



Telling Stories and Making Myths

Powerful stories make potent propaganda, and the accounts of the tribesmen's attack on Baramulla have, from the first moment, been coloured by the causes and interests of those reciting them. India has used the tales of sacrilege, atrocities and rapacious looting to damn the invaders from Pakistan and buttress its own claim to Kashmir. It has found and developed martyrs to add lustre to its argument. Pakistan has attempted to minimise and extenuate, alleging that over the years Indian misdemeanours have vastly outweighed any lapses by members of the lashkar. The Catholic church, or at least a section of it, has sought to develop a claim to saintly status for the young Spanish nun who died. And Western journalists and novelists have found in the episode stirring subject matter, evoking images of resolute, upright Europeans at the mercy of vengeful, violating Muslim tribesmen. All these bear perhaps an element of truth and more than a hint of myth. In these stark accounts of heroes and villains, each interest group has developed its own heroes and its own narrative to honour their courage and the cause they championed.

Just two weeks after the tribal army entered Kashmir, Sir George Cunningham, the governor of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, noted in his diary that two American women journalists from the photo-news magazine *Life* had been refused permission to go to Abbottabad, the nerve centre of the lashkar's operation, and to Baramulla. Margaret Bourke-White, one of those journalists, was not so easily thrown off course.¹ In the ensuing weeks, she managed to get to both towns. Bourke-White had already met and photographed Jinnah for what turned out to be one of his most memorable portraits, capturing both his growing physical frailty and his intellectual stamina and determination. His gaunt, hawk-eyed features, accentuated by his trademark astrakhan cap, peered out from *Life's* front cover in January 1948. Margaret Bourke-White, a





New Yorker, had provided *Life* with its first front cover in 1936, and became one of the most renowned photojournalists of her generation. She was in Europe for much of the Second World War and, memorably, in Moscow when Hitler turned on his Soviet ally.

In 1946, Margaret Bourke-White abandoned what she termed the ‘decay of Europe’ to take on a new assignment for *Life* in India. ‘I witnessed that extremely rare event in the history of nations,’ she wrote, ‘the birth of twins.’² Her photographs of Partition, with their sharply etched depictions of human upheaval and endurance, are among the most vivid images from that tragic and momentous episode. Some were not simply posed, but staged and manipulated beyond normal bounds. ‘We were there for hours,’ recalled the *Life* reporter working alongside Bourke-White when she captured her iconic images of destitute refugees. ‘She told them to go back again and again and again. They were too frightened to say no. They were dying.’³ In spite of the anguish she witnessed at independence, she bore the conviction that India was set to take an important place in the world. ‘Perhaps it was because I had come to India almost directly from the stagnation of Germany that the freshness, the quickening life of India struck me with such impact. Europe seemed heavy with the death of an era; India stood eager and shining with hope in the threshold of a new life.’⁴ She expressed her sense of optimism and recounted her experiences in India and Pakistan in a book published two years after Partition entitled *Halfway to Freedom: A Report on the New India*. It included one of the first renditions of the Baramulla story in the more enduring format of a book.

Bourke-White managed, in spite of the obstructions imposed by the Pakistan authorities, to get to Abbottabad, where she met some of the nuns who had been evacuated from Baramulla. ‘The grave-faced sister from whom I got the details had been in the babies’ ward on the convent grounds when the tribesmen began smashing up X-ray equipment, throwing medicine bottles to the ground, ripping the statuettes of saints out of the chapel, and shooting up the place generally.’⁵ By the time she reached Abbottabad, the authorities had apparently sought to disguise the scale of the military operation being masterminded from the town. An informant of British diplomats, who was apparently in Abbottabad through the first half of November, reported: ‘When the lady correspondents of “Life” went up, the local authorities got advance information—Abbottabad was cleared.’⁶ Bourke-White appears not to have been put off the scent. She recounted how she had ‘slipped out unescorted and . . . saw such things as the group of several hundred Pathans I met



shouting and yelling along the main highway leading from [Rawal]Pindi to Kashmir':

They had erected a cardboard victory arch over the road, decorated it with greenery and flower garlands, and were waving green flags bearing the central star and crescent of the Muslim League. They were waiting for their leader, Badsha Gul, of the Mohmand tribe, who was bringing one thousand men, a convoy of trucks, and ammunition. Unlike higher officials, these tribesmen seemed to know what was going on when I questioned them.

'Are you going into Kashmir?' I asked.

'Why not?' they said. 'We are all Muslims. We are going to help our Muslim brothers in Kashmir.'

Sometimes their help to their brother Muslims was accomplished so quickly that the trucks and buses would come back within a day or two bursting with loot, only to return to Kashmir with more tribesmen, to repeat their indiscriminate 'liberating'—and terrorizing of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim villager alike.⁷



Some of the weapons came from small arms factories in the Frontier, one of which Bourke-White had photographed, but she surmised that most were handed out by the Pakistan authorities.

Several weeks later, and by a circuitous route, Margaret Bourke-White managed to reach Baramulla. She flew to Srinagar in mid-December 1947, and was shown around by one of the leading left-wing supporters of Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference, B.P.L. Bedi.⁸ She found Baramulla 'as heaped with rubble and blackened with fire as those battered jewels of Italian towns through which many of us moved during our war in Italy.' The tone of her account, and indeed of her book, was markedly hostile to Pakistan, and somewhat naïvely uncritical of the National Conference. She retold stories of the suffering of Kashmiris at the hands of the tribesmen, and she wrote of her visit to what was left of St Joseph's mission:

Bedi and I walked up the hill to the deserted convent. It was badly defaced and littered, and a delegation of students from Srinagar was coming next day to clean it up and salvage what remained of the library. The group had been carefully selected to include Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, and would be escorted by members of the Kashmiri Home Guard, both men and women—these too chosen





symbolically from the three religions. They would put the Christian mission in as good order as they could in time for Christmas Day.

