

Indian Muslim Freedom Fighters Based in Afghanistan and Soviet Russia

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Abstract:

At the outbreak of the First World War, the Indian Muslim freedom fighters headed towards Afghanistan and thence to Soviet Russia to devise a strategy to pulverize the British Indian government through an alliance of the powers that were hostile to the British Imperialism in India such as Germany, Turkey, Czarist Russia and Soviet Russia. The present paper takes into account the life struggle of a few spirited individuals such as Mawlana Abdur Rahim Alias, Maulvi Bashir, Maulvi Muhammad Ali Quāuri, Mawlana Barakatullah Bhopali, Mawlana Ubayd Allah Sindhi and a host of others who found their way towards Afghanistan with the avowed intention of the liquidation of the British Imperialism from India. The activities of these Freedom fighters apparently did not bring about immediate tangible results in terms of the freedom of India; however, they contributed to the complete freedom of Afghanistan and in subsequent years brought the goal of the freedom of their own country nearer.

The idea of seeking political help from Afghanistan is traceable to the times of Shah Waliūll'āh of Delhi (1703-1762), a highly gifted Muslim Sufi of the 18th century, who invited Ahmad Shah Abdālī to invade India and save the Muslim rule from annihilation and anarchy.¹ Following the example of his illustrious father, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824), the elder son of Shah Waliūll'āh, had had a vision in which he felt he was directed to learn Pukhto.² When he woke up he interpreted this vision by saying that the Indian Muslims should look to Afghanistan for help and inspiration. In the wake of the fall of Delhi in 1803, Shah Abdul Aziz issued a *fatwa* that India had ceased to be a *Dār-ul-Islam* (the abode of Islam) and it had become *Dar-ul-Harb* (the abode of war).³ The ramifications of this *fatwa* were two-fold; either the Indian Muslims should wage an armed resistance against the

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British or they should migrate to the nearest Muslim country.⁴ In the subsequent years both these options were put to use by the Indian Muslims. Since he himself could not wage a *Jihad* due to his old age, he started searching for a young and energetic man who could lead a *Jihad* against the foreign rulers. Eventually, he found such a man in the person of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (1786-1831), who had been born 24 years after the death of Shah Waliull'ah.⁵ Shah Abdul Aziz took the Sayyid into his discipleship and groomed him not only as a mystic but also advised him to join the army of Nawwab Amir Khan of Tonk⁶ so that he could learn the art of soldiery and fighting. Thus before his death in 1824, Shah Abdul Aziz conferred his robe on the Sayyid, gave him his staff and permitted him to initiate *Jihad* against foreign rulers.

Sayyid Ahmad Shahid chose the present KPK as a bastion of his militant activities against the Sikhs. With the massacre of Balakot in 1831, the *Jihad* movement died out temporarily; however, the surviving *Mujahidin* quickly reorganized themselves and established their headquarters at Sithana, situated between Haripur and Tarbela. When this headquarter was demolished by the British, the *Mujahidin* shifted to Malka in the Chamla valley in Buner and from there to Smast also in Buner. Finally, they established their headquarters at Chamarkhand, situated at the confluence of the Mohmand and Bajaur political agencies. Obviously, the choice of Chamarkand was due to its proximity to Afghanistan. The *Mujahidin* thought that since Chamarkand was situated closer to the border with Afghanistan, they might get moral as well as material help from that country.

II

The person who played a dominant role in the establishment of the Chamarkand headquarters was Mawlana Abdur Rahim popularly known as Maulvi Bashir (d.1934). He was by far the most active person among the remnants of the group of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, who kept the flame of the *Jihad* alive in the Frontier. Maulvi Bashir belonged to the *ahl-Hadith* sect of Lahore. He was instrumental in goading the fifteen young Muslim students from the various colleges of Lahore to immigrate to Kabul and fight for Turkey in her war with the Allied powers bent as they were on the liquidation of Turkey. Among these enthusiastic students, eight were from government college Lahore; four were from King Edward's medical college and one each from Aitcheson, Chiefs College and Islamia college.⁷ On 6th January 1915 at mid night, these students reached the shores of Ravi through a ship. There they took an oath of secrecy on the Qur'an to participate in practical *Jihad*. On Friday, the 5th February 1915, they reached Haripur via a train. From here they entered the state of Amb;

crossed the Indus and reached the tāribal territory of Buner⁸ where they were welcomed at the Smast Centre of the *Mujāhidin*. After a brief stay at Smast, they set out for Kabul via Chamarkhand. The ultimate goal of these students was to go to Turkey; enlist in its army and fight the Allied forces. At Kabul they were incarcerated by Amīr Habibullāh. Later, upon the recommendation of the anti-British members of the court, they were released.⁹ These students played an important role in the affairs of Afghanistan such as participation in the third Anglo-Afghan war of 1919 and functioning like emissaries of the Provisional Government of India in exile to Russia and other countries. Miān °Abdul Bāri, Allāh Nawāz Khan, Khushi Muhammad and Zafar Hasan Aibak were included among these students.

After having galvanized these students, Maulvī Bashīr also migrated to Kabul and met with Mawlānā °Ubayd Allāh Sindhī. With the suggestion of the group of the *Mujāhidin* represented by Maulvī Bashīr, an association was formed which was named *Jundullāh* (the Army of God). The idea of the *Jundullāh* was the brainchild of Mawlānā °Ubayd Allāh,¹⁰ which will occupy us in a later section. By virtue of this organization, the mutual rivalries which had surfaced between the students from Lahore due to idleness were arrested. Thus the energies of these students that were being wasted in mutual disputes were channelized into fruitful social and political work.

III

Another indefatigable freedom fighter based in Central Asia was Maulvī Muhmmad °Alī Qusūrī (1851-1956) who was a teacher at Habibiya school at Kabul. Qusūrī had studied Math at Cambridge University. One month before the outbreak of the First World War, he returned to India. After making consultations with the national leaders, he decided to go to Afghanistan, because, as he put it “Britain and Russia had decided to bring Afghanistan under their influence like what they had done to Iran”.¹¹ Qusūrī’s mission was to inform Afghanistan about this looming danger as it were. He wanted to realize this mission and achieve his objectives by forging an alliance between Amīr Habibullāh Khan and the tribesmen and to pit this united front against the British. Qusūrī, like the rest of his fellow freedom fighters opined that the time for an onslaught on India was most congenial for the simple reason that British Indian soldiers were fighting on foreign fronts; very little army was left for the home front. In circumstances like these, so the fanciful argument ran, an attack on India could have been a great success.¹² Qusūrī visited the centres of Hāji Turangzai (1858-1937) and Mullā Şāhib of Bābara (d. 1927) He sent envoys to Swat, Amb, Chitral and to chieftains of other places. He prepared a plan of making attacks on Razmak, Parachinar, Kohat, Dara, Thal and Peshawar. Maulvī Bashīr was sent to Kabul to meet Amīr Habibullāh and seek his help and wise counsel. Meanwhile, Qusūrī and Turangzai attacked the fronts at Gandab, Michini and Shabqadar. Mullā Şāhib of Bābara attacked the post near his

hometown at Bajaur. These insurrections were a source of great trouble for the British. However, Maulvī Bashīr’s mission to seek the help of Amīr Habibullāh met with little success. The Amīr, who was known for his pro-British proclivities, was not willing to meet him in public. He summoned Bashīr at midnight to his palace and after some casual conversation bade him goodbye. Sardār Nasrullāh Khān (1874-1921), brother of the Amīr, who had a soft corner for the Indian freedom fighters apologized for the behavior of the Amīr and gave him 12 or 15 thousand rupees and some weapons. When the British realized that the tribesmen were being organized, they carried out propaganda that it was not lawful to make *Jihād* without an Amīr.¹³

