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## L i b e r a t i n g   K a s h m i r

Khan Shah Afridi always longed for what he regarded as the liberation of Kashmir. He went to fight there in 1947, and almost sixty years later its fate was still on his mind. ‘I hope Allah may give freedom to Kashmir, and in my lifetime,’ he declared, struggling for breath and in a voice little more than a whisper. ‘This will be a source of great joy to us, for this is a Muslim area.’ Khan Shah Afridi was living in advanced old age—he claimed to be 120, though his son thought he was born in 1906 or perhaps a little after—in a mud house in the village of Mattni to the south of Peshawar, the capital of Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province. He had lost the use of his legs, and spent much of the day lying on a loosely strung cot. He was almost blind and hard of hearing, with a wispy, white beard, and a pugri, a traditional turban, covering his bald head. And he was one of the last surviving veterans of the lashkar that invaded Kashmir in October 1947.

In his prime, Khan Shah must have been an imposing man, well over six feet tall, and even in his dotage he had an air of authority as he struggled to articulate his memories of war. ‘We were asked by the Pir of Manki Sharif to come for fighting,’ he recalled, talking of one of the Frontier’s most prominent and politically active clerics. ‘I was the pir’s follower. I had a small shotgun at that time. Pir sahib told us we will fight and we should not be afraid—it is a war between Muslims and infidels and we will get Kashmir freed.’ The Afridis, Mohmands and others of the Frontier tribes had headed to Kashmir, and Khan Shah Afridi, by his own account, was one of the coordinators of the operation. He was in charge of a group travelling in two vehicles. ‘We had no army command with us. Each group had its own leader.’ His role was in part to maintain the resolve of the tribesmen as they engaged in battle—and reading between the lines, that seems to have been quite a challenge. ‘I used to tell them after an attack that you have come here to fight not to run away like chickens. You will not run.’

Looking back on events more than half a century earlier, clouded by the passage of time and by the legends that have come to surround the lashkar, Khan Shah Afridi gave an account of the invaders' travails that was something less than heroic. One old man's memories are not always the most reliable of sources, but the outline of his account appears convincing. Certainly, when his recollections can be tested against known facts and events, they match. For three or four days, he stated, the lashkar advanced. There was fighting in Uri, and then in Baramulla, where his men spent a night. They went further forward, to within a few miles of Srinagar. Kashmiri Muslims were welcoming, and provided bread, milk, whatever they could.

As for the treatment the lashkar meted out to non-Muslims, Khan Shah was matter-of-fact. They were sought out, and many were killed. 'We shot whoever we saw in Baramulla. We didn't know how many were killed. We forced Hindus to run for their lives.' And the fate of the town's Christian community, gathered at the mission? 'I remember Christians in Baramulla. Our leader Suhbat Khan was not a good man. He used to put hands on these people.' There was no rape, he insisted, but there was looting, adding somewhat defensively that another contingent of the tribal forces was largely to blame.

The loot and destruction, the indiscipline and the sexual menace were what many of the townspeople of Baramulla remembered of the invaders. Inayatullah, a local businessman in his mid-twenties at the time, had no reason to blackguard the tribesmen. He was active in the 1940s in the more pro-Pakistan of Kashmir's two main parties, the Muslim Conference, and had attended gatherings of Jinnah's Muslim League. The story he told me in his home in Baramulla—unverifiable, but etched in his memory—was remarkable.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the lashkar's advance into the Valley, Inayatullah was in Lahore arranging to get film reels to show in his cinema in Baramulla. With the road closed because of the fighting, he arranged a lift with the raiders, and travelled with a group of armed tribesmen during the final stretch of his journey home—an act sufficient to earn him a spell in jail as a collaborator once Indian troops took control of the town.

'From Uri to this place [Baramulla], I came in their truck,' he told me. 'They provided me with a guard. And after two days, they looted me also.' A lifetime later, he was still angry about the way the lashkar had turned on their local allies. 'When they dropped me at Baramulla, they provided a guard for me, one of the tribal men,' he repeated, hammering home the point. 'I took him to my home. After two days, they looted me



also.’ There was not much killing, he asserted, but a lot of destruction. ‘They were not even disciplined. From Baramulla, when they saw big buildings, rich people, they were in a habit of looting. When they reached here, they thought to start a Muslim–Hindu fight. It was only for loot.’ They assumed that anyone of any wealth was a Hindu or Sikh. The raiders were led by a retired major—‘Major Khurshid’ according to Inayatullah, in reference to Khurshid Anwar—but when they reached Baramulla they turned violent and started to scatter in search of booty. ‘They didn’t listen to his orders.’