We made our way into the ravaged chapel, wading through the mass of torn hymnbooks and broken sacred statuary. The altar was deep in rubble. Bedi stooped down over it and picked up one fragment, turning it over carefully in his big hands. It was the broken head of Jesus, with just one eye remaining.

‘How beautiful it is’, said Bedi, ‘this single eye of Christ looking out so calmly on the world. We shall preserve it always in Kashmir as a permanent reminder of the unity between Indians of all religions which we are trying to achieve.’⁹

It was just the sort of message that the new Indian government, and its Kashmiri allies, wished to propagate.

Margaret Bourke-White also gave powerful impetus to the story of Maqbool Sherwani—‘a sort of Robin Hood character, from the stories the townspeople told me’—a National Conference activist in Baramulla who was tortured and killed by the tribesmen. ‘His martyrdom had taken place almost under the shadow of the convent walls,’ she asserted, somewhat uncritically recycling what she had been told, ‘and in the memory of the devoted Kashmiris he was fast assuming the stature of a saint.’ She portrayed Sherwani as a champion of religious tolerance who had sought to frustrate the tribesmen’s advance before being captured and crucified, with nails through his hands and the words ‘The punishment of a traitor is death’ scratched crudely on his forehead. ‘Once more Sherwani cried out, “Victory to Hindu-Muslim unity,” and fourteen tribesmen shot bullets into his body.’ Bourke-White recounted how the dead man was already becoming known as Mujahid Sherwani.¹⁰ In a succinct couple of pages, she wrote an account of Sherwani and his martyrdom, full of precise detail particularly of his death and with quasi-biblical imagery which could have come out of a saint’s life of many centuries earlier. Martyrs have been an important factor in providing moral succour to both religious and secular movements—in Kashmir, every cause has its martyrs. The separatist movement, since 1989, has put a lot of emphasis on shaheed or martyrs, and has interred many of its dead in martyrs’ graveyards. In response, the Indian authorities have disinterred the story of Maqbool Sherwani as a valorous victim of an earlier generation of outsider separatists, a Kashmiri Muslim who died for the cause of secularism and Indian unity.

Maqbool Sherwani was not a myth. He was a well-known political activist in Baramulla who, without doubt, tried to frustrate the raiders, and died a particularly brutal death. Francis Rath, who knew Sherwani, described him to me as ‘a loafer type of man . . . happy-go-lucky He was not a politician. He was just a National Conference worker. But a very staunch type of worker.’ Pran Nath Jalali had spent time with Sherwani in the maharaja’s jails and on their release they both joined the National Conference militia. Jalali told me that Sherwani was among those who offered to go undercover into areas controlled by the tribesmen. ‘In fact there was a list of 22 volunteers which we framed to go behind the enemy lines. [Sherwani] was one of them. But being an adventurer and a bit showy—he held public meetings village to village, and rode into the enemy on a motorbike. That motorbike undid him.’ Sherwani was, as far as Jalali recalled, the only one of these behind-the-lines militia volunteers to lose his life.

A rival political activist in Baramulla, Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, has depicted Sherwani as a ‘semi-literate man of about 40 years’ who was the second-in-command of the National Conference in the town and had proved ‘very unpopular for his goondaism [thuggery]’. He had apparently tried to disrupt Jinnah’s visit to Baramulla in July 1944, and is variously reputed to have escaped vengeance by either paddling a boat across the Jhelum or jumping into the river and swimming. Saraf, however, acknowledged both Sherwani’s devotion to Sheikh Abdullah and the courage with which he sought to impede the lashkar’s advance and approached his own death. ‘He was brought down to Baramula and after several days of interrogation, was tied to an electric pole in the centre of the town and nails were driven into his hands and forehead. Ultimately he was shot dead. How fanatically devoted he was to his leader and basically how brave he was, may be judged from the fact that even while he was being so nailed, he continued to shout “Sher-e-Kashmir Zindabad” [Long Live the Lion of Kashmir]. He was made a martyr not only by the National Conference but also by the Indian Government.’¹¹

The process of elevating Maqbool Sherwani to the status of a political martyr began as soon as the Indian army entered Baramulla, just a day or two after the killing. His death was a powerful and dramatic story, and its rendition suited the purposes of both Kashmir’s governing party and the Indian authorities. It also helped invest the town of Baramulla—which had at first welcomed the raiders, and then suffered at their hands—with the distinction by association of producing a hero

from the winning side. The *Times of India* correspondent who visited Baramulla on 9 November, the day after its capture by Indian troops, reported that the ‘most popular local leader of the National Conference, Meer Maqbool Sherwani, went through torture for his politics and was finally bound to wooden bars and shot dead—14 bullet holes were found in his body.’ The *Statesman* carried a slightly different story, reporting that Sherwani was ‘publicly executed by the raiders who denounced him as a traitor. He had three days previously surreptitiously motor-cycled to Srinagar to report to the head of the Emergency Administration,’ in other words, to Sheikh Abdullah. The *Hindustan Times* carried a variant on the same theme, recounting how Sherwani, ‘the local National Conference leader in Baramula . . . was tied to a post in one of the squares of the town and sprayed with Bren-gun fire. After he was killed, a notice was nailed on his forehead saying that Sherwani was a traitor and death was his just fate.’¹² The communist *People’s Age* carried an almost hagiographical article entitled ‘How Baramula Became Maqboolabad: No Greater Courage Can Any Indian Show Than Kashmir’s Maqbool Sherwani’. It recounted Sherwani’s scouting by motorbike, and the fourteen bullets which ended his life, and asserted that a play about Sherwani had already been written which would be performed across the Valley by National Conference drama squads.¹³

