

Alliance Française de Dhaka
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WAR
AND COLONIES
1914-1918

CONFERENCE PAPER • PROF. DR MUSHIRUL HASAN



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Indian Reactions to the First World War

Abstract

The War set in motion various forces world-wide. It had a major impact on the subcontinent as well. To begin with, I underline "moderation" as the key word to describe and define the responses of various political classes. But as the War progressed, the responses became more and more complex--from loyal declarations to muted responses--from moderation to Extremism. Some of them need to be evaluated in order to uncover the roots of the latter-day Indo-British confrontation. They are also critical for the understanding of the forms of nationalist consciousness that developed during the War years.

The second part of the paper takes a close look at 'Expectation'. In other words, I hope to focus on the hopes generated by the War in different political quarters--hopes of political reforms and greater representation in decision-making bodies. On these points there was a fair degree of unity that was expressed by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. And yet, there was no unanimity of the details. As the political classes became impatient with the government of India's attitude, the divisions widened.

The final part of the paper is concerned with the 'Disappointments', or the non-fulfilment of the political demands, and the popular discontent over it caused during the Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement.

I want to argue that the social and political forces triggered by the War period paved the way for the emergence of Gandhi as a major factor in Indian politics and society.

Profile

Dr Prof. Mushirul Hasan was formerly Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia and Director-General of the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Currently, he is a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow at the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.