Inayatullah was one of the most prominent and wealthy of Baramulla’s business community. Francis Rath, a doctor in Baramulla, remembered not only the tribesmen’s occupation of the town, but also those who had chosen or been obliged to collaborate with them. His recollection was that Inayatullah’s home became a field canteen for the tribal forces, that his cooks were kept busy providing meals, and that leading figures in the invasion—among them, the Pir of Manki Sharif—were found lodgings in the house. By the time I heard this story, Inayatullah was no longer alive to confirm or deny it. According to Dr Rath, Inayatullah’s cinema hall was requisitioned by a district official as a refuge for Hindu women. It didn’t guarantee their safety from the raiders. ‘They used to come and pick them out, the women. They had a very bad time.’ And he too recalled that Inayatullah’s hospitality did not ensure immunity from the invaders. ‘He was feeding them. Afterwards, they took away all his stuff also,’ Francis Rath told me with a chuckle. ‘They took all his carpets, all his expensive items and jewellery and everything.’

A similar account came from another Baramulla resident, G.M. Sherwani, at that time sympathetic to Pakistan. He had heard Jinnah speak in the town in 1944 and attended a procession in his honour. ‘They were Pathans,’ he told me, describing the advent of the tribal army. ‘There was tremendous firing in the air. Tremendous. We trembled. All. Very much frightened. There was no resistance in Baramulla.’ Again, he emphasised that there was not a great deal of killing. And the burning down of buildings—he suggested—was more by accident than by design. But Sherwani had every reason to remember the looting. ‘They came to my house,’ he recalled. ‘My elder brother was dealing in shoes and caps. There was a boot shop. All that property was brought to our home. When those [armed tribesmen] came, we served them with tea. Afterwards [they] went to [the] hall and took shoes and some Jinnah caps as to their choice. The rest one man bundled them in a blanket and went away. We couldn’t do anything. In case we stop them, maybe they will shoot us.’



Testimony as telling, and from a source no more sympathetic to India, comes from the writing of Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, who was brought up in Baramulla and went on to be chief justice of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. He chronicled the abrupt change of mood as the men initially greeted as harbingers of freedom started to torment their hosts:

Unfortunately the enthusiasm with which the local Muslims had welcomed their entry into Baramula was short lived. A sizable number of tribesmen lost no time in turning against them and within hours, many a building were [sic] ablaze; entry was being forced in almost all pucca [robustly built] houses and its inmates were robbed on pain of death. It was a stunning blow to those who had welcomed them with open arms as liberators. Scores of houses on the left side of river Jhelum were burnt to ashes . . . . There was generally no distinction between Hindus and Muslims in so far as loot and arson was concerned . . . . The local Cinema hall was converted into a sort of a restricted brothel.<sup>2</sup>



Saraf wrote that Muslim women were among those targeted by the tribesmen, and poor Muslim townsmen were among those robbed. Echoing other accounts, he said that the attackers refused to believe that any substantial house could belong to a Muslim. ‘Naturally, these excesses caused wide-spread indignation . . . . The Muslim youth who had so proudly attached themselves to various groups as guides began to desert them, partly out of hatred for the type of freedom they had ushered in but largely for fear of their own lives. Major Khurshid Anwar and some tribal elders were deeply ashamed of what was happening.’<sup>3</sup> The number of dead in the Baramulla violence, Saraf stated, was not great. He recorded somewhat chillingly that apart from two Muslims, ‘half a dozen’ Hindus, and the six killed at the mission, ‘the killings remained confined to Sikhs’.



Sikhs were sought out by the invaders. They were prosperous, both as traders in the towns, and farmers who owned much of the best land. They were also targets for vengeance. The tribesmen would have been keenly aware of the many accounts of Sikh atrocities against Punjabi Muslims at the height of the Partition violence earlier in the year—indeed some apparently insisted that after conquering Kashmir they intended to march on to the Sikh princely state of Patiala and invade that too. The testimony of the nuns who survived the attack on the Baramulla mission emphasised the extent to which the Sikhs were targeted. ‘Each night we



were in great danger as more batches [of tribesmen] were coming in looking for Sikhs,' one recalled in an official statement. They 'mistook one of the nurses as a Sikh and wanted to take her away but in the end they went off without her'. Another recalled a conversation with a boy accompanying the lashkar who was conspicuous in not carrying a gun or rifle. 'My work isn't to shoot people,' he replied, 'but to set fire to Sikh homes.' And that indeed is what he did very regularly.<sup>4</sup>

Kashmir's Sikh community has been described as a remnant of the period of Sikh rule over Kashmir in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Sikhs who have settled in the Valley—a community measured in the tens of thousands—by and large speak Kashmiri, and are well integrated. In the separatist insurgency that developed from the end of the 1980s, Kashmiri Sikhs were not targeted in the same way as the pandits, the Kashmiri-speaking high-caste Hindus. After all, the militant Sikh battle for a separate homeland in Punjab, eventually crushed by Indian security forces, was still a recent memory. Sikhs were not seen as agents of the Indian state. Although there have been over the years several attacks, and at least one notorious massacre, with Kashmiri Sikhs as the victims, there has been no Sikh exodus from the Valley on the scale of that of the pandits.