Two weeks after Maqbool Sherwani’s death, Mahatma Gandhi took up the Sherwani story at a prayer meeting in Delhi. ‘On learning that he was an important leader of the National Conference, the invaders tied him to two posts near the Nishat Talkies,’ Gandhi recounted. ‘They beat him first and then asked him to repudiate the All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and its leader, Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Abdulla[h]. They asked him to swear allegiance to the so-called Azad Kashmir Provisional Government which had its headquarters in Palandri’:

Sherwani stoutly refused to repudiate his national organization and told the invaders that Sher-e-Kashmir was the head of affairs now that Indian Union troops had arrived and the invaders would be driven out in a few days.

This enraged and frightened the invader gangs who riddled him with 14 bullets. They cut off his nose, disfigured his face and stuck a notice on his body with the words: This is a traitor. His name is Sherwani. This is the fate all traitors will get.

But within 48 hours of this cold-blooded murder and sadistic terror, Sherwani’s prophecy came true and the invaders ran pell-mell out of Baramula, with Indian Union troops in hot pursuit.

This was a martyrdom, said Mahatma Gandhi, of which anyone, be he Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or any other, would be proud.¹⁴

Maqbool Sherwani had been declared a martyr by the man with more moral authority than any other in the subcontinent, who was himself to die what many would regard as a martyr's death two months later.

From then on, the Sherwani story was co-opted into those accounts of the origins of the Kashmir conflict sympathetic to India. Sheikh Abdullah, in his autobiography, paid tribute to his political co-worker. General 'Bogey' Sen recounted using the Sherwani incident to defuse Kashmiri criticism of the Indian army, telling (so he says) Sheikh Abdullah to his face: 'If Maqbool Sherwani's torture and murder at Baramulla was any indicator of the tribesmen's attitude, and had my Brigade been defeated at the battle of Shalateng, what did he visualise would have happened to him as head of the National Conference Volunteers?' A Kashmir government pamphlet published dashing photos of Sherwani, including one showing him at rifle practice, and described him as the 'hero of Baramulla'. The official Indian defence ministry account of the conflict pointedly recounted how a 'Kashmiri Muslim patriot, Maqbool Sherwani, was shot dead in the public square for professing to treat Hindus and Sikhs as his brothers'. A more recent reference to his martyrdom made the still more pointed remark that 'in every subsequent war, including Pakistan's proxy war of the 1990s, thousands of Kashmiri Muslims actively helped the Indian forces against Pakistan, and often sacrificed their lives in the process'.¹⁵

The Sherwani message was developed and adapted by one of India's most renowned, and prolific, writers. Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Death of a Hero: Epitaph for Maqbool Sherwani* appeared in 1963. It is a slender book, both in bulk and quality. A critic sympathetic to Anand has described the novel as 'an unimpressive work' that 'does serious damage to Anand's reputation as a novelist'.¹⁶ Although the author or his publishers at various times suggested that the novel was written shortly after the events it described, and that Anand was in Kashmir at the time of the invasion, neither assertion appears to be correct—though Anand had certainly visited Kashmir in earlier years. Those close to Anand have suggested that he alighted on the story of Maqbool Sherwani as a device to write about Kashmir. It may have been something more than that. Certainly, Mulk Raj Anand, a radical in his early writing years, felt strongly about the Kashmir issue. He wrote a homage to V.K. Krishna Menon, the Indian defence minister, to accompany the text of Menon's marathon eight-hour speech on Kashmir at the UN Security Council in 1957. Here again,

Anand referred to the ordeal of Maqbool Sherwani, quoting (without attribution) from Margaret Bourke-White, who is likely to have been an important source for the story as recited in *Death of a Hero*.¹⁷

The novel's interest lies in the way it develops and perpetuates a political myth rather than in its literary merits. The rather flimsy caricatures presented in place of developing strong characters, and the failure to explore Sherwani's motivation or indeed much of his experience at the hands of the attackers, leave the book flat and unconvincing, the more so because it contains little incident or context. It is evident, however, that Anand took some trouble to find out about the events in Baramulla, and the people involved—though how he pursued this task is unclear. Mulk Raj Anand presents Maqbool Sherwani as young, radical, anti-feudal, and sceptical of conventional religion—and also impetuous, with a 'lack of mature judgement'. The novel opens with Sherwani speeding back to Baramulla by motorcycle, instructed to organize resistance to the raiders, (though how, we are never told), only to encounter betrayal. He has a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the raiders, Khurshid Anwar, whose 'English clothes seemed to revive the humiliation at the hands of the white sahib tourists in Kashmir'. He is captured, refuses to renounce the National Conference, is shot by a Pathan firing squad and tied to a wooden pole with the word 'Kafir' written on the lapel of his shirt. 'The body looked almost like a scarecrow, but also like that of a Yessuh Messiah on the cross'—and this image of a crucifixion featured on the book's initial dust-jacket, giving it more of an air of a Christian morality tale than an Indian nationalist parable. Anand also weaves into the novel references to the attack on the Catholic mission, and a character refers not just to the killing and injuring of nuns, but to how the attackers 'relieved themselves in the chapel!' Anand makes reference to several political personalities of the time, though, strangely, not to Sheikh Abdullah (who was in detention at the time of the novel's publication, as he had been for almost all the previous decade, which perhaps explains the author's reticence). But he does not seek to offer a rounded account of the conflict, and there is no real attempt to understand why the invaders came to Kashmir, beyond passing references to loot.

