

# Danger in Kashmir

by  
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WITH A FOREWORD BY  
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PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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D. P. F.

Copyright, 1954, by Princeton University Press  
London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press  
L.C. CARD 54-9022

Printed in the United States of America  
by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

*To My Wife*

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On the other hand it is difficult to understand why the Congress leaders were anxious "that the Maharaja of Kashmir should make no declaration of independence." It is safe to assume that they would not have advised the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan, but then if they did not wish him to declare independence, for what purpose was their visit? It is perhaps understandable that Pandit Nehru might have wanted to visit Kashmir to intervene for his political friend, Sheikh Abdullah, who was in prison. But one wonders whether Nehru was interested in Abdullah's personal welfare—devoid of political implications—at a time when the Subcontinent boiled with insurrection and thousands of people were being killed.

The Pakistanis further support their conviction about the purpose of Mr. Gandhi's visit with the Maharaja by pointing to several political events which followed in the period between the visit and the act of accession. They point out, for example, that the Prime Minister of Kashmir, Pandit Kak, who had signed the standstill agreement with Pakistan, was replaced by Janak Singh and later by Mehr Chand Mahajan, who sided openly with India and was for the state's accession to India. They point to the dismissal of the British officers from the Kashmir police and army, including the Chief of the General Staff and the Inspector General of Police.

The Pakistanis have further maintained that as a result of Gandhi's negotiations it was decided to build a direct road between India and Jammu. It was reported that "orders have been issued by the Kashmir Government that a temporary boat bridge should be constructed over the Ravi near Pathankot [India] so that vehicular traffic could be maintained between Jammu and the Indian Union. The metalling of the road from Jammu [town] to Kathua [in Jammu Province] is also proceeding at top speed. The idea is to keep up some sort of communication between the State and

the Indian Union, so that essential supplies and troops could be rushed to Kashmir without having to transport them through Pakistan territory. These orders were kept as top secret lest the Pakistan Government smell these shady moves. But somehow it leaked out and a local daily paper, belonging to the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, published it. When other papers and news agencies tried to copy it, the censor stepped in and prohibited its publication in the State and circulation outside."

It was further reported three weeks later that, "The Kashmir Government has confirmed the news that it is linking the State, via Pathankot, with the East Punjab, and throwing a bridge over the River Ravi. The work is already proceeding at top speed. Temporary arrangements are also under way to make it possible for vehicles and other transport to cross the Ravi. In short, every effort is being made to render the State independent of the two existing arteries of communications that link Kashmir with the outside world. Both of these run through Pakistan.

"Once the communication lines between the State and Hindustan become actual, it is generally believed in the highest circles, that the Maharaja will burst forth with a declaration of accession to Hindustan. In the Muslim circles throughout the State, it is said that such a declaration would be tantamount to a declaration of war against 80% of the Muslim population of the State, as well as against Pakistan."<sup>22</sup>

The Pakistanis, then, assert that "with Indian assistance the State improved the road to Jammu, constructed a telegraph line along it, and started work on the road to link Bagh in Poonch with the main Jhelum Valley road to Kashmir near Chikar. This latter road was to give India through Jammu, Naushera and Kotli a road open throughout the

<sup>22</sup> *The Pakistan Times* (Lahore), September 27, October 17, 1947.

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year to the Vale of Kashmir, which is normally inaccessible in winter by the Jammu-Banihal road."<sup>23</sup>

Now it cannot be assumed that a decision to link by highway two areas hitherto rather tenuously joined by inadequate transportation facilities is prima-facie evidence of either a secret agreement of eventual accession or military support in case of trouble. But the timing of such a decision, if it did come (as the Pakistanis claim) hard on the heels of Gandhi's visit, would be evidence enough for the Pakistanis. They were convinced that a plan to incorporate Kashmir within India had been prepared at the time of the negotiations concerning partition, when the Radcliffe Award assigned to India the district of Gurdaspur in spite of its slight Muslim majority. The district lies opposite Kathua and provides the only natural link between India and Jammu.

There is one piece of etymological fact that would seem to cast a different light on the question. This is the very name "Pakistan," with which the Muslims, ever since 1940, have associated the idea of national independence. It has a double meaning. One is Pak-i-Stan, meaning the "Land of Pure." The other is the fact that the name is composed of the initials of the regions from which Pakistan was to be created: P for Punjab, A for Afghan (North-West Frontier Province), K for Kashmir(!), S for Sind, and Tan for the ending of Baluchistan. Such a name would seem to imply that the Muslim leaders themselves had taken for granted that Kashmir would be an integral part of their future homeland. On the other hand, since the Indian National Congress failed to protest this highly political interpretation of the letter "K" in the name of Pakistan, it would seem to indicate at least its resignation to Kashmir's eventually becoming a part of Pakistan. If this is so, it would seem rather illogical to accuse the government of India of planning Kashmir's accession to India by force.