With the advent of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in October 1917, it was hoped that Soviet Russia would withdraw from the war resulting in the victory of Germany which would crush the Allied forces stationed at France. However, Bolshevik revolution was in a nascent state and expecting Soviet Russia to play such a role as would contribute to the defeat of the Allied forces was not possible. When the USA entered into the war with her fresh 86000 troops,¹⁴ a decisive blow was meted out to Germany. She could not sustain the onslaught of Britain, France, Japan and the USA taken together. Tribal chiefs initiated moves for a truce with Sir George Rooskippel, the Commissioner of NWFP. The latter proposed that Qusūrī should personally see him at Peshawar. The fictitious name of Qusūrī was Sulaimān. Invitation was sent to Sulaimān and negotiations ensued. Sulaimān refused Rooskippel’s offer of employment which included the principal ship of Islamia College Peshawar. Qusūrī had given ample financial help to Mawlānā ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhi. For instance, when Dr. Khushi Muhammad, one of the fifteen students from Lahore, who had assumed at least three fictitious names such Ahmad Hasan, Mirzā Muhammad ‘Alī and Ibrāhim Sipāsī, was being sent to Tsarist Russia as an envoy of the Provisional government of India in exile at Kabul, Sindhi borrowed money from Qusūrī who obtained two months’ salary in advance and gave it to Sindhi for the expenses of Khushi Muhammad’s journey to Russia.¹⁵ Muhammad ‘Alī Qusūrī survived the creation of Pakistan; he died of heart attack on 12 January 1956.¹⁶

IV

Yet another indefatigable Indian Muslim freedom fighter based in Central Asia was Mawlānā Barakatullāh Bhopali (1859-1927). He belonged to the family of ‘Ulamā in Bhopal and had studied at the Madrassa-i Sulaimāniya there. In 1883 he came into contact with Sayyid Jamāl-ud-Din Afghānī (1838-1897), the celebrated pan-Islamist leader when the latter was touring India, preaching the gospel of unity and egging the local populace on rebellion against the British. Barakatullāh must have been influenced by the oratory and fiery speeches of Afghānī. Perhaps it was due to the influence of Afghānī that he suddenly disappeared from Bhopal never to return. Barkatullāh went to Bombay, studied there for four years to learn

English and then left for England. His commitment to Pan-Islamic ideals coupled with his anti-British frenzy dragged him to various countries of the world. He spent 11 years in England, 6 years in the USA, 5 years in Japan and a considerable part of his life in Central Europe, Central Asia and Soviet Russia. When he visited Japan, he was appointed a Prof. of Urdu and Persian at the Tokyo School of foreign languages from which place he brought out a revolutionary paper called the *Islamic Fraternity*. Since the paper propagated anti-British, Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asiatic ideas, and since Japan was an ally of Britain in the First World War¹⁷ Bhopali's paper was muzzled and he was driven out from Japan at the behest of the British. From Tokyo, Barakatullāh left for San Francisco to work for the Ghadar party. The Ghadar party had been founded by Lala Hardayal with the purpose of inducing the Indians living in the USA, Canada and other countries to go back to India, stage rebellion there and work for the liquidation of the British rule.

The outbreak of the First World War found Barakatullāh at Berlin alongwith several other revolutionaries such as Hardayal, Virendranath Chattopadhy, Mahendra Pratap, °Abdur Rabb Burq, a Madrassi named Pilai and a host of other revolutionaries. These revolutionaries had formed a party called the Indian Revolutionary Society.¹⁸ The purpose of this Society according to the Lahore Conspiracy Case was to establish a Republic in India.¹⁹ In mid-1915, the Berlin Society decided to send a Turkish German mission to Afghanistan to persuade the King of Afghanistan Amīr Habibullāh to enter the war on the side of Germany. Mahendra Pratap and Barakatullāh had been included in this mission. According to Pratap, Barakatullāh had been included in the mission so that he could explain to the Afghan king the point of view of the Turkish-German mission in Persian language.

Barakatullāh lived in Afghanistan for three and a half years i.e 1915 to 1919. He was the Prime Minister in the Provisional Government of India in exile at Kabul. In his capacity he participated in the diplomatic conspiratorial activities of the Indian revolutionaries stationed at Kabul. After the return of the Turkish-German mission empty handedly from Afghanistan, Barakatullāh lived on in that country and weighed the possibility of seeking Soviet help in the liberation of India. This hope had been specifically engendered after the Bolshevik revolution brought about by V.I. Lenin and Leo Trotsky. The main actor in the so-called October revolution, namely, Lenin, preached and propagated the slogan of the 'people's right to self-determination'.²⁰ Obviously this slogan ringed favourably to the Indian revolutionaries who were groaning under the British Imperialism. Henceforth, Lenin became the hero and Soviet Russia the great friend and liberator of the oppressed peoples of the East. Barakatullāh's infatuation with the Soviet Russia could be seen against this background.

Barakatullāh was in Soviet Russia from March 1919 till mid 1922 as

the unofficial representative of Afghanistan. He was first received by Lenin on May 7, 1919 and later in July of the same year.²¹ Though a staunch Muslim, Barakatullāh sought to prove that the main propositions of Islam and Communism or for that matter of other religions were identical.²² In a pamphlet captioned 'Islam and Bolshevism' which he wrote in October 1919, Barakatullāh appealed to the Muslims "to respond to the divine call of liberty, equality and fraternity sent forth by Lenin and the Soviet and stated that the Soviets considered that Constantinople should remain Muslim and that treaties for the division of the Ottoman Empire should be burnt. Muhammadans[sic] were urged not to recoil from Russia but to shun the savage wolves of Europe"²³ It was perhaps the first time in the history of the Indian sub-Continent that Islam and Communism became so closer to each other. Nariman Narimanov, in charge of the Middle East Department of the Peoples Commissariat for foreign affairs reported in November 1919 that "Barakatullāh was sent to the Volga Region, in company of a veteran worker, Izmailo, to carry on propaganda... with a view to rising against British imperialism. The object was ... to inform the masses of the Muslims about the state of things in the East. ... The Muslims had to be roused to united action."²⁴