In recent years, the Indian authorities have sought to memorialise Maqbool Sherwani. The story of his heroism has been recounted—one particularly exuberant, and detailed account insisted that his 'blood liberated the soil on which it sealed for all time the silken bonds of unity binding the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Kashmir—and the rest of India'¹⁸—and the state governor in his Republic Day speech in 2005

lauded the opening of a Maqbool Sherwani memorial hall in memory of ‘this great hero who sacrificed his life to save the people during the Rape of Baramulla, which suffered a holocaust at the hands of tribal raiders from Pakistan’.

The more the Indian authorities portrayed Sherwani as a hero and martyr in India’s cause, the greater the reluctance of local people to champion his memory in a town with a reputation as a stronghold of separatist groups. A local newspaper, the *Daily Excelsior*, commenting on the renovating of the Sherwani memorial hall, recalled that the building had been deserted, ‘virtually in a shambles’, ever since the start of the armed militancy. ‘One can’t help but notice,’ the newspaper commented, ‘that the ordinary people are not irreverent but tend to keep silent about him. Is it because they have developed some aversion towards him? Or, is it that they feel that discretion is the better part of valour and no useful purpose will be served by risking their life at the hands of foreign mercenaries who are still around and who don’t have any love for the likes of Sherwani?’

Anyone promoted by one side of the conflict as a hero is just about certain to be denigrated or ignored by the other side. If you believe that India’s rule in Kashmir is illegitimate, or simply that this is the safest view to espouse, what purpose is served in tarnishing the reputation of the first fighters to take up arms against India’s claim or in praising India’s hero from that time? Those memories of Kashmir at the time of the lashkar’s advance that are shared with outsiders often betray more about present political loyalties than past traumas, and are influenced by the perception that if you are unguarded in those recollections you choose to recite, then you do so at your peril. In a Valley so politicised, so soaked in violence and suspicion, it is difficult to get anyone to make public a memory which goes against their personal, community or political interests.

Alongside the memory of Maqbool Sherwani, the Indian authorities also had other martyrs to honour. The Indian army had a number of casualties who were honoured for their bravery. In particular, Lieutenant Colonel Ranjit Rai, commander of the first Indian troops to land in Kashmir who died within thirty-six hours of the start of the airlift, remains one of the most renowned of India’s war dead. He was the first Indian officer to die in action defending the newly independent nation’s sovereignty—in the words of the official war history, he was a ‘gallant son of India’ who died ‘in defence of freedom and of the weak’.¹⁹ The raiders and their allies in the Pakistan armed forces, by contrast, have not developed any conspicuous cults of martyrs from their casualties in

the initial fighting in Kashmir—unlike the more recent fighters against Indian rule in the Kashmir Valley. Nor is Colonel Tom Dykes much remembered, in spite of his valour in trying to save others when the mission was under attack. He is buried in the only Commonwealth war grave in Kashmir—listed, curiously, alongside the war graves in Pakistan not in the Indian registers—but his family apart, there was no one with an interest in memorialising Tom Dykes. He was the martyr no one needed. Dykes was, at the time of his death, something of a historical anachronism. The British Indian army had run its course, and Tom Dykes and his family were, it seems, within weeks of joining the British military exodus from India. Although he was acting commandant of the Sikh Regimental Centre at the time of his death, his tenure had been brief, and he was a relic of the colonial era rather than an emblem of independent India. Nowadays, the regimental centre can offer little information about Colonel Dykes—and appears never to have sought to invoke his memory to instil regimental pride or loyalty. The Baramulla nuns tend his grave with care and respect his memory, but Tom Dykes was not a member of the mission community, and they had their own martyr to honour and promote.

Visitors to St Joseph's mission, and enquirers after the events there in 1947, are often given a small religious tract, *I Will Be the First*. It is the story of Mother Teresalina, the young Spanish nun killed in the attack on the mission, graced with a photograph of her in a white nun's habit. The opening paragraphs explain the choice of title. When the young missionary's uncle, a priest, said he had never heard of a Saint Teresalina, she is reputed to have riposted, playfully: 'I will be the first!' The story of her life, vocation, suffering and death is told concisely and respectfully. 'Mother Teresalina had always yearned to be a saint,' this tract asserts. 'Her soul had instinctively turned towards martyrdom.' The pamphlet also rehearses what it says were the young nun's dying words: 'I offer myself as a victim for the conversion of Kashmir.'²⁰ This has become the received clerical account of Teresalina's dying moments, recycled in Catholic literature in several languages.²¹ It may have been something other than the literal truth. Although Father Shanks was present at Teresalina's death, and was greatly moved by her courage and devotion, his various accounts of the episode do not include any account of her dying words. Indeed, he recorded that the nun's prayers gradually faded away as she 'slowly sank into unconsciousness'.