In 1947, both Muzaffarabad and Baramulla had substantial Sikh populations. The community in Muzaffarabad, now the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, was obliterated. Most fled in the face of the tribal assault. Quite a few were killed. Some were converted to Islam. The Sikhs had a strong martial tradition, and as the raiders advanced, there were times when Sikhs stood and fought. There were stories of arsenals stockpiled at local gurdwaras, Sikh temples. A British diplomat reported: 'Many Sikhs in this area have been armed by the Kashmir Government to reinforce their Hindu troops and police.'<sup>5</sup> But in the first week of the fighting, those Sikhs who chose to resist the invaders were completely overwhelmed by the scale of the incursion.

There is now no Sikh congregation in Muzaffarabad. The community in Baramulla, though it suffered grievously in 1947, survives. Today as you approach Baramulla from the west, along the Valley road—exactly the route the raiders took—the first glimpse of the town is of the cupola of an imposing Sikh temple on the other side of the Jhelum. It has been renovated since the time of the attack, but the earlier gurdwara was sufficiently grand, apparently, to lead some of the invaders to believe that they had reached the Sikh holy city of Amritsar.



The Bali family has claims to be one of the most prominent Sikh households in Baramulla. They once owned a great deal of property, and I was told that their forbears donated the land on which the Catholic college and mission were built. In recent years, the older members of the family have lived modestly in the ground floor of a house overlooking Baramulla. All had keen memories of the advent of the lashkar—the ‘kabailis’ as they called them. ‘Everybody was running—we had only one word, run for life,’ recalled Randir Singh Bali, then aged eleven. ‘There was a big panic in the town—the kabailis have come, and they are not sparing anyone. In Muzaffarabad, we had relations. In Uri, we had relations. They were mostly transporters. They were coming running and going to Srinagar. On the way they informed us—you also run away, the kabailis are coming. We just bolted the outer door of our house, and we went into the jungle nearby. We stayed there the night with gujjars [herdsmen], and we thought we’ll be coming [back] tomorrow morning. But we never came back. From there we ran to another village. We ran for [our] life. On foot we went village after village.’

Randhir Singh Bali’s sister-in-law Gunwant Kaur was married the year before the attack while still a teenager. She told me in Urdu, with a mounting sense of anguish, how her family had suffered. Her father was killed during the attack. So were three or four other members of her family. And then there were the abductions. ‘In the middle of all this, they were taking away lots of youngsters, young women. Taking them to other villages. Abducting them. Many of them were my friends.’ This wasn’t hearsay, she insisted. She had witnessed the tribesmen taking away her relatives. ‘In front of me, my uncles’ daughters—they took them. There were three cousins, and they took all three . . . One’s name was Nasib Kaur. Another was Harbans Kaur. And the third one’s name was Tejinder Kaur. There were three girls. They were my cousins. And all three of them, we don’t know anything about them.’ I asked Gunwant Kaur how old her cousins were at the time. About sixteen or seventeen, she replied. That would have been exactly her age. The family knows nothing about their fate. Tens of thousands of women were abducted during the Partition-era violence. Some were killed, others were passed around from man to man. Many were forcibly married to their abductors. While some were recovered or retrieved, treated a bit like stolen property which had to be restored to its rightful owner, many thousands will have lived out their lives in a new household, bearing allegiance to a new religion, learning a new language, customs and cuisine. Gunwant Kaur and her family



must sometimes wonder whether in the tribal areas of Pakistan, or perhaps more proximate districts, they have blood relatives of whom they know nothing.

There's more to be said about the abduction of women—thanks to the relentless bureaucratic zeal of the Indian authorities. Seven years after Partition, all the information available about those women and children abducted at that time and still missing was published. This enormous volume restricted itself to non-Muslims, and to events in what became Pakistan or on the Pakistan side of the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir. It ran to 1,400 pages, and contains more than 21,000 entries, all bearing an official reference number, the names of those taken, and details of where and by whom they were abducted.<sup>6</sup> Events in and around Baramulla, which was never on the Pakistan side of any formal ceasefire line, were outside the scope of this outsize volume. Still, in its last handful of pages, it listed twenty-five abductions in Baramulla district, all but two—to judge by the names—of Sikhs. Among them were Harbans Kaur, abducted in Baramulla, and Nasib Kaur, abducted nearby in Sopore—quite possibly Gunwant Kaur's cousins. In neither case was the abductor named, though in both, for reasons not specified, the entries stated that the woman was believed to be still in the area.