Towards the close of September 1919 or the beginning of October of the same year, Barakatullāh embarked upon a large propaganda tour of the Volga towns and returned to Moscow early in January 1920. During this journey, he visited Kazan, Ufa, Samara, Sterlitamak and many other towns. In the second half of 1920, he set out on a similar major propaganda tour of the Trans Caspian Region. He spoke regularly at rallies, meetings and in mosques, denouncing the imperialists and appealing to Muslims including the Turkish POWs, to take an active part in the struggle for strengthening the Soviet Power. One of his proclamation speeches made in Kazan on October 20, 1919 carrying the caption "To my Turkish Brethren in Captivity" goes like this "Heroes of war, defenders of sacred Islam, brothers in religion, my Turkish brothers!... Ten months have passed since the Turkish government had to sign an armistice agreement with England, France and Italy. Enemies of Islam promised a peace based on right and justice... but after the capture of Dardanelles... they began to occupy Turkey and carve it up".²⁵ Elaborating further on the origin of the Kamalist revolution in Turkey, Barakatullāh went on to say, "The Soviet authorities of Russia are fighting the English and the French and, to this end, they want to act united with the Turkish nation... The Soviet authorities want to liberate both Russia and Turkey from grabbing hands... Turkish brothers... we expect you to act with self-sacrifice. Come along, get together, organize all Turkish detachments ... and, on a war march, drive out the rapacious enemies who have trampled under foot your freedom and business..."²⁶

In his appeals to the Muslim population of Soviet Russia, Barakatullāh used a different jargon. He said, "Comrades! English, French and American capitalists have brought under their control the capital of the Muslim world Constantinople and their guns have destroyed the holy cities of Makkah and Madina. They support the Russian counter revolution with money and weapons, and want to kill all life in Soviet Russia with a blockade. Comrade Muslims! Remember that it is your moral duty to act in common with the Soviet authorities, for; if they fail you will lose the last hope for the liberation of the East and the whole world. Join the red army as it is fighting for your liberation and your interests"²⁷.

A whole number of Barakatullāh's articles i.e. "Wilson against Lenin", "Bolshevik ideas and the Islamic Republic" and "To All Muslims of Asia" found their way to the countries of the East. His booklet Bolshevism and Islam, published in a number of Eastern languages including Persian, had an especially great influence. It also reached India where people often cited, the author's words: "The dawn of mankind's liberation is rising in Russia's horizon and Ulaynov-Lenin is the bright son of this day of happiness"²⁸

V

By far the most important freedom fighter based in Afghanistan and Central Asia was Mawlānā ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi (1872-1944). ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi belonged to the Deobnd Madrasah, the seat of Muslim resistance to the British imperialism in India. Whereas Mawlānā Barakatullāh had travelled to Afghanistan from Berlin, Mawlānā ʿUbayd Allāh had been dispatched by his mentor the Shaikh-ul-Hind, Mawlānā Mahmūd Hasan from Delhi with a grand mission the gist of which was like this. In the middle of the First World War when Britain was in great trouble, ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi was supposed to travel to Afghanistan and persuade the Afghan King Amīr Habibullāh to enter the war on the side of Germany and to orchestrate an assault on British India with the help of Afghanistan and Turkey, using the present Tribal Areas of Pakistan as an operation base. In order to realize this objective, he undertook his political journey to Afghanistan in August 1914 and reached Kabul in a highly secretive and surreptitious manner.

Prior to the dispatching Mawlānā ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi to Afghanistan, Mawlānā Mahmūd Hasan had already done some spadework in the Tribal Areas where his students and sympathizers were in abundance. For example, Mawlānā Saifur Rahmān, a native of a village in the vicinity of Peshawar and a teacher in a certain Madrassah at Delhi, had shifted from Delhi to Peshawar where he had opened a branch of the Hizbullāh, the party of Mawlānā Abul Kalām Āzād (1888-1957). Hāji Turangzai (real name Fazli Wāhid) was elected leader of this party.²⁹ The Shaikhul Hind patronized these people and instructed the central leaders to give up their sedentary and easy ways of life and resort to active warfare. Mawlānā Saifur Rahmān and

Hāji Turangzai had already embarked upon skirmishes against the British. Furthermore, Mullāh Ṣāhib of Sandākai (whose real name was °Alī Ahmad), Mawlānā Fazal Mahmūd, Mawlānā Muhammad Akbar and Maulvī Muhammad °Alī Quṣ ūri were associated with the movement of the Shaikhul Hind.³⁰ Even °Abdul Ghaffār Khān(1890-1988) had made *ba'c ah* (allegiance) at the hands of the Shaikhul Hind.³¹

Sindhi was supposed to help the *mujāhidin* of Chamarkhand in their squirmishes against the British on the one hand and participate in the diplomatic conspiratorial activities at Kabul on the other. Kabul itself had become a safe haven for Turkish-German and Indian revolutionaries. Prior to the breaking of the First World War, the Indian revolutionaries had converged on Berlin with the grand but illusionary hope of getting weapons and help from Germany for the political manumission of India. These revolutionaries away from their home towns and free from the fear of being arrested by the British cherished the fantastic vision that their efforts would contribute to fixing the last nail in the coffin of the British imperialism in India.

Upon reaching Kabul in October 1915, °Ubayd Allāh found himself at home as his friends and disciples were already there and had created a congealed atmosphere for him. For instance, Shaikh Muhammad Ibrāhīm, who had done his MA. in Economics from Bombay University, had already been dispatched by Sindhi to Kabul to become a teacher at Habibiyah School where he taught Geography.³² Along with Ibrāhīm, Sindhi had sent his nephew °Azīz Ahmad, the younger brother of Mawlānā Ahmad °Alī Lāhorī (the son in law of Sindhi). Shaikh Ibrāhīm had forged friendly relations with the notables at Kabul such as Muhammad Nādir Khan(d.1934), the Sardār Sipāh Salār, who later became the king of Afghanistan. This friendship of Ibrāhīm with the members of the royal family proved very successful in subsequent years. At Kabul, Sindhi, along with Ibrāhīm and Qusūrī, lived in a house situated in a street called Kocha-i Hazrat in the famous Shor Bazār.³³ The Afghan government had fixed a daily allowance of two rupees per day for Sindhi and his associates. Through the good offices of Mahmūd Beg Tarzai, a prominent poet and literary figure, Sindhi had a meeting with Sardār °Ināyatullāh Khan, the *Mu^cin al-Sultanate* (Helper of the State), the elder son of Habibullāh and the son-in-law of Tarzai. The prince invited Sindhi to dinner one day and thus Sindhi,s presence in Kabul became known to other Afghan Sardārs.³⁴

Similarly, through the good offices of Hāji °Abdur Razzāq, a graduate of Deoband Madrassah and a student of Mawlānā Rashhid Ahmad Gangohi, who was then the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Afghanistan, a meeting was also arranged with Sardār Nasrullāh Khan, brother of Amīr Habibullāh Khan. In a written application to Sardār

Nasrullāh Khan, Sindhi explained the purpose of his visit to Afghanistan in the following words. He said that he had visited Afghanistan as a representative of the Indian Muslims in an effort that the Afghan Monarch may be persuaded to invade India.³⁵ Consequent upon this explanation, a meeting between the two men took place in secrecy which lasted for two hours. Nasrullāh Khan then asked Sindhi to prepare a resume of the conversation that took place between the two. Sindhi wrote this in seven or eight pages. This document was then handed over to Sheikh Muhammad Ibrāhīm for correction and polishing its language and was then sent to Nasrullāh Khan through Mahmūd Tarzai and °Ināyatullāh Khan. Keeping in view the importance of the document, Nasrullāh Khan decided to send it to his brother Amir Habibullāh, the *Sirāj al-millah wa al-Din* (the lamp of Nation and religion) as he was called.³⁶