The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary had, in 1946, celebrated the beatification of seven religious martyrs from their order who had been killed in China at the beginning of the century. Their group portrait is



still on display at the order's convents. Reflection on the beatification was one of the themes of the Baramulla convent's religious retreat in October 1947, brought to a hasty end by word of the approaching invaders. The account of Teresalina's death was certainly moulded to fit the interests of the religious order, and to some extent to seek to bring attention to what the nuns may well have regarded as one of the more neglected (and, it has to be said, less successful) fields of missionary endeavour. Decades later, Father Hormise Nirmal Raj, a Catholic priest who got to know some of Teresalina's fellow nuns at Baramulla and had access to clerical records and publications, set down his (again, deeply hagiographical) account of the Spanish assistant mother and her passing. And he pleaded directly for a goal that other clerical writers had only hinted at—that Teresalina be made a saint:



From heaven too her mission has continued since her death in the land she so loved and died for. She became the first Martyr of Kashmir . . . It is said that amid falling bombs, the body of this victim holocaust was laid to rest in the shade of a large tree, side by side with the five others, who had gone home to God with her. For more than two years, the bodies were laid there. But when the expelled missionaries came back and took out the body of Mother Teresalina to be buried in the cemetery, it is said that the body was found intact and so the carpenter had to make a big coffin instead of the casket he had made to bury the body. It may wot be too long for the Kashmiris to see their beloved sister who came to their homes with medicine and consoling the afflicted, be one day canonised as the first Martyred saint of the Valley by the Catholic Church.²²



While the nuns at Baramulla may still cherish the hope that Mother Teresalina will one day be beatified, the first stage towards being made a saint, the odds are against her. She had only spent a matter of weeks in Kashmir at the time of her death, and there was, and is, no groundswell of support for her elevation among local Kashmiris. The Kashmir Valley remains a low priority for the church, an area where it has few adherents. And the notion of conversion, which Teresalina was said to have lauded in her last words, is distinctly hazardous in zealously Muslim areas, so much so that nowadays Catholic missionary priests in Kashmir insist that the assistant mother was talking of the spiritual conversion of hearts and minds rather than conversion from one faith to another.





The clerical accounts of Teresalina's dying words may well have been embroidered to suit the purpose of those retelling the story. It's not so much an invention as an embellishment of a story in the course of its repeated retelling. There are other aspects of the clerical accounts of the attack on Baramulla which also have an element of legend, more a recital of what might be imagined to have happened to give a heightened sense of drama than a literal account of events. Father Nirmal Raj, in his account of the attack, rehearsed how 'many Sikh women collected themselves in the gurdwara across the river in Baramulla; when the Pathans arrived, they ran in a frenzy into the river and most of them got drowned'. He placed this recollection in the words of Father Shanks, though it doesn't appear in any of Shanks's extant accounts of the attack.²³ More curiously, a medical missionary showing me round the convent grounds in Baramulla pointed to a disused well which, she insisted, was where several local Sikh women died. 'So many Sikh women ran away from their homes and came to the hospital and took shelter in the wards, so it was overcrowded,' she told me while standing by the well. 'The raiders spotted them, so they [the Sikh women] ran away from the hospital, behind the convent, and they came to this well and they committed suicide. It was covered actually with bodies.' This is the only account that has been found of Sikh women jumping down a well in the grounds of the mission. There were such mass suicides elsewhere, the most renowned being at the village of Thoa Khalsa outside Rawalpindi.²⁴ But the transference of such events to Baramulla, where such things might have happened but probably didn't, appears to be part of the confusion of fact with legend, and the building of a story with the elements needed to valorise individuals and institutions.

Different accounts built up different heroes. Sydney Smith of the *Daily Express*, mindful of his British audience, accentuated the valour of personalities with whom his readers could relate. 'There is a hero among the refugees—Father George Shanks, born in Newcastle-on-Tyne,' Smith's front-page report declared once he was in Abbottabad and able to file to his news desk. 'He became our leader and comforter as we were harassed day and night by tribesmen and dive-bombed and cannon-shelled by Tempests and Spitfires of the Indian Air Force.' The news report, bearing a photograph of a handsome, dog-collared young man was entitled: 'Priest from Britain guards the girls'.²⁵ Sydney Smith's much more detailed account in the following day's paper, headlined 'Ten Days of Terror', combined a tale of tragedy and fear with a recital of the 'humour, courage and faith' which enabled the seventy-five people trapped in the convent

hospital to endure their ordeal. He praised the calming guidance of Fathers Shanks and Mallett, and of the European nuns who displayed ‘cheerful sweetness and endless energy’ and whose ‘calm, unfrightened faces were like a blessing on us’. Father Shanks himself was embarrassed by the tone of Smith’s reports. ‘I was horrified to see the meal which the Daily Express had made of our Baramulla affair,’ he told the order’s superior general in a letter, but hoped nevertheless that Mill Hill would ‘be able to turn it to useful purpose’.²⁶

Sydney Smith made the most of his exclusive, as did the *Daily Express* which devoted almost an entire page to the story. Smith was not simply a reporter or an eyewitness to the events in Baramulla. He had shared in the captivity. ‘I was lucky enough to be there,’ Smith declared—though what a scoop-hungry journalist regarded as good fortune, most would have regarded as grave misfortune. The story Smith recounted had all the elements of great drama—violence, pathos, heroism, stoicism, action, peril, a clash of cultures, even sexual menace (though not conventional romance), and the exoticism of those almost magical place names, the North West Frontier and Kashmir. His journalism certainly gained the attention of writers and film-makers. In Smith’s cuttings books, hefty volumes bearing his reports from one world trouble spot after another, there is a telegram sent to Smith in Rome in August 1948. It was from one of the top British film-makers of the time, Anthony Havelock-Allan. He wanted to make a film about the attack on Baramulla. Havelock-Allan urged Smith to ‘write from memory [the] most detailed account possible including account of how you went to Baramula,’ and was insistent that ‘all available material’ should be with his screenwriters by the end of the year. The telegram makes tantalising mention of a diary Smith had kept which was in a trunk being shipped from Mumbai.²⁷

