



Tortured Kashmir

I. The Smoke and the Fire

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SRINAGAR, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir State (area 86,024 square miles; 1961 population 3,560,976), is an odd little place at any time—more odd than really beautiful, it seemed to me—but conditions were peculiar even by local standards when I arrived there at the end of September. My introduction to the special Kashmiri atmosphere began while I was having tea at the Indian government's regional press information bureau, where I had gone to present my credentials and to ask for an appointment with the state's chief minister. I was having a pleasant chat with one of the press officers when there was a loud noise out in the street, quite close it seemed. "A blowout, of course," the press officer remarked.

Having often heard similar blowouts during the Algerian war, and even for a time in Paris, I finished my tea as fast as courtesy allowed and went out to investigate. "People saying bomb explode, sir," my chauffeur reported. The circumstances, unfortunately, did not lend themselves for the moment to impartial investigation. An armed patrol, rifles at the ready, its men two paces apart, faces alert and ugly, was trotting in single file along the sidewalk, and in

the middle of the street Kashmir state police were swinging their long, brass-tipped lathis at a group of youths who were running for dear life.

Late that same afternoon, there was a knock on my door and two young men in European clothes asked if they could come in. They identified themselves as members of a students' revolutionary committee fighting for Kashmir's freedom. Their committee, they said, had organized a peaceful demonstration of students that morning outside the headquarters of the U.N. military observer group and had tried to hand over to the U.N. personnel a resolution setting forth their grievances; they had been denied entrance by the Kashmir police and then brutally charged with lathis and gun butts. In retaliation they had thrown two hand grenades at their attackers, and had left two policemen writhing in pools of blood on the ground.

According to my two visitors, more than a hundred students had been arrested and then barbarously tortured in the police trucks taking them to prison, and in retaliation a third hand grenade had been thrown at a police detachment on Residency Road. Perhaps I had heard it go off? I said I had

heard an explosion that could have been a hand grenade, or perhaps just a tin can of something cooked up in a school chemistry lab or even a giant firecracker. My visitors retorted with some heat that it had been a pukka military hand grenade from their underground arsenal; then the older of the two handed me several copies of the resolution intended for the U.N. "Indian Government sent its Gestapo into action and wave after wave of repression was clamped on us," the text asserted. "Kashmir was turned into something worse than a Nazi concentration camp and naked genocide was committed on us! The drama of Eichmann was re-enacted."

WHILE I read on, the two genocide victims supplied me by way of footnotes with lurid atrocity stories—villages in flames, innocent peasants slaughtered by the score, women raped by the hundreds—all of which the older revolutionary shouted to me across the room in a voice suitable for addressing a large outdoor rally. In more than thirty years as a foreign correspondent I have never encountered such iron-nerved—and iron-lunged—conspirators.

For, if the resolution could be read at its face value, my visitors

were indeed conspirators; in fact they were nothing less than the famous guerrillas, or raiders, the Indian papers were constantly writing about. "Indian Government tried to mislead the world by naming us 'Pakistan Infiltrators,'" the document explained. "But now we have risen and shall fight to the last."

At first I was skeptical about practically everything my two visitors had told me. Later, I discovered there was quite a bit of truth mixed in with the wild exaggerations about "genocide." I finally succeeded in obtaining confirmation from a local official spokesman that the noise I heard on my arrival in Srinagar had been a small plastic bomb planted or thrown by some student agitators and that it had injured a passing cyclist and a policeman. The spokesman also admitted that a number of students had been arrested after the morning's demonstration, but claimed that most of them had been released within a few hours and denied that any had been tortured or otherwise maltreated. After I returned to Delhi, hand grenades were thrown by students in Srinagar on several occasions and, according to official statements by the Kashmir authorities, two youths were injured by what appeared to be the premature explosion of a bomb they were planting. It was also claimed that hand grenades made in Pakistan had been found in police raids.

The student demonstrations became increasingly frequent and violent, leading to bloody clashes with the police in the streets of Srinagar. On October 17, the Kashmir government ordered all schools in the city of Srinagar closed for an indefinite period. The decision had become necessary, a high Kashmir official told the press, because "Some unscrupulous people, paid agents and mercenaries of Pakistan, had endeavored to take advantage of the student community and incite them into agitation and indiscipline." Earlier the Kashmir home minister, D. P. Dhar, asserted that some Pakistani raiders were still hiding in Srinagar itself and charged that there was evidence that "certain elements were maintaining close liaison with these raiders." That sounded like at least partial and indirect corroboration of the most important allegation the

two student revolutionaries had made to me, namely that a significant part of the Kashmir population had been and was actively supporting the infiltrators or raiders from across the border, contrary to previous Indian official claims.