One day in the first week of December 1915, Nasrullāh Khan invited Sindhi to his palace Zain al-°Imārah. Amīr Habibullāh also came there in the afternoon and had a private meeting with Sindhi which lasted for half an hour. He appreciated the write-up of Sindhi and gave him verbal instructions that he should work in cooperation with the Hindus. This was perhaps the first lesson that Ubayd Allāh Sindhi learnt in Indian nationalism and he would remark later in his diary that he was rather surprised to see that the Afghan monarch preferred the Indian nationalist work to pan-Islamism.³⁷

Since the document that °Ubayd Allāh Sindhi handed over to Amīr Habibullāh is not extant today, it is not certain as what exactly had been written in it. However, Zafar Hasan Aibak, the biographer and disciple of Sindhi maintains that Sindhi had proposed to Amīr Habibullāh that in the event of the freedom of India through the invasion of Afghanistan, an Afghan prince would be seated on the throne of Delhi as a constitutional monarch. With the approval of the Amīr, this prince would be Amanullāh Khan, the *Mu°in al-Daulah*. A constitutional kingship would ensue in Afghanistan. Furthermore, an alliance of unity would be forged between India and Afghanistan through a treaty. Raja Mahender Pratab a colleague of Sindhi had also hinted at a similar deal with Habibullāh.³⁸

Meanwhile, a Turkish-German mission comprising of 23 members also reached Kabul for a similar purpose i.e. to persuade Amir Habibullāh to enter the war on the side of Germany and to goad him to invade India. From the German perspective, an invasion of India by Afghanistan was very important, for, by doing so, a significant portion of the British Army would be occupied in India quelling indigenous rebellion rather than fighting on the European fronts. Should this happen, it was hoped, the Turkish and German forces would be left free to fight more successfully with the Russian forces. Finally, in the event of a war between Afghanistan and India, the latter would be liberated from the British.³⁹

However, it was not possible for ‘Ubayd Allāh or the members of the Turkish-German mission to persuade Habibullāh to invade India for the simple reason that he was a faithful ally as well as a pensioner of the British who had purchased his loyalty through hard cash. By virtue of the Dane Treaty concluded between Habibullāh and the British in 1905, he was bound to remain neutral throughout the war.⁴⁰ This being so, he kept the members of the mission at bay through diplomacy and evasive tactics. About the attitude and dealing of Habibullāh with the Turkish-German mission, Louis Dupree states, “By judicious procrastination, Habibullāh forced the mission to a ludicrous treaty, under which the Germans agreed to give the Afghans 10,000 rifles, 300 cannons and 20 million pounds in gold. The mission’s immediate goal, an Afghan attack with rebel elements in British India, collapsed. Habibullāh hinted he would attack India but only after the victorious German and Turk armies entered Afghanistan to lead the assault.”⁴¹ Furthermore, he likened his position to a “loan man” who was “fearsome of the British and Russian allies between the upper and the nether mill stone.”⁴² According to Raja Mahendra Pratap, Habibullāh is said to have told the following to the members of the Turkish-German mission. “Show us your wares and then we shall see whether they suit us”.⁴³

VI

‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhi could not persuade the Afghan King to invade India. However, he made his stay useful in other ways. For instance, in league with Raja Mahendra Praatap and Mawlana Barakatullāh Bhopali, he established the provisional Government of India in exile at Kabul. This ‘government’ had been established on the first of December 1915 corresponding with the 28th birthday of Mahendra Pratap. The ‘provisional government’ had been established with the avowed purpose of forging good friendly relations with other countries and soliciting their help in the freedom of India. A contemporary Bengali writer and activist and a friend of Sindhi namely M.N. Roy (d.1954) maintains that the idea of the ‘provisional government’ was included in the agenda of the Turkish-German’ mission. This government, he says, had been established with the idea of creating disturbances in India and in the event of the successful overthrow of the British government to take charge of the government in independent India.⁴⁴

The Provisional Government consisted of the following members.

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| 1. | Mahendra Pratap | President |
| 2. | Mawlānā Barakatullāh Bhopali | Prime Minister |
| 3. | Mawlānā ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhi | Home minister |
| 4. | Maulvī Bashīr | Defense Minister |
| 5. | Champa Kraman Pillai | Foreign Minister |

6. Shamsheer Singh alias Mathura Singh Minister.

Besides these functionaries, there were nine plenipotentiaries. They were Khudā Bakhsh, Muhammad °Alī Quṣ ūrī, Rahmat °Alī Zakariyā, Zafar Hasan Aibak, °Abdul °Azīz and °Abdul Bāri.

The ‘Provisional Government’ entered into a treaty with Afghanistan.⁴⁵ Besides, it dispatched a delegation consisting of Mithra Singh and Mirzā Muhammad °Alī to Czarist Russia to prevail over her to break her alliance with Great Britain and assist in the liberation of India. At Tashqand the two men were received by the Governor of Russian Turkistan. The Governor took from them the letter which had been engraved on a golden plate and dispatched it to the Czar at Saint Petersburg, the capital of Czarist Russia. The two messengers were told to wait at Tashqand for reply. When the reply did not come for too long, the two men were given a send off with the false hope or assurance that they would be informed about the outcome of their letter in due course. Strangely enough, instead of giving a reply in response to the letter, the Czar showed it to the British. He also sought military help from Britain with the threat that if Russia did not receive the said help, she will make truce with Germany. The Rowlett Sedition Committee Report mentions this letter in the following words: “The Provisional Government dispatched letters to the Governor of Russian Turkistan and the then Czar of Russia inviting Russia to throw over her alliance with Great Britain and assist in the overthrow of the British rule in India. These were signed by Mahendra Pratap and subsequently fell in British hands. The letter to the Czar was written on a golden plate a photograph of which has been shown to us”.⁴⁶

After this unsuccessful mission to Czarist Russia, the Provisional government decided to send missions to Japan and Turkey. The mission to Japan consisted of Shaikh °Abdul Qādir and Dr. Mithra Singh. However, both these missions could not reach their destination and were met with failure. The two messengers fell into the Russian hands who handed them over to the British. Mithra Singh had already been wanted in a bomb case and had fled to Afghanistan. This time he was captured by the British and was consequently hanged at Lahore. Shaikh °Abdul Qādir remained in jail till the end of the war and in all probability died there.⁴⁷ Similarly, the mission to Turkey was intercepted by the Russians at Mashhad who, after subjecting °Abdul Bāri and Shujā°ullāh to severe torture, handed them over to the British. The two men were later brought to India.