Havelock-Allan’s ambition to make a movie out of Smith’s story was not some sudden wheeze which rapidly fizzled out. Several months later, in April 1949, he was still on the quest—writing to the superior general at Mill Hill, enclosing a typescript of Smith’s ‘Ten Days of Terror’ report and seeking a meeting. ‘The incidents related in the story seemed to me at the time to offer great possibilities for a fine and deeply moving film,’ he wrote. ‘I have been in contact with the editor of the newspaper in question and with the author of the article and have made the necessary arrangements to cover their rights in the story.’²⁸ For whatever reason, the project didn’t take off. Perhaps because another key figure in the creative arts in post-war Britain was also on the same trail.

The British novelist H.E. Bates noticed Smith’s reports from



Kashmir—though whether he read them at the time and salted them away, or was alerted to the story later, is uncertain—and they appear to have provided the spark for one of his strongest selling novels *The Scarlet Sword*. Bates never visited Kashmir, but the story of besieged Europeans at a remote mission captured his imagination. While Bates is now best known for his warm-hearted stories of rural England, he also wrote several novels and short stories which have war and conflict as either their main theme or the backdrop for the intimate dramas he depicts. H.E. Bates had begun to develop a reputation as a writer in the 1930s. During the Second World War, he was taken on by the British air ministry to write stories which would improve morale and reflect well on the Royal Air Force. In January 1945, in what was his first and probably his only trip to India, Bates travelled to Calcutta (now Kolkata) and on to Burma at the initiative of Army Public Relations to get a feel for the war in the east. The result was, over the next five years, what are sometimes described as his trilogy of eastern novels. *The Purple Plain* and *The Jacaranda Tree* are both set in Burma, a location which Bates writes about with an authority born of first-hand observation. *The Scarlet Sword*, published in 1950, returns to some of the themes of *The Purple Plain*—a test of endurance in a hostile environment, an isolated Christian mission, even such incidentals as battle-hardened, world-weary military nurses. The novel was, in some ways, an attempt to recreate themes and storylines that had already delivered literary and critical success.

How exactly Bates alighted on the story of Baramulla is not clear. His interest was not in Kashmir—about which he provides little topographical, historical or political context—but about human responses to extreme adversity. He seems to have done a little research beyond raiding newspaper cuttings. But the greater part of the plot, the people, the characterisation and the incidental detail was lifted from Sydney Smith's reports in the *Daily Express*—without any public acknowledgement. Indeed, there is little in *The Scarlet Sword* that doesn't derive from Smith's journalism. Bates based the greater part of a chapter on an incident related in the *Express* of how the priests had sought to make Sikh and Hindu women in the convent less vulnerable to attack by cutting their hair and dressing them in European clothes. The novelist adapted as a repeated refrain Smith's account of an Afridi officer who commiserated on the excesses committed by Mahsud tribesmen by saying: 'They haven't learned etiquette.' Bates turned Smith's passing mention of the 'tame white rabbits' tended in the convent grounds by an elderly nun into a recurring allegory of captivity.

The extent to which H.E. Bates borrowed description and imagery is striking, and indeed disconcerting. Sydney Smith made reference to one of the more unlikely captives in the convent, the teenage Kaushalya, 'a pretty and sullen Hindu dancing girl from the dock streets of Bombay. Kaushalya, her ears brilliant with great turquoise rings and her fingers still shining with silver, spent most of each day and night smoking cigarettes in a corner with a blanket clutched before her face.' Bates must surely have had this cutting in front of him as he wrote of a woman by the same name, 'sullen', constantly smoking, a dancer from 'the dock roads of Bombay' with 'big turquoise earrings' and fingers 'so covered with rings that they were like slender silver barrels'.²⁹ The novel contains many other clear echoes of Smith's news reports. To cite just one further example, Smith writes of 'the 12-year-old Pathan, Pur Dil Khan, who had run away from home armed with a rifle cleaning rod'. Bates makes reference to Pir Dil Khan, a 'tight-headed Pathan boy of twelve or thirteen who was carrying in his hand the ram-rod of a shot-gun'. Bates's Pir Dil Khan follows Smith's Pur Dil Khan in developing an attachment to one of the mission priests, to whom he provides looted cigarettes.³⁰ There are several dozen such borrowings of incident, description and on occasion dialogue. H.E. Bates acknowledged his debt, after a fashion, by making one of his central characters a war-weary British journalist named Crane (the reader never finds out his first name), presumably based loosely on Smith. Only loosely, one must suppose, because Crane never once attempts to file a story or reflects on how to make contact with his news editor.