A surprising and unsettling aspect of this enterprise was that in most cases, the identity of either the abductor or the 'custodian' was known and recorded. There were only a few cases with the description 'abducted by a mob'. Indeed, the whole massive volume was organised not according to the area where the abduction of the woman occurred but 'grouped according to the districts in which they are reported to be living at present'. There were no entries for Frontier tribal areas such as Waziristan, from where many of the raiders came. There were hundreds of entries for Frontier districts, and 1,655 for the district of Muzaffarabad, a part of the princely state through which the lashkar advanced. Those abducted at the time of the invasion were preponderantly Sikh women and children. Just to take some examples: two thirteen-year-old Sikh girls were reported abducted in Sopore in Kashmir by—or were later apparently being held by—Gulam Mohammed Shafi, head constable of the police station at Abbottabad in Pakistan; Inder Kaur, a twenty-two-year-old Sikh woman from near Baramulla, was said to have been abducted, or being kept by, Mohammed Aslam Khan of Garhi Habibullah in the Hazara district of Pakistan. It is impossible to know how accurate the information is, but impossible also to be other than impressed and daunted by the care taken in its collation. And there are snippets which both fascinate and repel:



Joginder Kaur, known as Gijju, a seven-year-old Sikh girl from Muzaffarabad recorded as being held by the nawab of the Frontier tribal district of Swat, where her name had been changed to Bano; Kaki, a fifteen-year-old Hindu girl who lived near Peshawar, said to be with the Muslim League cleric, the Pir of Manki Sharif.

Among the Baramulla entries at the very end of the volume is a listing that startled me when I came across it, and which poses something of a mystery. It is the record of the abduction of a Hindu woman from the Baramulla convent hospital. Case number '19. BRL/S-3/U-1 W' was that of Motia Devi, the thirty-five year old wife of Sewa Ram, staying at the mission hospital, who had been abducted in Baramulla in August 1947. She was, said the list, 'likely to be found in or about Baramula'. Yet among the five gravestones in the mission grounds of those killed when the raiders struck on 27 October is that of 'Mrs Motia Devi Kapoor/w[ife]/o[f] Seva Ram Kapoor/Almora'. As we've seen, eyewitness accounts indicate that she was a patient killed in her bed, probably stabbed, by a tribesman. So, what to make of this entry? Name and location match—date and detail are at odds. Was the list simply wrong? Was she kept on the list by the family in the hope of some form of compensation, or because they would not accept that she was dead? Had she been abducted in August but later been recovered and admitted to the hospital, then abandoned by her family to suffer a still graver misfortune a few weeks later? Survivors insist that a Hindu woman patient in the mission hospital was indeed murdered by the invaders and buried in the orchard, and none of the private correspondence from that time contradicts this. There is no way of resolving the discrepancy.

Looking through other entries, for Muzaffarabad in particular, there is another striking revelation. Hundreds of Sikh women were abducted, but if this volume is a useful guide, their kidnappers were often not Pathan invaders but local men. Almost the entire Sikh population of this area fled in the face of the lashkar. It seems that Sikhs already fleeing, or preparing to move, were those most vulnerable. And in many cases, they were taken by men they may well have known and, it must be imagined, lived as their wives amid communities that were familiar to them. It has suited both local communities, Muslims and Sikhs, to blame outsiders for the extent of the abduction of women amid the turmoil of that time. That way, perhaps, it's easier to heal the wounds. But often the perpetrators appear to have been much closer to hand.

From both sides of Kashmir, there is evidence that some non-Muslim women were abducted, converted, and forced to make new lives within





local Muslim households. Almost forty years after partition, a Sikh headmistress from Srinagar returned to her home town of Muzaffarabad in Pakistan Kashmir and spent six months there. She has stated that she became aware of perhaps twenty-five or thirty local women, Hindus and Sikhs by upbringing, who had been abducted in 1947, had converted and were married to local Muslims. Most had come to terms with their fate, and were settled. She also met some non-Muslim men who as youngsters had stayed back, perhaps against their will, and who also had converted. This small remnant of a community even had a name; they were known as 'sheikhs'.<sup>7</sup> There is also the powerful testimony of Krishna Mehta, whose husband, the district commissioner of Muzaffarabad, was killed by members of the lashkar. She set down her own remarkable story of survival, in which she wrote of the abduction of non-Muslim women, the apparent suicide of some of those taken captive, and of the experience of spending time with women who had been retrieved and were waiting to be sent into Indian territory but who remained at risk from marauding raiders.<sup>8</sup>

