

## **Indian Independence Coursework Assignment 2**

### **2) In what ways did the relationship between the British Government and the Indian political parties change as a result of the Second World War?**

The relationship between the British Government and the Indian political parties changed after and during the Second World War in many ways.

In India the two most common political parties were called the Muslim League and the Congress. Before the Second World War, Congress was more popular than the Muslim League and it all gradually changed after the War.

The British played a major role in the changes of both the two political parties of India. Both the parties went through and later during the War, the British declared the Congress party illegal in India as India was part of the British Empire and they had complete control over India and everything within India.

In September 1939, Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, without consulting the Indian Assembly, announced that India had declared War on Germany.

This was an imprudent decision because the Viceroy was supposed to discuss with the Executive Committee before making a conclusion about a major War like this.

Linlithgow's decision brought the disagreements between the Congress and the Muslim League to a head.

Both the political parties had different views on how India should be involved in the War. The Muslim League backed the declaration of War on Germany and supported the British Government throughout. This gave an opportunity to Jinnah to ask for a separate Muslim State because of their support to the British. This was the first time Jinnah spoke of a Muslim State and it was known as the Lahore Declaration. He wanted to name the Muslim State, Pakistan meaning 'the land of the pure'.

During the War, The League became a more powerful force and increased in number to more than two million people.

The Congress reaction was partially different. They did not want to turn to violence but to use peaceful methods and Gandhi urged the British Government to negotiate with Hitler.

The Congress did not object to India being involved in the War against Germany. But he believed that Indians should have had the right to decide for themselves.

The Congress refused to accept the Viceroy's announcement that India was at War without the Indian assembly being consulted.

All the Congress state governments resigned in protest of the Viceroy's decision.

In July 1940, Congress asked for a National Government but the Viceroy refused so the Congress started civil disobedience. This event made most of the Congress leaders arrested in 1940.

This was the crucial year where the British needed the Indian support. Some of the Congress leaders stayed in jail while the rest refused to co-operate with the British. In April 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with an offer for full Dominion Status, and their right to leave the Empire and the Commonwealth as soon as the War

was over. Also, he said that anyone that did not want to stay in India should become an Independent country.

The Congress refused the offer and demanded immediate cabinet government with full power and decisions taken by Indians in India.

Also, Congress did not want anyone to make an Independent country because they wanted a united India with a strong central government.

Gandhi demanded for an immediate independence. He threatened a mass non-violent action if his demands are not met. He ordered the British to leave India immediately except for the armed forces that's fighting against the Japanese could stay. This was known as the 'Quit Indian Campaign'.

This was impossible while they continued to fight the Japanese in the World War.

As these demands were not met, demonstrations began in India. First, they were peaceful but later they all turned violent. Police stations, government offices, railways and telephone lines were all attacked. In addition, supplies for the army that were fighting against the Japanese were held up.

These violent misunderstandings had a major effect. 30 000 troops had to be sent to restore the order and there were 1000 deaths. The British arrested the Congress leaders. Later on, Congress was made illegal and their funds were seized and they did not exist no more. Congress was the most dominant force in Indian politics.

But after all the leaders in jail and its funds in British hands, there was nothing else they could do. In contrast, the Muslim League expanded rapidly during the Second World War. By the Muslim League supporting the British and not backing the Congress in the protests they had won a lot of members. This gave an opportunity for the British to give the Muslim League a separate Muslim State, Pakistan.

In 1945, the Muslim League won 90% of the Muslim seats. This meant that the Muslim League was regarded the same as Congress when they both came to negotiations about the future of India.

Everyone including the Muslim League had expected that India would be independent after the War had ended. All the Indians in the Army had remained loyal to the British throughout the War. After the War was over, everyone's support for the British began to evaporate.