

## **Out Break of the Second World War and Attitude of the All India Muslim League**

**\*Parveen Usmani**

*Assist. Professor, Karim city college (B.Ed.), Jamshedpur Research Scholar Kolhan University Chaibasa, Jharkhand*

*Corresponding Author: \*Parveen Usmani*

---

**ABSTRACT:** Between 1906 and 1939 the All INDIA Muslim League claimed constitutional safeguards, separate electorates, weighted representation and reserve quota in the Government services. The principle of communal representation, conceded in the Morley – Minto Reforms of 1909, was not only maintained but extended even for other minorities in the successive reforms of 1919 and 1935. But since the Act of 1935 contained the federal scheme for India, all shields and concessions, granted to the Muslims, failed to serve their future. After 1937 the Congress refusal to include the Muslim League nominees in the Provincial ministries and the pouring reports of the tyrannies over the Muslims from the Congress ruled provinces changed the creed of the Muslim League. With the outbreak of the Second World War the idea of Muslims being a nation, forcefully pleaded by Jinnah, gathered much strength during 1839 – 1940 and from 1940 a persistent search was started for a satisfactory solution of the problem through a rearrangement, redistribution, division or partition of India on religious and cultural lines.

**Key Words:** Attitude, Muslim League, reactions, British Raj, World War II.

---

Date of Submission: 12 -07-2017

Date of acceptance: 26-07-2017

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The strain and stress that forced the nations of the World to fall into the First World War were vast and varied. It was not one country but many that brought the war. At the Paris Peace Treaty and formation of the League of Nations, efforts were made to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of the war. But the ill-fated Versailles Treaty and the magnificent structure of the League of Nations, with all its high ideals, objectives and elaborate machinery failed to deliver good to mankind and could not avoid the reoccurrence of similar tragedy. In 1939 the whole world was bound, in one way or the other, to feel the shock of both these two great calamities of human history. British India was no exception to it. The events of the war and the conflicting attitude of the different political parties towards the war led to a socio – political antagonism and intensification of the liberation movement in India.

### **II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE TOWARDS THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR:-**

The mounting tension in Europe and growing probability of the outbreak of the Second World War in the late thirties proved a blessing in disguise for the people of India, both Hindu and Muslims. It presented a different situation and also provided opportunity to the leaders of the Muslim League and the National Congress to play an important and more independent role in future Indian as well as world politics.

Fully aware of the decaying international situation and the increasing possibility of the outbreak of the second world crisis, the All India Muslim League under Mr. Jinnah made it clear that the League is not going to be an ally of any one, but would be the ally of even the devil if need be in the interest of Muslims. The Council of the Muslim League considered it premature to determine any policy and the attitude of the League towards the possible outbreak of the war. The Council authorized the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League to decide the issue and take any suitable recourse if the war breaks out suddenly.

With Germany's invasion of Poland on the first of September, 1939 the Second World War broke out and on September 3 England declared war against Germany. Simultaneously India too was declared a belligerent when on Sunday, September 3, 1939, at 8.30 PM I.S.T, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow proclaimed over All India Radio from the Viceregal summer residence in Simla that the Government of His Majesty was engaged in war with Germany and that a state of war emergency existed. He pleaded to the people in British India and the Indian Princes to support the war effort. This declaration of a Viceroy was unilateral and without

consulting the Provincial Governments and major Indian political parties and their Leaders. The Indian Leaders felt this humiliating because in all other members of the British Commonwealth like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa war was declared only on the advice and with the approval of their respective Parliaments. The very next day it was made clear by Mohammad Zafrullah Khan, the Law member of the Executive Council and the speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly, who declared that "every one of us here fully realizes the gravity of the crisis and is determined to his duty to fight for King and the Country." The Council of State also expressed similar view without any note of dissent from any member. Thus the Viceroy easily succeeded in obtaining a formal approval of both the houses of Legislature. On September 4, Linlithgow received the Indian Leaders of the two major but rival Indian political parties – the National Congress and the All India Muslim League, to know their immediate reaction to the declaration of the war, he met a Gandhi who deeply moved by Hitler's aggressive policy, assured him of his full moral support for the cause of Britain and he found a Jinnah who seemed determined to exploit the war situation for intensifying his struggle with the Congress and to achieve his goal. Jinnah believed that he had a chance for one sided Britain co- operation. The working Committee of the National Congress too, declared its willingness to help Britain against Germany. But Congress support to Britain was not unconditional. It repeated its earlier demand of immediate and complete independence.