On the Indian side of the line, two British women who served in Kashmir as Christian missionaries became aware that Sikh women who were left 'defenceless' when their menfolk were killed 'were taken into the homes of Muslim men, and became their wives . . . . Lily and I had close knowledge of this terrible predicament,' wrote Margaret Brown, who served at a mission in Sopore, 'for often these women would come weeping to our house. One young Sikh woman was very badly treated by the Muslim who had taken her in, and she came to us in the middle of the night. She knocked on Lily's window at the side of the house, looking for shelter. Lily invited her in. She went back to her Muslim home when the man's wrath was temporarily abated.'<sup>9</sup> While Sikh women in particular were the most vulnerable to abduction in the Kashmir Valley, there were victims and perpetrators among all communities. Kamla Patel, who played a key role in the Indian government's efforts to recover abducted women, took on particular responsibility for Kashmiri Muslim women who had been abducted (where, and in what circumstances, she did not specify) by Sikh men.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the level of abductions, killing and destruction at Baramulla, within a few days of the raiders' arrival in the town, most of the population had fled. It became a ghost town. Almost everything of value was looted, and the attackers clearly spent more time seeking cloth, crockery and valuables to take home with them than planning the next stage of their offensive. This is what lies behind the biggest 'what if' of

the fighting in Kashmir in 1947. What if the tribesmen had pressed ahead quickly from Baramulla towards Srinagar and captured the airstrip, stopping the airlift of Indian troops? Surely Kashmir would then have fallen to Pakistan, and the history of South Asia would have been very different. That was certainly the view of the *New York Times* correspondent on the spot, Robert Trumbull. ‘Looting, raping, killing, and burning, these fearsome warriors swept through Kashmir like a plague, until they reached the large town of Baramulla,’ Trumbull wrote in his memoirs. ‘There they stopped a full night in a foolish quarrel over booty. The night’s pause in Baramulla changed history.’<sup>11</sup>

The most powerful recitation of this argument appeared in the reminiscences of a senior Pakistani army officer, Major General Akbar Khan, one of the instigators of the incursion. He became a fierce critic of Pakistan’s failure to intervene more decisively in Kashmir, which in turn was a factor in his conviction and jailing four years later in the country’s first big treason trial. He did not immediately head out with the lashkar, but followed on a week after it started carrying a huge amount of ammunition and reached Baramulla on 29 or 30 October:

This used to be a town of orchards, schools, road and river transport stations, shops and restaurants—in short a bright and cheerful looking place. But now it looked as if an earthquake had shaken it. Shops were empty, doors and windows were gone—brick, stone and paper littered the ground . . .

The tribesmen had reached here on the 26<sup>th</sup> . . . . The State troops, thoroughly demoralised, had retreated in disorder. Only 35 more miles remained of level road and virtually no resistance. The tribesmen had a barely two hour journey left—and before them lay Srinagar, trembling, seemingly at their mercy. But the tribesmen had not moved forward that day, nor the next day. When at last they had advanced on the 28<sup>th</sup>, they had encountered the Indian troops that a hundred aircraft had been bringing in since the previous day. Although these had been successfully overcome ten miles outside Baramulla, a whole day had been lost in doing so. Thus it was not till the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup>, that the tribesmen had moved forward to Srinagar itself . . .

But why had two crucial days been wasted at Baramulla? It is more than probable that if these two days had not been lost, the story of Kashmir would be an entirely different one. There was no authentic answer to be found. It is unlikely that the tribesmen



themselves had wanted the delay; sending back their wounded could not have taken that much time; waiting for more men could hardly have been the cause as they knew that speed would be more valuable; and Baramulla itself could not have held that much attraction for them when the biggest prize of all, Srinagar, was so near at hand.<sup>12</sup>

News correspondents, reporting while the fighting was still raging, seized on this issue, and provided their own answer. The view of *The Times*—whose correspondent Eric Britter was one of the most knowledgeable foreign correspondents in the region—set the tone for much of the press comment. He reported that the invading tribesmen, numbering about 10,000, ‘are well armed and well trained’, but that the ‘impetus of their attack was dissipated because their leaders were not strong enough to prevent them from dispersing in search of loot’.<sup>13</sup> The *Times of India* correspondent in Srinagar stated bluntly that had ‘the invading tribesmen been less interested in looting and plundering and more concerned with military results, they should have been in Srinagar on October 22’.<sup>14</sup> Several accounts of the conflict by Indian army veterans—perhaps anxious to emphasise how close India came to losing Kashmir and how great the country’s debt is to its soldiers—also asserted that a resolute tribal force could easily have taken the Valley.