VII

During his stay at Kabul, Mawlānā °Ubayd Allāh Sindhi formed another organization called the *Jundullāh* (The Army of God), the purpose of which was to get recruits from India and create alliances between Muslim countries.⁴⁸ This was yet another attempt to liquidate British Imperialism in

India. The members of this semi-military organization which resembled the Christian Salvation Army were supposed to work for the welfare of the Muslim World on a voluntary basis without drawing any salary. Mawlānā Mahmūd al-Hasan was appointed the Commander in Chief of the Army of God. The headquarters of *Jundullāh* were to be in Madina; secondary headquarters under local generals were to be established at Constantinople, Tehran and Kabul. The general at Kabul Centre would be ʿUbayd Allāh himself. The Army of God had a highly elaborate list of appointees. There were three patrons, twelve Field Marshalls, two Generals, 30 Lieutenant generals, 10 Lieutenant Colonels, 5 Majors, 2 Captains and one Lieutenant.⁴⁹ Bamford says that of the students from Lahore, one was to be a Major general, one a Colonel, and six Lieutenant Colonels.⁵⁰

Mawlānā Sindhi issued separate instructions to each and every member of the *Jundullāh*. Apart from militant activities, these instructions were related to improving the economic conditions of those Islamic lands which were going to be liberated from the clutches of British Imperialism in the near future. More specifically, the schemes of Sindhi were related to Iran, Turkey and Arabia. For instance, Zafar Hasan Aibak and Muhammad Hasan Yaʿqūb were deputed by Sindhi to go to Arabia and form an organization the purpose of which would be to collect hides of goats, sheep and camels during the season of *Hajj* to manufacture various forms of leather from these hides in a factory, and then import these to various Islamic countries. It was also proposed that an international company should be established at Hijāz for the said purpose. The establishment of an Islamic bank which would finance such projects was also suggested. It was hoped that the company would become so large one day that it would have its own trading ships for exporting its manufactured leather goods. This was a gigantic task indeed. However, the attitude of the Afghan government was an impediment in the realization of this ambitious project.⁵¹

VIII

In July 1916, ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi intended to enlighten his friend as well as teacher, namely, the Shaikhul Hind about his activities at Kabul and what had been achieved till then. For this purpose two letters were jointly written by Sindhi and Mawlānā Muhammad Miyān alias Mawlānā Manṣūr Anṣārī who had joined Sindhi at Kabul after having distributed copies of *Ghālib Nāma* in India and the frontier tribesmen. The latter had accompanied Mahmūd Hasan to Arabia in September 1915 from where he returned to India bringing with him the *Ghālib Nāma*. The *Ghālib Nāma*, signed by Ghālib Pāshā, the military Governor of Hijāz, was an invitation of *Jihād* to be carried out by the people of India and the frontier tribesmen.

The silk letters, carrying the date of July 9th, 1916 were jointly written by Sindhi and Manṣūr Anṣārī and according to Rowlett Committee

Report, its contents mentioned “the arrival of the Turkish and German missions, the return of the Germans, the staying on of the Turks “but without work”, the runaway students, the circulation of Ghalib Nama, the Provisional Government and the projected formation of an Army of God”.⁵² The letters were written on yellow silk and were sewn into the waist coat of a certain °Abdul Haqq, a convert Muslim, who was supposed to carry it to a certain Shaikh °Abdur Rahīm Sindhi for onward transmission to the Shaikhul Hind. Along with the letters, a covering letter had been written to Shaikh °Abdur Rahīm Sindhi in which he had been advised to take the silk letters to the Shaikhul Hind through some reliable *Hājī* (pilgrim) and in case he could not find such a person, then he was told to carry these personally to Makkah. Among the fifteen ‘run away’ students from Lahore, there were two brothers from Multan i.e. Allah Nawaz Khan and Shāh Nawaz Khan, sons of Khan Bahāder Rabb Nawaz Khan of Multan.

°Abdul Haqq had been the family servant of the two brothers who might have told him that while going to Hyderabad, he should get off the train and enquire about the well-being of their family. Consequently, °Abdul Haqq got off the train at Multan to visit his home as well as that of the two brothers. He met with Khan Bahādur Rabb Nawāz Khan who, discerning suspicion about °Abdul Haqq’s visit enquired of him the real purpose of his visit. The messenger might have shown hesitancy in revealing the purpose of his visit, but under sheer threats from Rabb Nawāz Khan, he gave in. Rabb Nawāz Khan was a friend of Sir Michael O D’wyre, the Governor of the Punjab who showed him the letters. Thus the scheme of the silk letters collapsed thanks to the naivety of its planners bringing in its wake a hell of terror and torment let loose upon Indian Muslims. Large scale incarcerations of Muslims followed. The British protested strongly to the Afghan Government with the result that Sindhi and his associates were taken to Jalalabad where they were put under house arrest in the house of Muhammad Husain, the *Mustawfi al-Mamālik* till the murder of Amīr Habibullāh in February 1919.⁵³

Whatever may have caused the failure of the Silk Letters, it appears that their authors were not aware of the international situation prevailing then. For example, the silk Letters were written in July 1916. By that time, the Sharif of Makkah had already revolted against the Ottoman Caliphate in June 1916. This being so, even if the letters had reached Makkah, they could not have accomplished the desired objectives.⁵⁴ However, they evoked immense panic and reaction in India as noted above.

IX

Amir Habibullāh continued his neutrality till the end of the war. As a matter of fact, it won’t be amiss to point out that he paid for his life to maintain this neutrality. There was no dearth of people among the courtiers

as well the general public who were not happy with the pro British policy of Habibullāh. This fact might have contributed to his mysterious assassination in February 1919. After the murder of Habibullāh, his son Amanullāh Khan “the impetuous” mounted the Afghan throne. During the days of his crown prince ship, Amanullāh Khan had shown great promise in term of his pro-Indian and anti- British proclivities. This aspect of his personality was very much played upon by ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi. After assuming the reins of power, the first thing that Amanullāh Khan did was to declare the complete independence of Afghanistan. Thus far Afghanistan was under the indirect British rule in the sense that her foreign policy was tied to the apron strings of Great Britain as it were. The third Anglo-Afghan war was intended to put an end to Britain’s interference in Afghanistan’s foreign policy and to seek complete *Istiqlāl* (freedom) for that country.

The time of the third Anglo- Afghan war coincided with disturbances in India. For instance, there were revolts against the passage of the draconian Rowlett bills which were intended to stifle every political activity. Similarly, the Gallianwālā Bāgh massacre also took place in the same year. Furthermore, because of the Treaty of Severes, which had been concluded at the end of the First World War and in which Turkey had been dismembered, there was bitterness and resentment among Indian Muslims who had launched the *Khilāfat* Movement for the protection of Caliphate. About this state of affairs, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab Sir Michael O’d Wyre wrote that Afghanistan wanted to take advantage of these disturbances by “stabbing the British in the back”.⁵⁵

Aibak maintains that very few soldiers had been left in India as they were in European fronts. Though the First World War had ended, nevertheless, the British soldiers had not yet returned to India. Never was the time so opportune for the complete independence of Afghanistan or for that matter of India if only things would have gone in the right direction. Against this backdrop, preparations were started for the war by the Afghans themselves on the one hand, and on the other Amanullāh Khan asked Sindhi to inform the Indians about the invading Afghan Army and also to welcome it. One night at mid night, ʿUbayd Allāh went to the *Machine Khāna* (Engine house), an Afghan factory where weapons were manufactured and coins were minted, and printed the following announcement both in English and Urdu.

“Brave Indians! Courageous countrymen! You have read the account of the organization of the Provisional Government of India. It has Raja Mahendra Pratab as its president, Mr. Barakatullāh (of Ghadar Party) as its Prime Minister, and M. ʿUbayd Allāh as its Administrative minister. Its object is to liberate India from the iron clutches of the English and to establish indigenous government there.

“This government of yours heard with utmost pleasure the news of your gallant deeds done for the noble cause of liberty. You have no arms to extirpate the enemies of India and mankind. This government of yours has tried and succeeded in obtaining help from without. Our government has assured itself and made agreement for your full freedom with the allied invading powers.