In reply to this question when the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow declared on October 18, 1939 that the Dominion Status was the ultimate goal of Britain in India, the Congress felt very much disappointed. The Congress Working Committee refused to extend any co- operation and support to England in war efforts. The reaction and responses of All India Muslim League to the outbreak of the Second World War was not the same followed by the Congress. Soon after the declaration of war by Britain, the Muslim Ministries of the Punjab and Bengal declared their support to Britain. Sind and Assam did not lag behind. But the view of Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a little different and he disagreed to fully approve the declaration of war. The Muslim League adopted a mild attitude and courteously informed the Government of its resentment to the Nazi aggression. The League sought an assurance that no decision would be made about India without its approval and that the Muslim League to be recognized as the only organization that can speak for Muslim India.

In a meeting of the Muslim League's Working Committee held in New Delhi on September 18, 1939 it did not fail to indicate the conditions that must have to be fulfilled if real support and solid co- operation to Britain in her war efforts and crisis were to be secured. The League Leaders wanted some sort of guarantee as a precondition for extending their co- operation. When war started the League made it clear that Muslims of India were irrevocably opposed to federal scheme, which must necessarily result in a rule of the majority community under the guise of democracy and a parliamentary system of government. When the British Government agreed in October 1939 to make little concessions to both the League and the Congress by the expansion of the Central Executive Council, establishment of a War Council and by giving assurance for the revision of the Act of 1935 after the end of the war, both the major parties rejected it but on different lines. The Congress declared it unsatisfactory and repeated its demand of the framing of the constitution by an elected Constituent Assembly of the Indians. On the other hand the Muslim League was not prepared to accept such a declaration until Congress had recognized the Muslim League as the voice of India's Muslims and redressed its grievances.

The Working Committee of the Muslim League in its meeting on October 22, 1939 decided to seek certain clarifications and offers made, subject to which it empowered Mr Jinnah, if fully satisfied to an assurance of co- operation and support on behalf of the Indian Muslims to Britain in the war.

A special Cabinet meeting unanimously decided on November 6, that Britain should not concede India's right to post war independence and a constituent Assembly and resolved to support the Viceroy in maintaining law and order but agreed that Congress should not be obstructed in any co- operative overture it might make. However, in pursuance of the resolution of the Congress Working Committee the Congress ministries in all the eight provinces resigned between October 27 and November 15, 1939.

This withdrawal of the National Congress from the provincial politics provided greater leverage to the League leaders in the non- Congress provinces of Sind, Bengal and Punjab and increased the power of the Muslim League. With the Congress thrown into wilderness the British also got opportunity to play the game. Now the Viceroy felt that there was no need to woo the Congress leaders and instead he began to lean more on the support of Jinnah and his party in the war effort. In a way the Government gave him a Veto power on any future constitutional change. He fully utilized the opportunity by making the very most of the situation. He added to his demands in Constitutional matters with a request not to deploy any Indian troops against any Muslim country.

The Muslim League Leaders fully exploited the war situation. Under encouragement during the war crisis Mr. Jinnah by making profound promises of Muslim aid in the war effort, in course of his frequent interviews with the Viceroy, not only gained the support for his plans and objectives, he fortified Government's decision not to accept the demand put forward by the Congress Leaders for a Constituent Assembly to frame the

Constitution of India. The most important condition was that no constitutional arrangement was acceptable which was not approved by the Muslim League.

The Lahore session held on March 24, 1940 under the president ship of Jinnah declared the plan of drafting a constitution by Constituent Assembly as impracticable and unacceptable. The historic session of Lahore passed the famous Pakistan resolution. The Lahore session did not pass any resolution on war issue, neither it could take any reference to the war. During the remaining period of the war the Muslim League continued its efforts to achieve the declared goal of Pakistan.

During the second phase from April 1940 to December 1942, the war developed with lightning speed. During this period France and England were the main targets of German attack and Hitler concentrated his efforts against England. Amery, the new Secretary of State for India and Linlithgow realized the necessity of discussing with Gandhi and Jinnah. Linlithgow considered the importance of unity in this time of trial and for united effort in which all parties can join for the common good.