Akbar Khan’s own mischievous suggestion for the reason for delay was to blame the man who was the nearest the lashkar had to a commanding officer. It ‘may have been what the locals at Baramulla said,’ Khan innocently remarked, ‘that Khurshid Anwar, who was in command, had waited for Kashmiri Leaders whom he had sent for in order to confer with regarding his own position in the future Government of Kashmir.’ That’s not a compelling explanation. But certainly at Baramulla, the lashkar lost its momentum. The opportunities for loot must have been part of the explanation. Also, the terrain had changed. The opening out of the Valley beyond Baramulla required the raiders to advance through what is, in essence, a plain, away from their natural mountain habitat, and increasingly susceptible to being cut off from their retreat route. And with the deployment of Indian troops, the tribesmen were facing a more formidable adversary. More than this, the commanders of the lashkar appear to have believed that without greater discipline their goals could not be achieved. The looting at Baramulla had distracted the lashkar from its military purpose, had disaffected local Kashmiris who might otherwise have provided considerable support, and had sullied

the reputation of the tribal forces and the causes of Islam and of Pakistan that they espoused.

If the looting led to delay in the lashkar's advance, then so too did the attempts to address the problems of lax organisation, loose command structures and widespread robbery and rape. A British diplomat based in Pakistan picked up a telling if partisan account of this when he visited Abbottabad, still the nerve centre of the tribesmen's continuing military operations, at the beginning of December 1947. He spoke to some Mahsud maliks, or local leaders, who echoed Akbar Khan in blaming Major Khurshid Anwar for the lashkar's failure to take Srinagar, but for a different reason. 'It was he, [the Mahsud maliks] said, who had caused the delay in their first advance when the whole of the Kashmir Valley lay open before them with nothing but the remnants of the Kashmir State forces to defend it.'

After the capture of Domel and Baramulla, Khurshid Anwar apparently asked all the tribal leaders to sign an undertaking on behalf of their men to abstain from looting, to respect Government property, protect treasuries and so on. The maliks objected that it was the most inopportune moment to raise such a question and that the tribesmen would never agree to any such thing, having come in the belief that they would be able to keep anything they could take. Khurshid Anwar, however, pressed his point, so much so that it was suggested that he had better be killed and replaced as commander; but it was decided that this would be impolitic and would undermine confidence. The result was that two valuable days were wasted in tribal discussion and arguments, which gave time for the Indian Troops to land in force in Kashmir.<sup>15</sup>

Piecing together fragments of evidence, it seems that when Khurshid Anwar found resistance from tribal leaders to his attempts to instil discipline, he or his colleagues paused at Baramulla to summon political and religious figures respected by the tribesmen, with the hope that they would read the riot act to their errant fighters and persuade them to behave. The *Daily Express*'s Sydney Smith certainly suggested as much when debriefed by British diplomats in Delhi. Smith spent some days in Baramulla as a detainee of the raiders, held initially in the home of a retired superintendent of the Kashmir police. 'There was a Muslim League flag flying on this house,' Smith said, 'but it did the owner no good as he



was thoroughly looted of all his possession by the tribesmen.’ Smith also met Hyat Khan—the man who had halted the killing at the Catholic mission—who was ‘dressed in Air Force trousers and blue pullover. He was an Afridi who had been born in Kashmir. He had been in the Indian Air Force and was under orders of transfer to the Pakistan Army, but said that he had never joined and described himself as a deserter.’ Through him he met Major Khurshid Anwar, who was ‘not particularly friendly’ and an array of more amenable senior tribal leaders, among them Aslam Khan, an Afridi former army officer, and Shah Pasand Khan, a Mahsud who had been a colonel in the Afghan royal army.

Sydney Smith also became aware of the presence in Baramulla of one of Pakistan’s political heavyweights, a Muslim cleric who had done much to instigate the invasion of Kashmir and to persuade his tribal followers that this was a jihad:

A day or two later the Pir of Manki Sharif of the N.W.F.P. appeared and apparently castigated all and sundry for their disgraceful behaviour and the order went round that the Mahsuds were to go. There appeared to be a sudden panic and the tribesmen all went off in trucks down the road. Mr. Smith and Umrao Khan [the retired police superintendent] came out of the latter’s house for the first time as it had been unsafe even to go into the garden, and found the place deserted. Later, however, they all started coming back. It appeared that their officers had gone and brought them as the other tribesmen had refused to fight unless the Mahsuds stayed with them.<sup>16</sup>

The presence of the pir, a cleric of great influence within the Muslim League in the Frontier province, is particularly intriguing. The lashkar veteran Khan Shah Afridi, who took part in the invasion at the pir’s request, met him in Baramulla, and heard his plea to the fighters to show greater resolve, a message that was not well received. ‘We saw the Pir of Manki Sharif there. He was present in Baramulla. He was alone and asked us to fight. He told us that those who wished to go back would not be provided fuel for their vehicles. The tribesmen told the pir they would have their own fuel as they wanted to turn up in their villages alive.’