<sup>23</sup> *Jammu: A Muslim Province, op.cit.*, p. 17.

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All these may seem to be trivial and bothersome details. Yet they are of material importance in view of the Pakistani suspicions which have cast heavy shadows upon the good faith and integrity of the Indian government. And such seemingly unimportant evidence, multiplied hundreds of times by the general distrust which clouded every detail of crucial negotiations in Delhi concerning the complex issues of the partition, added fuel to the flames of Hindu-Muslim hostility.

One fact, however, stands out amid the welter of claims and counterclaims. This is that of the other 584 Princely States not a single one with Hindu population became a part of Pakistan even though in two cases, Hyderabad and Junagadh, they were ruled by Muslim Princes. Nor did any state with a Muslim population (with the exception of the Sikh-ruled State of Kapurthala, in which almost all Muslims were killed or expelled) accede to India. Rather, they sought integration according to their religious affinity in every case save one—Kashmir.

### *Independence—and Bloodshed in Kashmir*

Through all the mists of uncertainty that shroud the negotiations concerning the future of Kashmir, one fact alone is clear. This is the irresponsible behavior of the Maharaja. It was this that brought his nation uncommitted, his people's wishes unascertained, past the fatal day of partition, August 15, 1947. It was his stubbornness, his coy maneuvering, including his "attacks of colic," that brought upon his people unparalleled suffering and pain. In this respect at least, he was a worthy "Son of the Dogras."

When the fateful day of August 15 dawned, Muslims celebrated a "Pakistan Day" with flags enthusiastically displayed throughout the state. The Maharaja ordered them torn down and retaliated by closing all pro-Pakistani newspapers.

Still the pressure mounted, and the stories carried by

refugees pouring in from bloodsoaked Punjab by Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims must have done little to allay the Maharaja's anxiety. Nor did the presence in Kashmir of these bitter and hysterical refugees do anything to reduce the tension within Kashmir.

The Maharaja's last-minute decision was, as history would indicate, no decision at all. It was only a final maneuver—a last vacillation. He apparently thought to temporize his position on August 12, three days before partition, by offering a standstill agreement with both India and Pakistan.<sup>24</sup> Under its terms, Pakistan would assume the responsibilities it now held as a part of British India and would continue to run the communications, postal and telegraph services. An agreement along these lines was signed with Pakistan on August 14. With India, however, such an agreement was never effected. There was no official explanation for this important omission until five years later when Sheikh Abdullah declared that India's decision to refrain from signing such an agreement was based upon the belief that "it could not consider any agreement entered into by the Government of the State valid until it had the approval of the people's representatives."<sup>25</sup> The fact that India accepted the all-important act of accession from the same Maharaja's government two months later, in October, casts some doubt upon Sheikh Abdullah's sincerity concerning India's motives. This abstention on the part of India has also been the basis for Pakistani accusations that the entire affair was a premeditated ruse on the part of both the Maharaja and India. They declare that the standstill agreement was designed to persuade Pakistan that no action was immediately anticipated; that India's failure to sign was based upon a fairly well-founded hope for a much closer political relationship.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, *op.cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>25</sup> *Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly*, *op.cit.*, pp. 15-16.

*Who Coerced Whom?*

The Indian government had an entirely different view about the development in Kashmir and the happenings connected with the question of accession. It admits that "Kashmir became crowded with a large number of refugees, both Sikhs and Muslims; the Muslim refugees passed through parts of the State on their way from East Punjab to West Punjab. This resulted in the State becoming a sort of channel through which they passed." Still, they insist that "Kashmir remained quiet . . . Kashmir had no disturbances at all when both East and West Punjab were in the flames of the communal passions and disturbances"; that ". . . there is no reason for any suggestion that anything has been done by the Dogra Raja or by the Dogras otherwise to molest the Muslims"; that they "have no facts which would show that any Muslims were killed in the Kashmir State by Sikhs or Hindus or even by the Maharaja or his Dogras before October 22, which is the date of the penetration and raid in Kashmir territory by the tribesmen."<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, says the Indian government, ever since the Maharaja failed to meet the time limit of accession the Pakistan government pursued a policy of coercing him into accession to Pakistan. It accused the Pakistani authorities of arousing feelings of communal hatred and giving support to acts of terrorism in Kashmir. Agents and religious leaders, it maintains, were sent from Pakistan to various parts of Kashmir to incite the Muslim population against Sikhs and Hindus. Raids were reportedly organized from Pakistan's West Punjab into Jammu Province, villages were burned, and non-Muslims murdered and robbed.