Smoke, Fire, and Propaganda

Both Rawalpindi and New Delhi, I suspect, are sometimes misled by their respective protégés or agents in Kashmir, and reports from both sides must often be taken with several grains of salt. Pakistan's External Affairs Minister Z. A. Bhutto, for example, has reiterated the preposterous genocide charge in the U.N. On the other side of the coin one can cite Kashmir's chief minister, G. M. Sadiq, arriving in Delhi on the same day his police had just shot down seven of his constituents in the streets of his state's capital and declaring that the general situation in Kashmir was "absolutely normal."

Often there are real flames, or at least embers, behind all the clouds of propaganda smoke, and those embers could in certain circumstances start a world conflagration. Wars usually do generate atrocities. But if, as the Pakistan sympathizers in Kashmir allege, Kashmiri villages have been deliberately burned down by Indian forces—and I suspect myself that this has happened, though less frequently than alleged—it is probably often because Pakistani raiders have sniped at Indian troops from such villages, realizing full well the reprisals they would provoke.

The charges of rape are equally complicated. Most frequently they are laid against the police forces that were sent into the valley from other parts of India when political agitation threatened to get out of hand last spring. I heard several leaders of the legally tolerated pro-independence Plebiscite Front talking of Moslem women raped by the hundreds. The most responsible Front leaders, such as Maulana Mohammed Sayeed Masoodi, were more cautious; they spoke merely of "molestation." The Front's official propaganda publications are similarly circumspect.

The distinction drawn between rape and molestation is interesting. Hundreds of Kashmiri women probably did feel that they had been

molested last May and it is likely that the feeling was in many cases justified. (The number of such cases is thought to have increased further since the arrival of Pakistani raiders in August.) But it is often pointed out by way of explanation that police forces under the local authorities—not the Indian Army—frequently search passengers boarding or leaving busses to make sure they are not raiders in disguise or that they are not carrying concealed weapons. Women are not spared, and especially when the searches are carried out by non-Kashmiri police, they are not always conducted with tact; sometimes, it appears, the searchers are deliberately untactful.

Kashmir is not the nightmare land that Pakistani propaganda depicts, but there is scarcely better foundation for Indian claims that the failure of the local population to give the Pakistani raiders any significant support demonstrates their basic loyalty to India. The Kashmiris are a gentle, unwarlike race, but their obvious unwillingness to fight for independence is no proof that they do not want it. And gentle folk can sometimes be incredibly stubborn.

One thing is painfully apparent: those Kashmiris who do have a definite political ideal, and who are willing to run risks for it, are adopting increasingly extremist attitudes that tend to narrow the choice open to the Kashmiri people to one simple alternative: India or Pakistan.

Ten Million Missing Persons

Political activists on the opposition side naturally make a major effort to convince foreign newsmen that the entire Moslem population of the state shares their pro-Pakistan or anti-India extremism; a number of street demonstrations and other theatrics are probably staged mainly to catch their attention. It is not certain that even the central government in Delhi knows what the true state of opinion in Kashmir is. "I am convinced," an Indian editor told me, "that a great many Kashmir Moslems are willing to put up with the status quo. But I am equally convinced that for a long time the central government has dangerously underestimated the strength of pro-Pakistan sentiment in the valley."

The lack of accurate information

about the whole situation available to Indian policymakers in Delhi is in itself disturbing. An official expert on the problems of Kashmir here, after explaining to me that there are important Hindu and Buddhist enclaves in predominantly Moslem Kashmir, just as there are Moslem ones in the adjoining Hindu Province of Jammu, had to admit that he had no figures on the size of these various enclaves and did not believe they had ever been compiled. The 1961 census figures show roughly 1.1 million non-Moslems to about 2.4 million Moslems for the whole State of Jammu and Kashmir, but according to my source they were not further broken down. In fact, judging by the 1964 edition of a handbook on India published by the ministry of information, the central government does not even know the exact population of the majority of the state's eight administrative districts, since their frontiers were dislocated by Pakistani occupation in 1947. As a Moslem reader of the *Hindustan Times* complained, the total present-day Moslem population of India—listed as just under forty-seven million in the 1961 census—was given in one recent speech by President S. Radhakrishnan as sixty million and in another by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri as only fifty million. (In fairness to these Indian leaders it should be pointed out that census data are particularly difficult to collect in this huge country.)