M. Y. Saraf, too, has left an account of how the pir came to Baramulla at the behest of the Frontier chief minister and ‘forcefully reminded [the tribesmen] that plunder was not the primary purpose for which they had entered Kashmir. He also told them what were the commands of God and our Holy Prophet . . . about the rules of conduct in a war.’<sup>17</sup> The

comments of captured tribesmen, reported by Indian newspapers and later compiled and circulated by the Indian government, also pointed to a serious row within the lashkar's ranks. The *Times of India* correspondent in Baramulla heard a prisoner state: 'One section had argued that in a *Jehad* looting was not permitted and that therefore they should refrain from such activities, and confine themselves to killing the *Kaffirs* [non-believers] or converting them to Islam. The other section, mostly Tribals, had refused to listen to them and insisted on looting.'<sup>18</sup>

The nuns at the Baramulla convent also remembered the pir—ten years after the event, an Italian nun told one of India's most distinguished journalists, Frank Moraes, of "a stout, round roly-poly of a man" . . . before whom the raiders prostrated themselves'.

The two infant children of Colonel and Mrs Dykes were brought before him, and the Pir solemnly presented thirty rupees to both of them.

'Aren't you ashamed', said one of the nuns, 'to give thirty rupees to the children whose parents your men have killed?'

'The Pir said nothing but with his arrival the condition of the nuns and the Convent improved . . .'<sup>19</sup>

The Pir of Manki Sharif's visit had other beneficial effects. While the lashkar's looting certainly didn't stop, there was no further incident of the notoriety of the sacking of Baramulla and the desecration of its mission. But the various tribal contingents were not fused into a more cohesive fighting force. While elements of the tribal forces moved on towards the Kashmiri capital, they did so haphazardly, and with little greater discipline than before.

There were a few experienced army officers accompanying the lashkar, whether under instructions from the Pakistan army or civil authorities or on their own initiative. The number appears to have been modest. Sydney Smith made no mention of coming across more than a handful of officers in a position of command. From Pakistan's point of view, this was arguably the worst of both worlds. There was clearly a level of complicity in the incursion, but not sufficient to provide the prospect of success or to prevent wild indiscipline. After Kashmir's accession to India, Pakistan's new rulers came to see that there was more at stake in the fighting for the Valley. The raiders were no longer simply a proxy force who might be able to achieve leverage for Pakistan. In the absence of a formal mobilisation of the Pakistan army, they were the only military



option open to Jinnah and his ministers to keep Kashmir's fate in play. The longer the fighting continued, and with it the uncertainty about who would claim Kashmir, the greater the new Pakistan government's urgency to provide support.

The most graphic and telling account of the debate within Pakistan's leadership about supporting the tribesmen's offensive comes from the diary of Sir George Cunningham. He had been recalled by Jinnah to his old job as governor of the North West Frontier Province. On 29 October, the day after Jinnah's showdown with Field Marshal Auchinleck which ended with the rescinding of the Pakistan government's order to send its troops into Kashmir, Cunningham met Jinnah in Lahore to discuss how to assist the invasion more surreptitiously:

I said that, as things stood now . . . I thought a military advance up the Jhelum Valley would be very difficult, as there was little room at Baramula to deploy. I also begged him not to get our army mixed up with operations by tribesmen. The two things wouldn't go together. I said the only thing to do now, if pressure were required, was to pump in more tribesmen, but that proper organisation of rations, ammunition, and supplies was essential, as well as some recognised authority for summoning tribal quotas. He finally agreed with all this . . .<sup>20</sup>

Cunningham recorded that a discussion immediately afterwards in the presence of Pakistan's prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, agreed on a seven-point plan to support the lashkar. The authorities would seek to send tribal reinforcements to Baramulla to keep the lashkar's strength there at about 5,000, and would supply rations and ammunition from Punjab. 'I would supply 100,000 rounds from village defence stocks,' Cunningham noted. There would be separate moves to get arms and ammunition to the insurgents near Poonch, in a different sector of the fighting. The tribesmen would be given cash payments on their return home, and bodies being sent back for burial would be routed away from Punjab—'this would be too blatant!!' A five-strong directing committee was established in Abbottabad consisting of Pakistani officials and officers, who 'would control recruiting, operations and supplies, etc.', and should any more Pakistani army officers be required in the operation 'it would probably be best to give them leave'.<sup>21</sup>

