congress took no part in the polling, according to the official results the valid votes for Pakistan were 289,244 and for India 2874.⁴² The Khudai Khidmatgars regarded the referendum as a 'farce' and 'one-sided' affair. 'As we

took no part in the referendum', remarked Abdul Ghaffar Khan 'the Muslim League had no hurdles to cross'.⁴³ In the absence of any scrutiny by the Congress, they were free to do so, which they did, in most cases with the support of the Muslim polling staff. To deceive the general public, at each big polling booth a few votes were cast in support of India and the remainder went to Pakistan.

The League's success in the Frontier referendum was regarded as an expression of the willingness of the people of the N-WFP to join Pakistan. The PML circles were jubilant at the results, but the Khudai Khidmatgars, who were the real losers in the whole drama, termed it a 'great conspiracy' against the patriots. The Khudai Khidmatgars, against their will, were forced into joining a state against which they had quiet recently been struggling. The Khudai Khidmatgars generally, and the Khan Brothers particularly, were accused of friendship with the opponents of Pakistan.

Mountbatten informed the Secretary of State of the latest Frontier situation. He asked for permission for the immediate dismissal of Khan Sahib's ministry and formation of a new League ministry. The main reasons, according to the Viceroy were the apprehensions of the League leaders concerning Khan Sahib's intended declaration of an independent Pashtoonistan on 15 August.⁴⁴ The India Office did not approve the Viceroy's suggestions. The Secretary of State regarded the dismissal as unconstitutional, because the ministry still had a majority in the legislature. Law and order were under the control of the provincial administration, therefore the imposition of Section 93 was also ruled out. On Liaquat's allegations concerning Khan Sahib's declaration, Listowel asked Mountbatten for its confirmation by other sources. Liaquat, according to the Secretary of State 'is very interested party and I do not think that we ought to accept his unsupported assertion regarding Khan Sahib's intentions particularly as you in India presumably and we in Parliament certainly would have to justify our action by reference to our knowledge that Khan Sahib was about to declare Pathanistan'. Listowel advised Mountbatten 'to leave the problem to be resolved after August 15th and this must be without intervention of yourself and HMG'. Moreover, Mountbatten was informed of Cunningham's taking over as the new Governor before 15 August, and 'if he believes that there is the slightest risk of such a step' he would be left with no other choice but to dissolve the ministry instantly.⁴⁵ Mountbatten informed Liaquat of his inability to dismiss the ministry and anticipated further discussion of the matter between Jinnah and Cunningham.

Cunningham arrived in Karachi on 11 August. He met Jinnah, who remained adamant on the immediate dismissal of Khan Sahib's ministry. Jinnah was suspicious of Khan Sahib's assurances of 'playing fair with Pakistan'. He had no doubts that 'Khan Sahib meant to "sabotage" the whole idea of Pakistan. I asked Jinnah 3 or 4 times', recorded Cunningham, 'what he really meant by this, and how Khan Sahib could destroy the whole Constitution, but he refused, both on this and on other points, to say exactly what he meant, and confined himself to vague general statements'.⁴⁶ Cunningham persuaded Jinnah 'with great difficulty' to allow him to try to settle affairs in the N-WFP without 'having recourse to such drastic means'. Cunningham replaced Lockhart as Governor N-WFP on 13 August. He had a meeting with Khan Sahib on the same day. Khan Sahib was informed of Jinnah's apprehensions and was warned of dismissal from office in the case of non-co-operation with the Pakistan government. Khan Sahib assured Cunningham that they neither had any intentions of declaring an independent Pashtoonistan nor would they be jeopardising the Pakistan government. The Frontier Premier opined that if they found themselves unable to support the government of Pakistan, they should tender their resignations without hesitation.

Pakistan came into being on 14 August 1947. Khan Sahib and his colleagues decided not to attend the flag-hoisting ceremony held on 15 August at Peshawar. The obvious reason was the possibility of preventing the projected misbehaviour of the League volunteers on the occasion. This provided a *casus belli* for the dismissal of the Congress ministry; Khan Sahib and his colleagues were charged with insulting the Pakistan government by their wilful absence from the official flag-hoisting ceremony. On 21 August Jinnah authorised Cunningham to dissolve Khan Sahib's ministry, which he did accordingly. Cunningham invited Abdul Qaiyum Khan on the same afternoon to form a League ministry in the N-WFP. The Frontier Leaguers gave a sigh of relief, as their concept of Pakistan, accompanied by full Muslim League control was now fulfilled. On the other hand, Frontier Congress and the Khudai Khidmatgars, who opposed the Pakistan movement from its inception, regarded it as Jinnah's first un-democratic step and a severe blow to democracy in the newly created state of Pakistan. Pakistan, which till the very recent past was regarded by them as only an electioneering slogan of the League, became a reality. Before they could think over what their responses were to the drastic changes in the sub-continent and their attitude to their future relations with Pakistan, a campaign of intimidation and torture was initiated by Qaiyum, the new Frontier

Premier, which resulted in a ban on the Khudai Khidmatgars and the arrest of all the prominent leaders of Frontier Congress in the N-WFP. Thus with the British withdrawal from the sub-continent in 1947 a new chapter of Frontier history started, but without giving any proper place to the nationalists, who had dominated the Frontier politics for nearly three decades.

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