Before visiting Kashmir, I had been told by reliable western friends in New Delhi that some seventy per cent of the Kashmiri population would probably vote for independence in any plebiscite; the only element of uncertainty was whether the remaining thirty per cent would be split twenty per cent for union with Pakistan and ten per cent for India, or vice versa. When I interviewed Maulana Masoodi at the Front headquarters in the picturesque old quarter of Srinagar, he appeared to feel that such formulas belonged to the past: "As a result of the excesses committed here by the army and local authority, there is no doubt at all about what the outcome would be: the decision would be almost unanimous." "Unanimous for joining Pakistan, you mean?" I asked. The Maulana

merely shrugged impatiently as if the matter had gone beyond the control of even the least extremist among the Moslem leaders. When a war starts, there is not much freedom of choice left to the individuals on both sides, who are swept away either by their own passions or by the pressure of an uncompromising police and propaganda apparatus. At least this is what happened to the Maulana, who has since been arrested, along with most of the remaining leaders of the Kashmiri self-determination movement. Jail has never had the virtue of inducing a spirit of moderation among political prisoners.

Hitherto Masoodi had impressed foreign observers as being the best balanced as well as the most influential of the Front leaders still at large, but I could see how Indian repression was endangering that balance. He spoke about a police assault on him during the disorders last May in which he had four teeth knocked out, described the latest conflict in the valley as an authentic "revolt" of the Kashmiri people—though he did not appear to maintain that the local population had taken an active part in the fighting—and denounced the Indian forces for burning "hundreds of homes," for "killing scores of civilians," for looting, "molestation" of women, and for putting "hundreds" of Kashmiris in jails or concentration camps. There was bitterness, rather than fanaticism, in this indictment.

The Psychological Gap

My own travels around the Vale of Kashmir satisfied me that there had been no general revolt of the population despite Pakistani efforts to provoke one last August. Evidence is accumulating, however, that despite early Indian statements to the contrary, part of the population did rise up or at least actively assist the raiders. But the small number of shotguns and muzzle-loading rifles captured by the Indian Army in the state indicates that these activists probably never exceeded a few hundred at most.

The October student riots and general agitation in Srinagar are something quite different, though there is little doubt that many of the demonstrators have been stirred up and sometimes equipped by under-

ground Pakistani agents. A few days after I left Kashmir but eleven days before Masoodi's arrest, it was announced that five prominent Moslem leaders had been jailed for "activities prejudicial to peace and public order." As the Kashmir authorities doubtless anticipated, the arrests touched off a wave of violent protest, and they were not slow to let the population see that they meant business. A twenty-four-hour curfew was briefly clamped on several quarters of Srinagar. Then, as the student unrest continued, came the drastic decision to close all the city's schools.

Some Indian observers here believed that this firm stand on the part of the Kashmir government, combined with the central government's unequivocal statements that Kashmir will always remain part of India, might eventually restore tranquillity to the state. There had already been some reports of increasing numbers of Moslems refusing to follow extremist leadership any longer. On the other hand, I also encountered Indians here who appeared to share my view that at least some of the disaffection in Kashmir was attributable to psychological blunders committed by the police authorities in their determination to round up every last Pakistani raider or agent regardless of the impact on normal civilian life in the state. In studying not only the present disorders in Kashmir but the history of the numerous and sometimes much graver local incidents that have occurred in other parts of India in recent years, I am surprised to see how great a psychological gap has remained between the Indian bureaucracy at every level and the masses of the country, despite eighteen years of national independence and provincial self-government. In many bloody conflicts between the authorities and infuriated citizens, the former seem to have displayed the same well-intentioned but heavy-handed insensitivity that marked officialdom in the last phase of British rule.

Whatever else may be said of the confused conflict in Kashmir, it is certain that it has caused the leaders of what was formerly no more than a struggle for greater independence to manifest their sympathy, if not solidarity, with a military enemy of India. According to the *Hindustan*

Times, the inevitable consequence is that "There can be no solution of the Kashmir question today which will not leave a deep sense of injury in the minds of India or Pakistan, or both." In particular, as another writer in the same paper affirms, "No government of this country could survive to deliver a solution involving anything more than purely internal adjustments to Kashmir." There is a hope, though a faint one, that the Indian government might eventually reach an understanding with Sheikh Abdullah, the venerated Kashmiri independence leader at present under arrest, on such "internal adjustments"; he is reported to have written several moderate and constructive letters to Prime Minister Shastri and other high Indian officials. It is by no means certain that even Sheikh Abdullah's release from detention and his agreement—if it could be obtained—to accept concessions stopping short of full independence for Kashmir would suffice to appease the fanaticism that recent events have unleashed there. And it is extremely doubtful that Pakistan would be satisfied with such a solution.