The Pakistani authorities were determined to make an attempt to co-opt the tribal fighters and mould them into a more effective force. It

was perhaps an aspect of this new endeavour that Sydney Smith witnessed during his enforced sojourn at the Baramulla mission, and later commented on to British diplomats. He saw ‘no-one looking like Punjabis until a body of about 1,000 men appeared in uniform and whose duty seemed to be to act as a sort of field security police force to try and maintain order. A permanent guard of these men was put over the convent and hospital and Mr. Smith said that they did well. Most of them seemed to be ex-soldiers.’ Smith surmised that these men had been sent either by the Pir of Manki Sharif or in response to his reports of indiscipline.<sup>22</sup> Another news correspondent, Jim Michaels of the United Press news agency, also saw evidence of Pakistani attempts to strengthen the anti-Indian forces. He managed to travel from Rawalpindi in Pakistan to Poonch, where he met both Azad Kashmir fighters and some of their leaders. ‘On the return trip,’ he recalled, ‘I saw an amazing sight. At least a battalion of Pakistani regulars crossed into Kashmir, ripping off their regimental insignia as they marched. My minders made no effort to prevent my seeing it.’<sup>23</sup>

Although Sir George Cunningham appears to have taken the lead in trying to tame the lashkar, he was beset by misgivings:

I am not particularly happy . . . about the whole business, and I suspect JINNAH is conscious of having made a blunder (having assumed that tribal intervention would not at once—as seemed obvious to me—throw KASHMIR into the arms of India) and is desperate to find a way out. Anyway, the harm has been done, and we have to make the best of the situation. It is full of snags, not the least how we are to prevent our tribal contingents looting our own districts on their homeward march. I never thought I would become practically a member of a tribal *lashkar*; the fact that it is aimed against the Sikhs and people like [Sardar] PATEL is some consolation.<sup>24</sup>

It seems that Cunningham had become a member of the lashkar in more ways than one, sharing their mindset as well as aiding their invasion. That last visceral remark of his is a haunting reflection of how bitter relations had become between countries and communities in the wake of the Partition bloodletting.

Jinnah, although always the cautious lawyer in his use of language, at times came close to suggesting that he controlled the tribal army. Lord Mountbatten, India’s Governor General, met Jinnah in Lahore on 1 November, five days after the first Indian troops reached Srinagar,



to seek to ease the tension and secure a disengagement between the Indian army and Pakistani tribesmen. According to Mountbatten's account of their discussions, Pakistan's leader appeared to give the lie to his government's repeated assertion that the tribal forces were beyond their control:

Mr Jinnah said that both sides should withdraw at once. He emphasized that the withdrawal must be simultaneous. When I asked him how the tribesmen were to be called off, he said that all he had to do was to give them an order to come out and to warn them that if they did not comply, he would send large forces along their lines of communication. In fact, if I was prepared to fly to Srinagar with him, he would guarantee that the business would be settled within 24 hours.

I expressed mild astonishment at the degree of control that he appeared to exercise over the raiders.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the degree of control, the level of support was not anything like as great as the architects of the tribal invasion had hoped. A month after the expulsion of the raiders from the Kashmir Valley, Khurshid Anwar, nursing his wounds in a hospital in Karachi and no doubt looking for scapegoats, complained to the Muslim League newspaper *Dawn* that he had been hampered by the government's inactivity. He was 'very bitter against the Pakistan Government for not having rendered any assistance to the tribesmen in their heroic bid to capture Srinagar. He was of the opinion that given the necessary arms and ammunition, the tribesmen would sweep the whole state within a few days.'<sup>26</sup> In fact, the Pakistani authorities were providing arms, and petrol and transport. They could not have done much more other than to have ordered a mobilisation of the regular army to back up the tribesmen—which is what Jinnah had initially wanted to, and what the Pakistan government eventually did the following spring. Khurshid Anwar also had another scapegoat in view, telling a British veteran of the Frontier whom he met in Karachi about the grave shortcomings of the tribal forces. 'He was very bitter against the Mahsuds who, he said, were responsible for both the worst atrocities and the disastrous delays of the initial offensive.'<sup>27</sup>

The Pakistan establishment came to be more concerned about getting the tribesmen back to the Frontier without incident than in using them to gain a toehold in the Kashmir Valley. Sir George Cunningham confided in his diary in mid-November that 'ABDUL QAYUM [his chief



minister in the Frontier Province] came . . . and told me that the people running the Kashmir Operations were fed up with our tribesmen. I could have told them 3 weeks ago that this would happen if they had asked me.' Later the same month, the chief minister publicly suggested that the Frontier tribesmen should be absorbed into the Pakistan army and given thorough training, because they lacked discipline.<sup>28</sup> He had every reason to know just how undisciplined they were.

Nevertheless, Baramulla was not the end of their advance. Even with the Indian army airlifting hundreds of soldiers each day from 27 October onwards, the tribal forces managed to get within a few miles of the centre of Srinagar, and almost to the perimeter of the airstrip. It was another ten days before the military tide turned decisively in India's favour.