“Murder the English wherever you find them, cut the telegraph lines, destroy the railway lines and railway bridges and help in all respects the liberating armies. None shall be molested except he who shall resist.”⁵⁶

This letter carries the signature of ‘Ubayd Allāh. It had been dispatched by the provisional government of India and on its face side there is a stamp of the minister of Interior of the Provisional government. The declaration was secretly dispatched to India by Muhammad Alī, the nephew of Sindhi, and Allah Nawāz Khan. Muhammad ‘Alī took the declaration as far as Hyderabad (Decca). Allah Nawāz took it to the friends of Sindhi in the Punjab.⁵⁷ Poullada says the declaration of Sindhi had been intercepted by the British.⁵⁸ However, Aibk, from whose book this declaration has been taken does not say anything about its interception. From this account it appears that it must have reached a significant number of people in India.

Initially, May 15 had been fixed for the Afghan attack and the simultaneous uprising in India.⁵⁹ However, the actual war started on May 3, 1919 when shots were exchanged between the British troops and the Afghan soldiers at the mouth of the Khyber Pass. On May 9, the British forces bombed Dakka, followed by the bombing of Jalalābād and Kabul.⁶⁰ The war became operational on three fronts i.e Khyber, Peiwar and Spin Boldak corresponding with the eastern, southern and western fronts respectively. The commander of the eastern front was Şāleh Muhammad Khan. Sindhi was asked by Amanullāh Khan to accompany the eastern front for the sake of advice and *barakah*.⁶¹

The initial military operations of the Afghan soldiers against the British were mostly unsuccessful. Only at the Central front under the command of Nadir Khan and his brother, the Afghan soldiers were successful. Nadir Khan captured Thall whereas his brother Shāh Walī Khan captured Wana. The students of Sindhi played a decisive role in the success of Nadir Khan. For instance, Zafar Hasan Aibak fought shoulder to shoulder with Nadir Khan. Aibak put his knowledge of mathematics into good use and all of his cannon shots landed on the desired targets. He had already prepared a map of the area. The first shell was fired by Nadir Khan himself. ‘Ubayd Allāh says that the achievements of Aibak were highly appreciated. In recognition of his services, the Afghan government fixed an honorarium for Aibak.⁶² Similarly, the nephew of Sindhi, namely, Muhammad ‘Alī had been appointed at the western front of Qandahar, to help Sardār ‘Abdul Quddūs

Khan, the commander of that front.⁶³ Besides the disciples of Sindhi, another freedom fighter, namely, Hāji Ṣāhib of Turangzai(d.1937) who was in close contact with ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi during the latter's stay at Kabul⁶⁴ is also reported to have played an important role in the third Afghan War.⁶⁵ He was dubbed as "the stormy patrol of the Peshawar district border."⁶⁶ An Indian writer Sadhan Mukerji states that there is reason to believe that a lot of Indian revolutionaries participated in the third Anglo-Afghan war. Furthermore, he claims that he had an interview with the Afghan Prime Minister Hafizullāh Amīn in 1979 at Kabul in which Amīn confirmed this and said also that some Indian revolutionaries had been killed in the Anglo-Afghan war of 1919.⁶⁷ It is obvious from a comment of Husain Ahmad Madani (d.1953), a colleague of Sindhi and rector of Deoband Madrassah that the stage for the third Anglo-Afghan war had actually been orchestrated by ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi who was instrumental in Amanullāh Khan's victory over the British.

The Afghans claimed that the British were forced into an armistice on 31st May, 1919. Negotiations for peace were held on 26th July-8th of August at Rawalpindi. As a result of these negotiations, Afghanistan's complete independence was accepted and on the 18th of August 1919, Amanullāh Khan celebrated the *Jishn-i Istiqlāl* (independence celebrations) of Afghanistan.⁶⁸ Since then this day is celebrated as the national day of Afghanistan.

X

ʿUbayd Allāh Sindhi has given an account of his activities and those of his associates during the era of Amanullāh in his diary. He says: "For a short while under the regime of king Amanullāh, we had a glimpse of the recognition of our Provisional Government in the treatment meted out to us. His dealings with us were nearly the same as with his own ministers of the first rank upon whom he relied so much. Whenever, we attended his private meetings, we were received with the same honour and respect as was shown to the members of his own family and dignitaries of the national level. Never did he turn down any advice tendered by us, nor was any recommendation made by us ever rejected by him. This being the case, we did not hesitate to render any service to make his Government free and strong. The details of our political activities and the contribution we made to it cannot be given here because they have not reached the stage of becoming history".⁶⁹ Furthermore, he states, "Amanullāh Khan's relations with our mission can be judged from the words that he uttered in the condolence meeting that he held on the death of Mawlānā Mahmūd Hasan. In the condolence address he said", Mawlānā Mahmūd Hasan initiated a mission which I am going to fulfill."⁷⁰

However, Amanullāh could not maintain his anti-British élan or

frenzy for a long time. With the freedom of Afghanistan and with his installation as king, his responsibilities and priorities changed. He had to keep some sort of rapprochement both with the Soviet Russia and Great Britain. Consequently, when Amanullāh Khan made the last treaty with the British in November 1921 where after the activities of the Provisional Government were stopped by the Afghan government, ‘Ubayd Allāh was disillusioned. Henceforth, he has to seek fresher and greener pastures as it were to solve the problem of India. Since Soviet Russia had posited herself as the great foe of British Imperialism, Sindhi and his entourage fixed their gaze on the U.S.S.R for help.

X1

‘Ubayd Allāh had developed relations with Soviet Russia during Amanullāh Khan’s era. He says that relations with Russia became possible through the permission and suggestion of Amanullāh. Raja Mahendra Pratap also played a role in it. It was through his suggestion that Indian youth started visiting Soviet Russia. When the Indian Communist party was established in Moscow under the leaderships of M.N. Roy, its headquarters was established at Tashqand. For many years Roy ran the affairs of the Communist party of India and for this reason he became a friend of Sindhi. When the British urged Amanullāh to stop the activities of the Indian revolutionaries in his country, Sindhi decided to leave for Soviet Russia.⁷¹

Furthermore, the Bolshevik revolution brought about by Lenin and Trotsky in October 1917 had engendered great expectations among the anti-Imperialist Indian revolutionaries. Apparently, these revolutionaries who, for all practical purposes did not gain anything from their alliance with Germany, but who nevertheless were still not willing to give up this alliance as yet, were coming round the idea in mid 1917 that they must cooperate with the Bolsheviks.⁷² Like Berlin previously, the revolutionaries from the world had converged on the Soviet republic. There were at least one million citizens of China, Korea, India and Turkey in the Soviet Union in 1917 through 1920.⁷³ In the leadership of Lenin, the Soviet Union had become a dreamland for these revolutionaries and adventurers from around the globe.⁷⁴ Moscow was like Makkah for them who had agglutinated there and were girding up their loins to combat British Imperialism.