ONE unexpected and extremely dangerous aspect of the Kashmir problem came to light during Chief Minister Sadiq's stay in Delhi, where he conferred with national leaders and made several public speeches. As a Moslem resident of Kashmir, Sadiq symbolizes the nation's unity in the face of Pakistani aggression, and the central government naturally was glad to give him a public build-up. Sadiq appears to have exploited the situation to launch himself as a national figure. Instead of being the puppet that his local enemies accuse him of being, Sadiq seemed to have not only an internal policy of his own for Kashmir but almost an independent foreign policy. According to Indian press reports, he lectured Prime Minister Shastri on such matters as allowing members of the Congress Party to talk with Sheikh Abdullah or the attempts of Railway Minister S. K. Patil in London and Washington to reassure Anglo-American opinion about India's intentions in Kashmir.

In his public speeches, Sadiq poured vituperation on the United States in

terms that do not correspond to any known policy attitude of the central government, and his anti-U.S. and anti-Pakistan pronouncements appeared to align him with a faction of left-wing ultranationalists both inside and outside the Congress Party that is vying more and more strenuously with the right-wing ultranationalists in incendiary demagoguery.

Above all, Sadiq appeared to be trying to force the government's hand on the vitally important issue of the conditions under which India might agree to withdraw to the original cease-fire line in Kashmir as part of a general détente with Pakistan. Whereas the official Indian position up to now has seemed to be that there could be no question of withdrawing from the newly reoccupied areas of Kashmir until there were solid guaranties that Pakistan would not use the terrain to launch new attacks or infiltrations, Sadiq in his speeches here declared that there would be no withdrawal, period—a position that almost inevitably implies renewal of hostilities with Pakistan unless the present régime there should first be overthrown.

The question inevitably arises in an observer's mind whether the Indian government is really in full control of its own authorities in Kashmir. Under the best conditions, the Indian constitution makes it very difficult to exercise central control over state authorities.

The Communal Danger

A disturbing element in the present situation is the Indian government's apparent eagerness to exploit the tonic effect of the recent fighting on national unity and morale. Through speeches, radio talks, and press conferences by political leaders, the nation is bombarded daily, or even several times daily, with calls for unceasing vigilance, reminders of the Indian Army's prowess, and warnings to Pakistan not to try Indian patience too far.

Responsible Indian leaders and publishers usually keep the polemic with Pakistan at a fairly dignified level and avoid crude appeals to hate. Also, such nationalist and militarist themes are linked with a systematic educational campaign to make the Indian people realize the permanent threat of Chinese as well

as Pakistani expansionism. There is cause for some concern, however, that the sheer volume and constant repetition of the themes is beginning to overstimulate the Indian masses.

By far the most dangerous aspect of the psychological battle that has been continuing between India and Pakistan since the cease-fire has been the increasing injection of the communal issue into the dispute between the two countries. The major blame falls on Pakistan, where the press and radio have been allowed to spread religious hatred very thinly disguised as patriotic propaganda. Responsible Indian leadership—and even some extreme nationalist leadership that has not always been noted for responsibility in the past—has taken great pains to avoid inflaming the traditional Hindu hatred or fear of the Moslem. In fact, however paradoxical it may seem, Indian nationalist propaganda in the form it has taken recently may be an antidote to the poisons of old-fashioned communalism. It is a risky one, however, and sometimes in voicing their indignation over Pakistan's exploitation of the communal theme the Indians seem to a foreign observer to be unconsciously reflecting traces of communal prejudice in their own minds.

An example was the decision of the East Pakistan Moslem League to organize a great "Crush India Day" rally in Dacca on October 22. Past experience indicates that such rallies are all too likely to launch anti-Hindu programs in Pakistan and retaliatory anti-Moslem ones in West Bengal. The Indian government, therefore, understandably sent a note of protest to Rawalpindi. Less wisely, it published the text of the note in the domestic press, and when Pakistan rejected the communication as "interference" in its domestic affairs, Prime Minister Shastri in a speech at Allahabad warned that by going ahead with the scheduled rally Pakistan was "playing with fire." He was right, but perhaps so much public talk here about Moslem communalism in Pakistan is not the best way to dampen Hindu communalism in India.

In a situation like that now prevailing in the subcontinent, this is, to say the least, a disquieting thought.

II. Background to Conflict

RICHARD CRITCHFIELD

IT WAS the beginning of January, 1964. I was the only western correspondent in Kashmir. For ten days the valley had been engulfed in a religious frenzy. Moslems, heavily cloaked against bitter cold, had surged in almost constant processions through the valley, demanding the return of the stolen sacred hair of the Prophet Mohammed. Night and day they had marched through the streets of Srinagar, bearing the corpses of their dead and carrying thousands of green Islamic flags and black banners of mourning.