As a measure necessitated by the war, the expansion of the Executive Council and formation of a War Advisory Council was announced in July 1941. No Congress or League member joined. The inclusion of the Muslim Premiers of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam by the Viceroy at the newly constituted National Defence Council without the permission of the Muslim League President was sharply censured by Jinnah who had sized up Linlithgow and found him deficient in both wit and grit. The Government of India, however, considers it opportune to maintain a smooth co-operation with all important groups of the sub-continent.

The British Indian military occupation of Iran, Iraq and Syria evoked sharp criticism in the Muslim circle and Jinnah opposed Linlithgow's efforts of co-operation. But the entry of Japan and America in the war and an imminent threat of invasion on India created a new situation. The mounting war pressure resulted in the announcement of Cripps proposals in March 1940 which dominated the rest of the war. Cripps brought the offer of the British Government to woo the support of the political parties in the war effort. One of the proposals conceded Jinnah's demand of Pakistan. The Cripps Mission did not satisfy the Congress. After the disbandment of the Congress the field was left free for the activities of the League. Both the Viceroy and the Secretary of State repeatedly gave assurance that no constitutional or administrative measure would be considered or affected without the consent of the League.

Now the British aimed at consolidating the Muslim opposition to the Congress and support to their war measures and increased Jinnah's prestige and influence. With Government's help the non-League ministries of the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, Assam and North West Frontier Province were removed and brought under the rule of the League.

Jinnah's strategy was to threaten the British with fearful consequences if they showed any inclination to accept Congress demand and adopt any measure against their Pakistan demand, it will lead to terrible chaos and disaster, as 100 million of Muslims of India will never forgive the British if they are let down.

Addressing to the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Muslim League at Karachi in December 1943 Jinnah proclaimed:

"We have time and again made it clear- we have offered our hand of co-operation for the job or work that Lord Wavell (new Viceroy) wants to do, provided our hand is accepted as that of a confident friend with real share in the authority of the Government, and with a definite promise that we shall get our share in the fruits of Viceroy when we win it. That has been rejected.

Reacting to Churchill's statement, given some times ago, that he was not called or summoned to be the First Minister of the King to liquidate the British Empire, Jinnah warned that Voluntary liquidation is more honorable than a compulsory one. The British Empire will have to be liquidated one day, whether you like it or not.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Thus the World War Second created in India a situation which proved a great menace to the possibility of the Hindu Muslim unity. An analysis of the reaction of the Congress and the Muslim League to the Second World War shows that Britain's need of Indian co-operation and support in her war effort was fully exploited by both the major political groups to achieve their respective goal- the transfer of power to the Congress and creation of Pakistan. But they differ in manner and tactics. The Congress pressurized the Government by her policy of non-co-operation, withdrawal from the Provincial ministries and put an end to any possibility of co-operation between the Raj and the Congress. Jinnah was clever enough to make good of the war situation by adopting a mild policy and refraining from taking any harsh action and confrontation with the Raj. He made the British to promote his cause and accept his increasing demands. It was his political wisdom and shrewd political diplomacy that made him supreme Leader throughout the period of war.

**REFERENCES**

- [1]. Zaidi A.M., *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India*, vol. v, pp.75- 77.
- [2]. *The Hindu*, September 5, 1939.
- [3]. Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. v, No. 13, 1939, pp. 277- 310.
- [4]. Ahmad Manzoor, *Indian Response to Second World War*, (New Delhi 1987) p. 27.
- [5]. Cabinet Conclusion 73 (39).
- [6]. Chand Tara, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. Iv, P.287.
- [7]. Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India*, vol. v, pp. 195- 225.
- [8]. Linlithgow, *Speeches*, vol. 2, pp.231- 34.
- [9]. Vought J. H., *India in the Second World War*, p. 59.
- [10]. Ahmad Manzoor, *Indian Response to the Second World War*, p. 250.
- [11]. Ahmad Jamiluddin, *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr Jinnah*, p.434.
- [12]. Official Pamphlet printed and published by S. Shamsul Hasan, at the Muslim League Printing Press and Latifi Press, Delhi.

IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Parveen Usmani. "Out Break of the Second World War and Attitude of the All India Muslim League." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) 22.7 (2017): 01-04.