Besides, Soviet Russia was the only country in the world that was impervious to British Imperialism and here the revolutionaries could carry out the anti-Imperialist work freely without the fear of arrest or persecution by the British colonial authorities. Almost every Muslim country was under the direct or indirect Western imperialistic yoke. The only fortunate exception was Turkey which was free from the direct or indirect Western imperialism. Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia were under the indirect Western rule. The rest of the Muslim world was under the direct Western

colonialism. Besides, as far as Soviet Russia was concerned, there were expectations on both sides. Soviet Russia expected the revolutionaries based in that country would take the new found gospel of Communist ideology to their countries. On the other hand, the Indian revolutionaries considering Soviet Russia as the greatest enemy of Britain fancied she would be helpful in the political emancipation of India. Furthermore, since the Bolshevik revolution, contrary to the predictions of Karl Marks and Friedreich Engels, did not succeed in taking roots in the industrially advanced countries of western Europe, Lenin turned his attention to the East.⁷⁵ Besides, in *Better Fewer But Better*, Lenin wrote, "The final victory of Socialism [was] fully and absolutely assured by virtue of the fact that Russia, India and China, the countries which constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe had been completely drawn into the struggle for emancipation".⁷⁶ One way of bring about world revolution was to weaken imperialistic powers by encouraging national revolts.⁷⁷

It was with a view to radicalize this objective that the Soviet Government encouraged Muslims to rise in armed rebellion against Britain. This is exemplified by the fact that on December 3, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars published an "Appeal to all the working Muslims of Russia and the East". The wording of this appeal was very inflammatory. This document ran like this: "Now, when war and chaos are shaking the old world to its foundation, when the whole world is fired with resentment against the imperialist robbers, when every spark of indignation becomes transformed into a mighty flame of revolution, when even the Indian Muslims, oppressed and tormented by a foreign yoke, are rising in revolt against their enslavers, it is impossible to remain silent. Loose no time and shake the ancient conquerors of your land from you back! This is your right, for; your destiny is in your own hands."⁷⁸ The infatuation and liking of the Indian revolutionaries for Soviet Russia could be seen and appreciated against this background.

XII

‘Ubayd Allāh lived in Soviet Russia for a period of nine months i.e. November 1922 to July 1923. Over this period of time he had four meetings with the Soviet foreign minister Georgiy Vasilyevich Chicherin. The background of these meetings had already been laid by ‘Ubayd Allāh during his stay at Kabul. For instance, Sindhi had developed good relations with Fedor F. Raskolnikov, Lenin's envoy to Kabul in early 1920s and also with Mr. Reisner, the brother in law of the said envoy, who was the first secretary in the Russian embassy at Kabul. Reisner was now attached with the foreign ministry in Moscow. Aibak would visit the house of Reisner twice a week for the purpose of teaching him Urdu. Keeping advantage of this friendship, one day Aibak told Reisner about Sindhi in the following jargon. "An Indian

leader has been staying in Soviet Russia for several months. He is influential not only in his own country but also in Afghanistan which he pitted against Great Britain. From among the Afghans, he has friendship with such important chief a General Nadir Khan. He is the president of the all India National Congress Committee of Kabul. Wouldn't the Russian government help such a person in his war against Britain, the enemy of Bolshevik Russia which left no stone unturned in undoing the Bolshevik revolution by supporting such "white" (anti-Bolshevik) commanders as Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak and Anton Ivanovich Denikin? Today a unique opportunity has knocked at the doors of Russians. Though M. N. Roy is the president of the Indian Communist Party, nevertheless, he could not succeed in spearheading any revolutionary movement in India. On the other hand, Mawlana Sindhi is the personal friend of very many Indian leaders and politicians. He can accomplish a lot against British India if only he is assisted by the Russian Government."⁷⁹ Reisner was so much impressed by this discourse of Aibak that he discussed this matter with his senior officer, namely, Mr. Sukerman, head of the Central Asian Department in the ministry of Foreign Affairs and prevailed upon him to mention this issue to Chicherin and arrange a meeting between the latter and Mawlānā Sindhi. Consequently, one week later that is in first week of June 1923 a meeting was arranged between Chicherin and Sindhi. The modus operandi observed in the meeting was that Reisner would translate the conversation of Chicherin from Russian into English and then Aibk would render it into Urdu to make it understandable for Sindhi.

In his discourse with Chiherin, Sindhi mentioned his association with the Indian National Congress in the capacity of the president of the Congress Committee of Kabul. He said that he was willing to cooperate with Russia in the liquidation of the British rule in India. Furthermore, he argued that since the expulsion of the British from India was beneficial for Russia, she should make a treaty with the Indian national Congress. However, he insisted that during the course of negotiations between the two, the Communist Party should not intervene. In other words, Sindhi wanted to do business with the Russian Government rather than the Communist Party of Russia. Chicherin was a bit taken aback by this ratiocination of Sindhi, for; in Russia nothing could be accomplished without the approval of the Communist Party. Be that as it may, being true to the interests of his own country which had only recently come out of the quagmire civil war and which had suffered from drought and famine, Chicherin thought it fit and proper that no opportunity should be lost sight of to strike at the interests of the British. It was in view of these considerations that Chicherin agreed to put forward the proposal of Sindhi before the Russian government.⁸⁰ Aibak opines that extorting unconditional help from Russia was a great achievement of Sindhi, for, the wont of Bolshevik Russia was that she would not extend any help in the

liberation of any country prior to imposing the Communist ideology on it. Kamalist Turkey was the only exception to this rule. Soviet Russia had given unconditional help to the national government of Mustaa Kamal Atatürk in his war against the British as well as Greeks.

During the second meeting, Chicherin informed Sindhi that the Russian government was ready to help in the Indian nationalist movement. However, the Soviet Government wanted to ask from the Mawlana whether the help would be in terms of money or weapons and furthermore how would that help reach India? In response to this question, the Mawlana replied, "The motto of the Indian national Congress is peaceful non-cooperation. This being so, help to India in terms of weapons was not required; rather it would be in the shape of money. Presently, the Soviet Government should give a grant of one crore rupees to the Indian national government. India will consider this amount like a loan and return it to Soviet Russia after gaining freedom. However, it is essential that Afghanistan should work with Soviet Russia in this matter. This is so because Afghanistan is the only safe route by which Soviet Russia can establish relationship with India. In order to get Afghanistan involved in this matter, Soviet Russia should also give Rs.10.0 million to Afghanistan which is now struggling to fortify the new government. This amount will be like a grand compensation to Afghanistan for her letting the Soviets to use her soil and maintain relationship with India"⁸¹ Chicherin did not raise objection to the first part of the Mawlānā's proposal. However, he objected to the second part of the proposal and asked the Mawlānā as to what guarantee was there that Afghanistan would not join hands with Britain even after receiving the aid and banishing him (the Mawlānā) like before? Upon hearing this, the Mawlānā said, "Sardār Nadir Khan will be the guarantor in this affair. After receiving the aid, Nadir Khan will become so powerful that King Amanullāh would not do anything prior to taking him into confidence. Never again would Nadir Khan permit Afghanistan to make friendship with Britain."⁸² With these words ended the second meeting between Sindhi and Chicherin.