In the distant eastern Indian sea-coast town of Bhubaneswar, just when the religious outburst in Kashmir was at its height, Jawaharlal Nehru collapsed of a stroke and had to be carried semi-conscious from a political convention. In steamy East Bengal, Pakistani Moslems had already begun massacres of Hindu neighbors and the communal slaughter was rapidly spreading toward Calcutta, inflamed by refugees' tales of rape, murder, and arson. In Rawalpindi, the Pakistani capital, an emergency cabinet session decided to appeal once again for United Nations intervention.

But in the Vale of Kashmir, cut off from the outside world by blizzards and total censorship, these repercussions to its troubles were unknown. And when daylight came on January 4 a huge multitude, in defiance of an Indian police order, moved into Srinagar's historic Red Square, where Nehru had promised Kashmir a plebiscite fourteen years before. From an improvised platform on top of a bus, Maulana Mohammed Sayeed Masoodi, a revered elder, said the Indian authorities claimed to have found the hair but would not show it to him or the other Moslem leaders and divines. "If the relic, God forbid, is not recovered, there will be no difference between the sky and earth nor the river and shores in Srinagar!" he shouted over a loudspeaker.

A fierce groan swept over the vast mass of people. Suddenly some men were on their feet and shouting, "Release the Lion of Kashmir! Only Sheikh Abdullah can be trusted to identify the Holy Relic!"

Within minutes Red Square was in pandemonium. "Plebiscite! Plebiscite! Down with the Indian government!" The treasonous words, punishable by imprisonment, rumbled across the square and echoed from the crowded rooftops. Masoodi, caught up in the fever, shouted at the top of his lungs into the microphone: "The ice that has frozen our politics for ten years has melted! Spring has come to Kashmir even if God has not given the world ears to hear!"

Masoodi was wrong. The Indian authorities, who until then had been reluctant to crush a religious demonstration, hesitated no longer. Indian Army troops supported by armed police were called from their heavily fortified barracks and sent into Srinagar to reoccupy the city, and Kashmir's third abortive uprising against Indian rule in a decade was quelled. Thousands of troops patrolled Srinagar's streets with fixed bayonets. Policemen, watched by sullen crowds, set off fireworks in the streets.

Meanwhile, All India Radio in New Delhi broadcast news reports that the Kashmiri people were rejoicing and dancing in the streets to celebrate the recovery of the holy relic, and this Indian version was largely carried in the world press. For anyone who was there, nothing that India says on Kashmir can be quite the same again.

India has always insisted that whatever unrest there is in Kashmir is caused by the religious bias of a backward people, and that the Kashmiris themselves are largely indifferent pawns in the struggle between India and Pakistan. Many fair-minded Indians are convinced that this is true. While many westerners concede that the Kashmiris would

join Pakistan on religious grounds if given a choice, few realize the amount of opposition among Kashmiris to Indian rule on purely political and economic grounds as well.

The more than \$170 million spent by India in Kashmir in the past decade has gone mostly for military highways and public buildings, and several hundred million dollars more has gone to maintain some 150,000 police and military troops in the Vale to stave off uprisings. Despite New Delhi's endless claims that "Kashmir is an integral part of India," it has not seriously tried to raise the living standard of Kashmir's Moslems, and the poverty of the people living in this beautiful valley comes as a shock to the foreign visitor.

The Gentle Lion

Jawaharlal Nehru clearly knew the danger of the Kashmir situation during the last five months of his life. In February, 1964, suffering partial paralysis and uremic poisoning, and aware he had not long to live, Nehru sent his deputy, Lal Bahadur Shastri, to Kashmir to strike a bargain with the Moslem leaders. Shastri secretly promised to release Sheikh Abdullah, the former chief minister of Kashmir, whom Nehru, despite their old friendship, had deposed and kept in confinement for ten years, in return for an end to religious demonstrations and a promise that Moslem elders would help in a public identification of the recovered holy relic as the genuine hair of Prophet Mohammed.

Abdullah was released two months later, and on April 18 made his triumphal return to Srinagar. I had returned to the city that morning and watched as nearly a million wildly cheering peasants lined Abdullah's sixty-mile approach across the Vale. As the procession crawled through the city and surging mobs showered his car with spring flowers, all Srinagar echoed with the cry "We want a plebiscite!"

Abdullah, a silver-haired, soft-spoken giant of a man, pledged to his adoring peasant followers, "I am with you even if I am torn to pieces to solve this problem." He did not, however, demand a plebiscite but spoke instead in ethical terms of forgiveness and love for