The Scarlet Sword is broadly successful as a novel in exploring the ways in which ordinary, fallible individuals respond to—and by and large, rise to—adversity. But it is marred by the poor development of character and by the absence of context. H.E. Bates also failed to attempt to understand, or even describe, non-Europeans. All the main characters of the novel are British—indeed no Kashmiri has more than a walk-on part, and only one non-European, the convent-educated Afridi officer who manages to stop the initial slaughter, is allotted more than a few words of dialogue. While almost all the Europeans in the mission are given the dignity of a name, most of the non-Europeans who took refuge there, and all but two of the attackers, are anonymous. Bates's pages are sprinkled with references to 'a Pathan', 'a Hindu woman', 'two Afridis', 'a young Sikh woman' or 'a dead Kashmiri'—their lives, stories and motives are not explored.

In the judgement of the Bates scholar Dean Baldwin, *The Scarlet Sword* is 'the last and least successful of the Eastern novels'. It achieved

mixed reviews. 'A band of Pathans and Afridis burst upon the scene like mad Martians dropped out of the sky,' one reviewer lamented. 'Nobody in the story seems to know what is going on or why; nowhere in it does Mr Bates offer a key to the meaning of this episode . . . Without it, the bloody episode is quite meaningless. A whole dimension is missing.'³¹ But by 1950, Bates was an immensely popular writer. *The Scarlet Sword* appeared in many editions, and the ease with which it can be found in second-hand bookshops is testament to its one-time popularity.

Bates appears to have been in two minds about whether to acknowledge the Baramulla incident as the basis for his novel. The town in which *The Scarlet Sword* is set is never named, nor is the mission—though at one stage, in his teasing way, Bates makes the older priest suggest that the survivors 'burn a candle for St Joseph'. The Kashmir setting, however, is made clear from the opening page. Most of the characters are given fictional names—thus Father Shanks becomes Father Anstey (though, again mischievously, another incidental character is given the name Miss Shanks) and Colonel Dykes is depicted as Colonel Mathieson (the name of another Scottish officer who achieved some renown in Gilgit in another corner of the princely state). A few of the non-European characters lifted from Smith's reportage are given their actual names. So too is Mother Teresalina, the Spanish nun who died in the attack, and Greta Barretto (Baretta, according to Bates), the mission doctor. The account of events was changed in some instances: in *The Scarlet Sword*, the colonel's wife is depicted as pregnant rather than having recently given birth; the colonel himself dies not in the initial attack but in a later Indian air attack; Teresalina survives and the mother superior is killed rather than the other way round; and the mission is eventually evacuated by Indian rather than Pakistani troops.

The attempt to achieve a broadly accurate rendition of events, one that anyone who knew about the Baramulla incident would immediately recognise, perhaps inevitably upset both survivors and bereaved families. By depicting human frailties and weaknesses, which are lifelike but may not have corresponded to the characters of those who suffered or died at St Joseph's mission, Bates made plenty of enemies. His rendition of both sexual violence and sexual attraction, the perceived disparagement of those of mixed racial heritage, and depictions of individual battles of faith and religiosity, aroused hurt and anger. Tom Dykes junior recalled that his paternal grandmother had been upset by the book. The family of another victim, Jose Barretto, was even more incensed, and his children to this day remain dismayed by what they regard as the cheapening of

his martyrdom. There was, apparently, a protest to Bates's publishers, urging that the book either be amended or withdrawn. It didn't help that some editions of *The Scarlet Sword* placed more emphasis on the sex than the spirituality. 'A Lusty Novel Of Civil War In India' proclaimed a 35-cent American paperback edition featuring on its cover a drawing of a naked, lipstick-adorned redhead cowering as a rifle-wielding Pathan looms over her. Readers in search of sexual excitement would have been disappointed.

It may have been H.E. Bates who stung Father George Shanks into his most detailed retelling of the Baramulla attack. The clerical press had followed Sydney Smith in presenting Father Shanks as a hero. *The Scarlet Sword*, by contrast, downgrades the older priest to a minor role, presenting him as tired and flawed, 'rather like the ghost of a carthorse. The sinews had dried up; perhaps he was too old for the job.'³² The younger priest, Father Simpson (portrayed as flabby in build and resolve, whereas his real-life counterpart was gaunt), is given the greater role, as he discovers new reserves of faith, compassion and character during the tragedy befalling the mission. Perhaps encouraged or goaded by the success of Bates's book, George Shanks took up a desk diary and set to work assembling the fullest first-hand account of the attack. Shanks appears to have been uncertain about whether to write a straightforward factual account, or to develop character and dialogue in the fashion of a story based on the events he had lived through. In the event, although he set down by hand about one hundred pages of text and notes, he never finished the first draft.

Mulk Raj Anand and H.E. Bates offer deeply contrasting literary accounts of the lashkar's descent on Baramulla—both instinctively critical of the tribal fighters, but otherwise with little common in approach. Given that both *Death of a Hero* and *The Scarlet Sword* are based on events that took place in the same small town over a period of less than two weeks, they have only the most tangential of links in plot and personality. Anand refers only in passing to events at the mission, while Bates makes only fleeting reference to the destruction and killing beyond the mission walls.