Furthermore, according to the Indian statements, Pakistan applied an economic blockade to Kashmir to coerce her into accession. She refused to honor her obligations towards

<sup>26</sup> From the speech of the representative of India, M. C. Setalvad, before the Security Council, *Security Council Official Records*, *op.cit.*, pp. 211, 212, 214.

Kashmir emanating from the standstill agreement and cut the country off from its supply of gasoline, wheat, salt, kerosene oil, and cloth. The postal system did not work, savings bank accounts were tied up, postal certificates were not cashed, and checks on West Punjab banks were not honored.<sup>27</sup>

The Pakistan government rejects emphatically these Indian accusations. It explains that the difficulties of supplying the state were caused by the dislocation of communications, by their being overloaded with the transport of refugees, by the failure of India to supply coal to Pakistan, by the fact that Muslim lorry drivers were afraid to carry supplies to Kashmir because the Sikhs and Hindus were attacking them. It further asserts that India violated the standstill agreement by having Kashmir included within her postal system, and as evidence it published a memorandum, dated September 1, 1947, almost eight weeks before the accession of the state to India, signed by the Director-General, Postal Telegraph, New Delhi, in which towns in the State of Jammu and Kashmir are listed as if they were part of India.<sup>28</sup>

Whatever the validity of the mutual accusations, there is little doubt that Kashmir was brewing with revolt against the Maharaja long before the tribesmen invaded the country. The political opposition launched in 1930 was carried into an open resistance in 1946. This was resumed in the spring of 1947, and it reached a critical climax in the summer when the news of the fratricidal struggle in Punjab echoed throughout Kashmir.

The Maharaja apparently was thoroughly aware of the situation. He strengthened the Sikh and Hindu garrisons in the Muslim areas. Then, towards the end of July, he

<sup>27</sup> See Government of India, *White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir*, pp. 2, 8, 9.

<sup>28</sup> See Sir Zafrulla Khan's statement before the Security Council, *Security Council Official Records*, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-103.

ordered the Muslims to deposit arms with the police. The Muslims answered by organizing themselves in guerrilla groups in the wild hills of West Poonch, where their movements remained unnoticed for some time. They were led by seasoned soldiers who previously had been demobilized from the British Indian army. They organized the smuggling of arms. Messengers were sent to the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province, where manufacturing of small arms and ammunitions had been practiced for years. The Muslim partisans in the hills were armed with these weapons. Many ex-servicemen from World War II, hearing about the Maharaja's expeditions against Muslim villages, evacuated their families to West Punjab, where their relatives lived, and returned to Jammu to fight the Dogra rule.

This movement was led by a young Kashmiri, Sardar Mohammed Ibrahim Khan, who since June had traveled throughout the country, arousing the spirit of his countrymen. In August he narrowly escaped arrest in Srinagar and fled to Pakistan. At Murree he laid the foundation for a political movement of liberation, out of which later grew the Azad (Free) Kashmir government.

The Maharaja admitted unrest when his government issued a statement on September 12, 1947, listing dates and places where agitation had been launched "by evilly disposed persons," and assured the population that the whole of Jammu was "now on the 10th of September pacified" and that "steps to restore control to civil administration of the area" were in progress.<sup>29</sup> But the revolt was not suppressed, and the fighting did not stop. From West Jammu it spread to the eastern part of the province, and massacres grew into mass proportions.

Richard Symonds, who served with a group of British Quakers in Punjab aiding innumerable victims of communal

<sup>29</sup> *Kashmir Before Accession*. Government Printing, Lahore, 1948; pp. 13-14.

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strife, described the situation in Jammu and Poonch in the following terms:

"Poonch is a barren, rocky mountainous country, whose important export is military manpower. Sixty thousand Poonchis served in the Indian Army in World War II. They returned (they said) to find that during the war the Raja of Poonch, under whose mild, if unprogressive rule they had existed tolerably, had been dispossessed by a law suit and that the Maharaja of Kashmir's direct rule had imposed all the tyrannous taxes of Kashmir and Jammu. There was a tax on every hearth and every window. Every cow, buffalo and sheep was taxed and even every wife. Finally the Zail-dari tax was introduced to pay for the cost of taxation, and Dogra troops were billeted on the Poonchis to enforce collection.