During the third meeting, Chicherin informed Sindhi that the Soviet government had accepted all the proposals of Sindhi and it was ready to help India in her nationalist cause. Also she was willing to dispatch financial help to Afghanistan. But the Soviet government was eager to know as to how this help would trickle to the two countries? To this question the Mawlānā replied, "I intend to go to Turkey. There, either by calling a leader of the Indian National Congress to Turkey or by sending a reliable person to India, I will get across the message that the Soviet Government was willing to give a grant of Rs. one crore to India for her nationalist movement. After communicating this message to the Indian National Congress, I will arrange a meeting between the Soviet Government and the Congress. As a result of the deliberations between the two bodies, a treaty will be signed following

which the India National Congress will receive the Soviet aid. As for Afghanistan, it is imperative that prior to giving any aid to that country, I initiate correspondence with Nadir Khan. If it is not possible for me to accomplish this goal in Turkey, then I will travel to the Hijāz. There, through the agency of my friends who come for Hajj, I will communicate this message to India and reestablish my friendship with Afghanistan.⁸³

Chicherin promised to put forward this scheme of Sindhi before the Russian government and appointed a fourth meeting with him after a week. During the fourth and last meeting, Chicherin informed Sindhi that the Soviet government had accepted all the proposals of Sindhi. Furthermore, he was told to go about his scheme to travel to Turkey and concretize his plan. The expenses of his journey, he was assured, would be borne by the Russian government. Besides, he was also assured that during his stay in Turkey he would receive whatever financial assistance he needed from the Russia Consulate from time to time.⁸⁴

XIII

After having reached an agreement with the Soviet foreign minister, Sindhi travelled to Turkey in July 1923. The following year Aibak also reached there. He says that prior to his arrival in Turkey. Lala Lajpat Rai(d.1928), the Punjabi Arya Samajist leader and member of the Indian national Congress, had arrived in Turkey. Mawlana Sindhi told Lajpat Rai that “in the future, Russian aid for the purpose of the liberation of India will reach there, via Afghanistan”.⁸⁵ When Lajpat Rai returned to India, he initiated a strong propaganda against Sindhi. The target of this propaganda was not only the Muslims but the Indian national Congress as well. One gathers from a comment of Mawlānā Laghārī that the Hindu revivalist and sectarian leaders such as Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and a host others were averse to the idea of Afghanistan’s involvement in the liberation of India, particularly her supposed invasion of India. It appears that the memories of the invasion of India by the early Muslim conquerors from the north were still alive in the minds of the revivalist Hindus who feared that another invasion of India from Afghanistan might turn India once again into a Muslim country. For this reason, they endeavoured to keep away the dragon i.e the expected invasion of Afghanistan from the boundaries of India.⁸⁶ If this assumption of Laghārī is correct, then it would appear that the Indian nationalist leaders were not unanimous in their thoughts as regards the freedom India. This being so, the efforts of Sindhi in Afghanistan and Soviet Russia were not destined to bring about any meaningful result. Furthermore, it was in those days that the Hindus started “*Shuddi*” movement in response to which the Muslims started *Tablīgh* movement. Similarly, in response to the Hindu movement of *Sanghatan*, the Muslims started *Tanzīm*. Against this backdrop, communal problems flared up occasionally and the problem of the

freedom of India went into the background momentarily.

Mawlana Ubayd Allah stayed in Soviet Russia for about nine months. Since his association with the India national Congress had been proven, he was treated like a guest of the Soviet Union and all kinds of facilities including access to library were provided to him. The stay in Soviet Russia, apart from his political activities, enabled him to undertake a deep study of Communism through the help of his students and friends among whom were included people belonging to all shades of opinion- Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, socialists and nationalist. In a figurative sense these people constituted a rainbow. An illusory or faint hop of dismantling the British power from India had dragged them all to Moscow, the Makkah of the Socialist World. About his study of Communism, he records the following in his diary, “It was a corollary of this study that I was able to contemplate ways and means as to how to save my religious movement –a continuation of the philosophy of Shāh Walillāh from the anti-religious attacks of our age. Upon this success of mine, I am grateful first to the Indian National Congress; second, to my friends who included Muslims, Hindus, Socialists and nationalists; and third to Soviet Russia. But for the help of these three entities, I would not have accomplished this distinction which came to my lot.⁸⁷

Conclusion:

The Indian Muslim revolutionaries whose life struggle has been adumbrated in the preceding pages cherished the vision that the political emancipation of India was not possible without the external help and intervention. In order to realize this objective, they rushed to Afghanistan on the commencement of the First World War with a view to persuade the Afghan monarch Amir Habibullah to enter the war on the side of Germany, an ally of the Ottoman Turkey, and help in the freedom of India. However, the Afghan King was an ally of Britain and therefore he could not play any substantial role in the freedom of India. Even then he gave moral as well as material support to the Indian Muslims freedom fighters in their struggle. After his assassination in February 1919, the reins of power went into the hands of his son and successor, King Amanullah Khan who was a great supporter of the freedom fighters during his crown prince ship. The Indian Muslim freedom fighters played upon the jingoistic tendencies of king Amanullah and petted him against British India resulting in the complete freedom (*Istiqlāl*) of Afghanistan. There are formidable reasons to believe that the success of Amanullah Khan was attributable to the participation of the Indian freedom fighters especially the activities of Mawlānā ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhī and his students and associates. However, as things turned out later, Amanullah could not maintain his ant-British frenzy for a long time. Political expediency and diplomacy demanded that he should be more tactful

and less emotional. In circumstances like these, when Amanullah inked an agreement with the British and resultantly stopped and discouraged the activities of the Provisional Government, ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhī and his associates were disillusioned. Henceforth, they started searching fresher and greener pastures as it were. Soviet Russia offered herself the next best land of hope.

Soviet Russia had posed herself as the great champion of the ‘People’s right to self-determination’ and a great foe of British imperialism. Quite naturally, therefore, she had become the dreamland for the Indian revolutionaries. Mawlānā ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhī, Mawlānā Barakatullāh Bhopalī, Mawlānā Saifur Rahmān, to mention only a few became enamored by the Russian revolution. The infatuation of these ‘Ulamā and a host of others with the atheistic Communism was in fact a marriage of convenience. It only showed that the revolutionaries were willing to go to any extreme if only for the sake of the freedom of their country.

However, from the Russian point of view, the Indian revolutionaries had wrong tactical guidelines to go by. The Bolsheviks endeavoured to bring home the realization to the Indian revolutionaries that instead of relying upon foreign help or resorting to acts of individual terrorism, they should bring about a social revolution in their country, and furthermore, political freedom was only one step away from social freedom. Apparently, the social and cultural conditions of India were not favourable for such a philosophy.

When Mawlānā ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhī visited Soviet Russia in November 1922, Lenin was in a state of coma. There was famine and civil war in Soviet Russia. Soviet Russia was not in position to oblige the Indian revolutionaries through their coveted project of the military invasion of India. However, ‘Ubayd Allāh Sindhī entered into an agreement with the Soviet foreign minister according to which Soviet Russia agreed to give a grant of one crore rupees to the Indian National Congress. This scheme also could not materialize due to factors mentioned above.

In fine, it could be said that the Indian Muslim freedom fighters based in Afghanistan were instrumental in the complete freedom of Afghanistan. As for the freedom of their own country, apart from giving considerable trouble to the British, their stay in Afghanistan and the subsequent link with Soviet Russia caused worry to the British authorities in terms of the Bolshevization of India and this fact hastened their departure from that country in the final analysis.

Notes and References:

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