The Pashtuns are a Muslim group that occupied the North-West Frontier of British India, the area near present day Afghanistan. This area was occupied by the British in 1848 and divided into two areas. In one area, districts were established and made under British control. The other area was a tribal area where the people lived semi-independent lives without much influence from the British. In 1902, both the settled districts and the tribal region were consolidated into the “North-West Frontier Province” by the British Empire.

The problem with the North-West Frontier Province was that the Frontier Crimes Regulation established repressive laws that aimed to destroy anti-government activities. The police force in the region was allowed to destroy buildings and inflict collective punishment, which punished entire families and villages for the crimes of one individual. The police force also inhibited the people’s right to assemble. The tribal areas did not pay taxes, and the extensive British police force resulted in extensive taxes paid by the settled districts.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God), started his resistance against the British by opening up schools throughout the districts of Mardan and Peshawar, educating villagers on the reforms he planned for India. British authorities heard of his schools and attempts to reform society, and arrested Ghaffar Khan, his 95-year-old father, and other members of his family. When Ghaffar Khan was released from prison three months later, he joined the Khalifat movement. This was a movement that began as a Muslim group against the British policies from World War I, but evolved into an anti- British group with Hindu participation as well. Ghaffar Khan also formed the organization Anjuman-Islah-e-Afaghina (Afghan Reform Society), which served to increase education and reform in the North-West Frontier Province. He taught people that they should become involved in work outside of farming, so that the Indian population would not be completely dependent on the British.

After being jailed for three years for his attempts at reform, Ghaffar Kahn founded the Pashtun Jirga (Pashtun Council) in 1929, which emphasized education, social, and political matters. The Pashtun Jirga began publishing a journal called Pashtun. In 1929, new volunteer members were added, called the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God). This was the most efficient group among the Pashtuns because it was a non-violent army used to fight the British for Indian independence. The members of the Khudai Khidmatgar pledged to serve the nation above all else using non-violence at all costs, even when met with violence. The main goal of the Khudai Khidmatgar was to win Indian independence and reform the social, political, and economic life of the Pashtuns via non-violence. This was a local battle in the North-West Frontier Province, but the Khudai Khidmatgar was also part of the Indian National Congress and was involved in the national struggle for Indian independence.

In 1929, the Indian National Congress announced a plan for civil disobedience in order to achieve Indian independence. Ghaffar Khan approved the plan and travelled throughout the frontier with the Khudai Khidmatgar, encouraging people to take part in the Congress civil disobedience campaign. In 1931, the Khudai Khidmatgar and Congress formed an alliance that would last until Indian independence was achieved in 1947.

The Khudai Khidmatgar organization required volunteers to take oaths and participate in training camps to learn about the goals of the movement. While at these training camps, individuals cleaned houses of non-members in the movement in order to gain support from outsiders. Volunteers had to work together, which increased unity and cooperation among the movement. Furthermore, volunteers performed physically demanding work, which served to teach discipline and hard work to the members of the movement. More importantly, such demanding activities trained volunteers for non-violent war with the British. The usual routine for the volunteers involved drills, physical exercise, running, long marches, and daylong protests. All of these activities served to prepare volunteers for their non-violent action in the field against the British. Though this lifestyle resembled that of a

Military soldier, with leaders within the movement given ranks as heads of units, non-violence was always the emphasis.

The Khudai Khidmatgar opened schools that taught reading, writing, political awareness, cleaning, and sanitation to Indians. This served to teach the Indian people to be self-sufficient and not economically dependent on the British to be successful. At these schools, people learned to spin thread, grind wheat for flour, and press oil seeds for cooking oil. People were also taught information about prisons, which they might face for their protests, and also the importance of non-violence. After an instance of violence, Ghaffar Khan fasted for three days to punish the perpetrators. Those who committed violence were also immediately removed from the movement, including Ghaffar Khan’s own son, Ghani. The schools of the Khudai Khidmatgar used poetry, skits, and music to reinforce concepts to the people. Though the Khudai Khidmatgar started in 1930 with approximately 1,000 volunteers, by 1938, there were more than 100,000 volunteers in its membership.

There were many non-violent methods utilized by the Khudai Khidmatgar against the British. Though the British claimed that the Khudai Khidmatgar was a paramilitary group based on the rigorous training volunteers faced, the organization continued to act through non-violence. The Khudai Khidmatgar refused to pay taxes or rent to the government, picketed at government offices, boycotted foreign goods, refused to cooperate with the government administration, refused to settle criminal and civil cases in government courts (opted for village councils instead), ostracized village officials who acted as tax collectors unless they resigned, and also commemorated significant events for the resistance against the British.

On April 23, 1930, Ghaffar Khan gave a speech in Utmanzai urging continued civil resistance. Following the speech he was arrested. New persons took the Khudai Khidmatgar pledge in response, and surrounded the jail. More Khudai Khidmatgar leaders were then arrested, but this only fuelled the protests. Workers in the region began a spontaneous general strike and the demonstrators gathered at the Kissa Khani Bazaar to protest the detainments of the non-violent leaders. During the demonstration, British soldiers began shooting at the protestors, who maintained their non-violent discipline even as they were fired upon. By the end of the destruction, approximately 200 unarmed people were killed and many more were injured. Ghaffar Khan was charged the next day for “sedition and wrongful assembly.” As news of this massacre spread, the British were forced to withdraw from Peshawar due to the outrage of the citizens of the city.

By May 3, the British made the Khudai Khidmatgar to be illegal. Congress activists were arrested and a curfew was imposed on all movement for 24 hours. At this point, many people were outraged by the Kissa Khani Bazaar Massacre, and protestors began to turn to violence against the British. This was only met with increased violence from the British government. On May 30, a British officer was killed during a protest in the village of Takar. In retaliation, the village was attacked and multiple individuals were killed at the hands of the British troops.

Another act of campaigner violence occurred on August 24, 1930, when a British soldier fired at a prominent local leader of the village of Spin Tangi at a protest gathering. Though many of the protestors were committed to non-violence, there were some armed protestors, who incited a riot. When the fighting ended, the government had arrested 300 people, killed 80 and wounded many more. The protestors had killed one British captain. In 1931, the Afridis, a large Pashtun war tribe, violently invaded Pashtun in response to the carnage wreaked by the government.

In response to this, by 1931 the government had increased its pressure in the Frontier. Ghaffar Khan was arrested and the Khudai Khidmatgar was banned. The police and government were given unlimited authority, which resulted in more violence against protestors. Houses were burned down and stocks of grain were destroyed. Members of the Khudai Khidmatgar were assaulted by British officers. Forced labour, physical violence, torture, and even sexual abuse were common actions taken against the Khudai Khidmatgar volunteers. Although forms of civil disobedience continued after 1931, they were drastically reduced due to the repressive violence.

The Khudai Khidmatgar campaign succeeded in educating Indians on the necessary non-violent tactics to reform society so that, in time, the British could be ousted from India. The campaign was also successful in achieving several short-term goals, such as increased government finance for education, health, agriculture, and veterinary medicine. In 1932, the government brought the Frontier Province to the same level of administration as other parts of India, and urban and rural elections followed shortly thereafter. In 1934 after negotiations between Gandhi and the British government resulted in Britain conceding other immediate Indian demands in India, the Indian National Congress ended the campaign, which was nicknamed "the Salt Satyagraha." Gandhi launched other campaigns before independence was achieved in 1947.

**Research Notes Influences:**

This movement took place during the same time as Gandhi’s similar non-violent efforts to achieve Indian independence (see "Indians campaign for independence (Salt Satyagraha), 1930-1931")(1,2)

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Additional Notes:

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