"As August 15 and the partition of India drew near, there were many meetings and demonstrations in Poonch in favour of Kashmir joining Pakistan. Martial law was introduced and meetings fired on. After one such incident on August 27 in Nila But, Abdul Qayyum, a young zamindar, started the revolt with a few friends. Substantial men told me that they would never have joined such a rash enterprise but for the folly of the Dogras who burnt whole villages where only a single family was involved in the revolt. Rapidly most of the Muslim ex-Servicemen joined Qayyum and in six weeks the whole district except for Poonch city itself was in rebel hands."<sup>30</sup>

About the middle of October, when the situation in Kashmir developed into mass killing, the governments of Pakistan and Kashmir exchanged a number of telegrams. Karachi accused Srinagar of organized expeditions against Muslims, and of the state troops' raids into West Punjab. The Maharaja government protested against the infiltration of Pakistani nationals and the smuggling of arms into

<sup>30</sup> *The Statesman* (Calcutta), February 4, 1948.

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Kashmir. In one telegram, on October 15, it expressed readiness "to have an impartial inquiry made into the whole affair. . . ." But it warned at the same time, "If, unfortunately, this request is not heeded the Government much against its wishes will have no option but to ask for assistance to withstand the aggressive and unfriendly actions of the Pakistan people along our border. . . ."

The Pakistani government took a grave view of the threat of asking for an assistance which could not have implied anything other than help from India, but it accepted Srinagar's proposal to establish an inquiry committee. It expressed readiness to nominate its representative without delay.

A few days later, on October 18, the Prime Minister of Kashmir repeated the threat of asking "for friendly assistance," but, significantly, the previous offer of establishing an inquiry committee was omitted. The Governor General of Pakistan protested again, saying:

". . . the threat to enlist outside assistance shows clearly that the real aim of your Government's policy is to seek an opportunity to join the Indian Dominion, as a coup d'état, by securing the intervention and assistance of that Dominion.

"This policy is naturally creating deep resentment and grave apprehension among your subjects, 85 per cent of whom are Muslims. The proposal made by my Government for a meeting with your accredited representative is now an urgent necessity. I suggest that the way to smooth out the difficulties and adjust matters in a friendly way is for your Prime Minister to come to Karachi and discuss the developments that have taken place, instead of carrying on acrimonious and bitter controversy by telegrams and correspondence. I would also repeat that I endorse the suggestion made in your Prime Minister's telegram of 15 October, and accepted by my Government in their reply of 18 October,

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to have an impartial inquiry made into the whole affair.”<sup>31</sup>

Several other telegrams were sent to Kashmir from Karachi, pointing to mounting oppression of Muslims and also to mountain tensions among the Pakistani nationals. But despite this insistent exchange of messages, nobody from the Maharaja's government came to Karachi, and no commission to carry out an “impartial inquiry” was ever established.

### *Abdullah Reenters the Scene*

While this battle of telegrams between Karachi and Srinagar was going on, a highly curious event took place in Srinagar. Sheikh Abdullah was, without explanation, released from prison.

It will be remembered that Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference, was sentenced in May 1946 to nine years in prison for having led the “Quit Kashmir” campaign, aimed against the Maharaja. Yet, on September 29, 1947, while the state was in the midst of a revolt, the Maharaja ordered his release.

There is no evidence of any official intervention with the Maharaja, but the only possible guess which suggests itself is that Abdullah was released on the intervention of the government of India, whose Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, had been for years associated with him. That some such high-level intervention took place is supported by the fact that the leaders of the Muslim Conference, who had been far less pronounced in their hostility to the Maharaja than their political opponent, Sheikh Abdullah, remained behind bars. Abdullah's actions following his release are likewise significant and continue to imply that his freedom was no princely whim on the part of the Maharaja.

Immediately after his release, Abdullah set up a number of meetings and declared at a gathering of 100,000 people at Hazaribagh, in Kashmir, on October 5:

<sup>31</sup> The telegrams are quoted in the *Security Council Official Records; op.cit.*, pp. 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81-82.

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“ . . . Our first demand is complete transfer of power to the people in Kashmir. Representatives of the people in a democratic Kashmir will then decide whether the State should join India or Pakistan. If the forty lakhs [4,000,000] of people living in Jammu and Kashmir are by-passed and the State declares its accession to India or Pakistan, I shall raise the banner of revolt and we face a struggle.

