Sir Feroz Khan Noon

My role in this committee would be as the Indian high commissioner to the United Kingdom. Sir Feroz Khan Noon worked as the Indian high commissioner to the United Kingdom from 1936 to 1941. A high commissioner acts as his country’s embassy to another Commonwealth nation. Since India was under rule by Britain at the time, is important to understand Britain’s stance in the war and how India worked together with Britain. Britain’s allies included France, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, the Soviet Union,China and the United States of America.

India played a major role for Britain during both World War 1 and World War 2; however, the British and the Indians didn’t always get along so well. I must consider all of the facts below when drawing and conclusions or making any decisions during the conference. Firstly, India played a crucial role for Britain in WW1, in 1918, “The world must pay India in whatever India wants, for without Indian products, there would be greater difficulty in winning the war”(New York Times, 1918). Secondly, despite contributing significant amounts of resources and soldiers to help Britain win World War 1, India helped even more during World War 2 - contributing over 2.6 million soldiers. In addition to all the men India sent, India also supplied many valuable materials such as weapons, ammunition, timber and food in large quantities to Britain’s allies in Europe. Key British figures recognized and thanked the Indian country and its troops publicly on multiple occasions. The Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian Army in 1942, asserted that the British “Couldn’t have come through both wars if they hadn’t had the Indian Army”(Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck, 1942). Even Winston Churchill who was known for his bias and inexplicable hate for the Indian people, acknowledged that the unsurpassed bravery of all the Indian soldiers and officers. Despite being constantly exploited by the British, they Indians fought extremely smart and hard to do everything they could to help the British Commonwealth and their allies. The immense help the Indian soldiers provided was best seen in 1940, the Germans put the British army into a very tough situation, as over 380, 000 British soldiers were trapped between the English Channel and the advancing German troops. At this point the whole British army consisted of only 1,100,000 men, therefore this was a huge loss of over 30% of all their soldiers. Luckily, Britain was lucky to have countries step in and help them, India had a much larger and better-organized army and they ultimately saved the war from slipping out of the hands of the British and losing control.

Often people don’t realize how helpful the Indian army was to the British army, since on its own the British army was very weak and bad at planning effective battle strategies.The British had such a pathetic army that they lost some of their battles against multiple Asian countries such as the Malaysia and Singapore, despite the Asian soldiers being outnumbered four to one. Many of the British head war officials realized themselves how weak and unorganized their own army was. Vice Admiral, acting Commander-in-Chief of Britain’s Eastern Fleet, wrote in his war diary: “Man for man, our men were inferior to the Japanese in training and in the moral qualities of audacity, tenacity, discipline and devotion”(Geoffrey Layton, 1942). Although India played a major role in the war, experts agree that without the United States of America and India entering the war, Britain would’ve had zero chance of emerging victorious. India played an essential part because they supplied Britain food to prevent their people from starving; although, ironically, many Indians died of starvation themselves because of the massive exports of food due to Churchill’s orders. As Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, it would be crucial for me to aid Britain with their battles and war materials; however, I would also have to fight for the right’s of the Indian workers and soldiers and make sure that they aren’t being exploited.

During the war, over 14 million Indians were working in war factories or on farms which were exporting massive amounts of food to the soldiers. These workers played an extremely underrated role in winning the war. The only reason the Indians essentially volunteered to fight and work for the British was that over the past 200 years, Britain had reduced India to such a poverty-stricken country that men were willing to fight just so that they could send back some money to their family. However, this was not always true, in some cases Indian men were forced to join or else the British would block the regions irrigation system or people were punished. The British would also abuse the men until they would say that they were ready for enlistment, Indian men were stripped naked and even thrown in thorny bushes and left there for hours. As I mentioned before, I would continue in helping Britain with their war efforts, however I would request for a fair trial of many British army officials to punish those who didn’t take their orders and abused and harassed innocent men. Not only did India sacrifice its soldiers, they also gave up much of their most valuable resources.“35% of the Indian cotton produced during the war, went into creating war materials”(The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History, Volume 2). Cotton was and still is one of India’s major industries, for 35% of all that cotton to be used in the war is an enormous amount. Furthermore, India also suffered major deforestation, due to being stripped of all its timber for all the productions of war necessities such as boats. Shockingly, despite being treated horribly by the British, Indian royal families donated enormous amounts of cash to fund Royal Air Force Squadrons. This was most-likely due to the fact that although the general Indian population was disliked by the British leaders, they respected the royal Indian families because they understood how desperately they needed funding for all their war operations. Despite the Indians doing so much for the British and their Allies, instead of being rewarded, they suffered. On August 2, 1943, a cabled message from Calcutta’s mayor was sent to New York City’s mayor and US President Franklin Roosevelt: “Acute distress prevails in the city of Calcutta and the province of Bengal due to shortage of foodstuffs. Entire population is being devitalised and hundreds dying of starvation. Appeal to you and Mr Churchill in the name of starving humanity to arrange immediate shipment of food grains from America, Australia and other countries”( The New York Times, 1943).

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