“Of course, we will naturally opt to go to that Dominion where our own demand for freedom receives recognition and support. . . . We cannot desire to joint those [in Pakistan] who say that the people must have no voice in the matter. We shall be cut to pieces before we allow alliance between this state and people of this type. . . .

“In this time of national crisis Kashmir must hold the beaconlight. All around us we see the tragedy of brother killing brother. At this time Kashmir must come forward and raise the banner of Hindu-Muslim unity.

“In Kashmir we want a people's Government. We want a government which will give equal rights and equal opportunities to all men—irrespective of caste and creed. The Kashmir Government will not be the government of any one community. It will be a joint government of the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. That is what I am fighting for.”<sup>32</sup>

Such sentiments are of course eminently noble, but since, at the time he expressed them, the basic pattern for accession by the Princely States to India or Pakistan was being decided exclusively on a communal basis, there can be no doubt that the sense of Sheikh Abdullah's statement was decidedly pro-Indian—at least anti-Pakistani. The Sheikh's subsequent actions are likewise significant.

Soon after his release from prison and after a few days of campaigning in Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah visited New Delhi. In two statements released through API (Associated

<sup>32</sup> *People's Age* (Bombay), October 26, 1947, as quoted in the *Security Council Official Record, op.cit.*, pp. 212-213.



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Press of India) on October 10 and 21, he confirmed that the Poonchis were in open revolt against the Maharaja but he reaffirmed his policy against joining Pakistan. He sympathized with the Indian policy of Hindu-Muslim unity but insisted on "freedom before accession."

This, then, was the situation as darkness slid over the Subcontinent on the evening of the twenty-first of October, 1947. The independence of Hindus and Muslims from almost two centuries of British rule was only a little more than nine weeks old. But already, over vast areas of what should have been this happy land, an indigenous and complex tyranny was spreading—a tyranny of terror, product of a "fission" that was at once to the Indian leaders preposterous and to the Pakistanis, inescapable.

It was in Kashmir, peopled by Muslims, ruled by a Hindu, resting upon India, nestled against Pakistan, crossroad of refugees fleeing from the terrors of both Muslim and Hindu pillage and murder, that the most tragic explosion, product of this fission, was to take place.

In India, in Pakistan, in Kashmir on this evening of October 21, tension continued to mount. The press bayed accusation and counter-accusation. Hindus and Sikhs intensified the bitterness of their thrusts against Pakistan. The Muslims of Kashmir fell before the rifles and swords of the Dogras, and in Pakistan the tribesmen called for a *jihad*, a holy war of revenge against their brothers' killers.

The explosion had now become inevitable. It started at dawn of the twenty-second.

## 4. Invasion and Accession

"October 22nd. In the hour before dawn, Prithvinath Wanchoo, a young divisional engineer, staying in the dak bungalow at Domel near the Kashmir-North-West Frontier Province border, is rudely awakened by his servant hysterically shouting 'Dushman aagaya' (The enemy has come). Wanchoo runs barefooted into the verandah and sees the village of Nalochi, across the Kishenganga bridge, in flames. The Dogra garrison, caught unawares by the suddenness of the invasion, loses its hill-top positions and trenches and falls back to organize a new defensive position."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the curtain was raised on another scene of the drama of the Kashmiri people. It was the formidable Afridi and Mahsud tribesmen of Tirah and Waziristan who, aroused by stories of the slaughter of Muslims by the Dogra troops, crossed the Kashmir frontier at the strategic outpost of Domel and swept down, some 2,000 strong, along the Jhelum river valley, quickly overcoming the resistance of the state troops.

It had not required much effort to incite them into a "holy war." For years these tribes had been a thorn to the British in this all-important territory, where the British-Russian interests had often clashed in diplomatic squabbles. They were a restless people. Every man carried a rifle and recognized only one authority—his tribal chief. During the mild summers they were relatively quiet. But the winter snows covering their hilly motherland drove them to temporary quarters in milder valleys, and these seasonal migrations were by no means peaceable. On their treks they invaded villages, looted homes and shops, and abducted women. Then, their spirits satisfied and their greediness assuaged, they returned to their homes.

<sup>1</sup> D. F. Karaka, *Betrayal in India*. Victor Gollancz, London, 1950; pp. 173-174, quoting from the pamphlet by K. Ahmad Abbas, *Kashmir Fights for Freedom*; Kutub.