A third novel was also based upon the lashkar's invasion of Kashmir—and this by someone who was there. The *Observer's* Alan Moorehead—a renowned and widely read foreign correspondent, writer and historian—published *The Rage of the Vulture* in 1948. The novel is set in what he calls Kandahar, but is unmistakably the story he witnessed in Srinagar the previous year. The emphasis is on the mounting anxiety as the tribesmen approach the city: 'They were Chaos, they were the

outer darkness, the pure essence of violence. When they arrived they automatically looted your house, raped your wife and left you dead on the smoking ruins of your belongings. They performed all this without passion or anger, purely as a mechanical reaction. They were as relentless and objective as death itself.³³ Moorehead dwells on the response of the dwindling, cantankerous British community in the Kashmiri capital. While there is no fictionalized representation of the attack on the Baramulla mission, the account of the death of a British ex-army couple, John and Louise Britten, in an isolated hospital in Kashmir bears a distinct echo of the fate of Tom and Biddy Dykes. There are also references to the raiders' propensity to loot and rape and to nuns being displaced. As a novel, Moorehead cannot easily compete in style and technique with H.E. Bates. Yet *The Rage of the Vulture* is a more satisfying literary depiction of the invasion of Kashmir than the writing of either Anand or Bates.

At about the time Monsignor Shanks was setting down in longhand his recollections of the attack on Baramulla, one of the region's most renowned journalists managed to traverse along the same route as the lashkar into Baramulla. Ian Stephens had been the editor of the *Statesman*, at one time the most renowned of India's daily newspapers, for nine years until 1951. In the spring and summer of 1952, he travelled through Pakistan, Kashmir and Afghanistan, and the following year published a highly political account of his travels. Stephens had, he recalled, dined with the Mountbattens on 26 October 1947 at a time when Delhi was buzzing with rumours about the Pathan incursion into Kashmir. 'I was "startled by their one-sided verdict on affairs". They seemed to have "become wholly pro-Hindu". The atmosphere at Government House that night was almost one of war. Pakistan, the Muslim League, and Mr Jinnah were the enemy.'³⁴ That reflects the tone of much of his writing—intensely critical of Mountbatten, and sympathetic to Pakistan.

Ian Stephens had good contacts in both newly independent countries and in April 1952, in the company of a Danish UN military observer, he managed to cross the ceasefire line at Chakothe into Indian Kashmir—apparently only the third civilian not on official duty to do so in as many years. He recorded that Baramulla 'had been less knocked about by the Pathan incursion of October 1947 than official Indian photographs issued at the time suggested. Parts of it were indeed still a shambles; but large other parts, unreconstructed, stood intact. By comparison with devastated Mirpur in Azad Kashmir, it was thriving and populous.'³⁵ He visited the convent hospital, where one of the wards was still without a roof lost in Indian bombing raids. He spoke to the

nuns, and retrieved some details of what ‘had certainly been a very shameful affair’.

Stephens also recounted an incident from a trip to Miranshah in North Waziristan in February 1948 escorted by tribesmen, some of whom had fought in the advance on Srinagar four months earlier. He got talking to one of his informal bodyguards:

He and his friends would have taken the city, he asserted, but for the fools at Baramula behind them. These men, the second invading wave, should have sent up reinforcements. Instead, they turned aside, the nincompoops, to loot the smaller town and waste bullets on the queer-clothed foreign women. It was a complete disgrace.

‘What, shooting the women?’

No, no; not that at all. The fools had ruined, within an ace of success, a very pretty little military operation.³⁶

It was of course an easy alibi for the tribesmen—they had failed to capture the Valley, but it was someone else’s fault.

A decade later, Ian Stephens wrote a book devoted to the establishment of Pakistan. And by then, his views had hardened. The origins of the Kashmir dispute, he stated, lay in ‘the impetuous and (some might reckon) unprincipled haste’ with which the British, under Mountbatten’s lead, pulled out from India. The Kashmiris of the Valley, ‘though talented in many ways, tended to be a spiritless, evasive lot, easily overawed’. The Pathans’ invasion involved ‘dramatic but over- notorious happenings’, small by comparison with events in Poonch and Jammu. And as for the attack on the Baramulla mission, it was ‘a bad but secondary episode, soon inflated out of all proportion by Indian propaganda aimed at countries of the Christian West. And the time lost over these misdeeds, we can now see, also lost them the campaign—it was of no avail that later waves of invading tribesmen behaved much better, sometimes fighting superbly’.³⁷

This reflected the tone of histories written by outsiders broadly sympathetic to Pakistan. L.F. Rushbrook Williams, an academic, administrator and journalist, assembled most of the elements of Pakistan’s approach to the lashkar’s excesses in a single prose passage. He explained how the attack on the Baramulla mission, and the ensuing casualties ‘naturally caused a great sensation, made headlines in the Press, not only of India, but also of the outside world, and brought the Pakistan Government, which was in no way to blame, into undeserved discredit’.



He recounted being told by a Pakistani officer who was ‘a volunteer with the Azad Kashmir forces’, and who had hurried to Baramulla when he heard about the attack on the mission, that the lashkar had no intention of attacking Europeans. The tribesmen had been ‘wandering about, helping themselves to pots of jam and other food, when Colonel Dykes tried to turn them out of the convent at the point of his pistol. Indiscriminate firing then broke out, and tragedy followed.’³⁸ Whatever extenuation can be offered for the killings and violence at St Joseph’s, the suggestion that the attackers were searching for jam sounds particularly hollow.

Another apologia has come from the noted historian of Kashmir, Alastair Lamb, who has asserted that ‘whatever happened in Baramulla that day is as nothing when compared to what has happened to Kashmiri men, women and children at Indian hands since 1989’. Lamb suggests that those massacres which may have been forestalled by the Indian military airlift in 1947 ‘were not prevented; they were merely postponed for two generations, with the Indians now the vandals.’³⁹ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is a partisan comment rather than a judgement based on historical inquiry.

Pakistan has had the more difficult task in turning the narrative of the lashkar’s attack to its political advantage. Pakistan’s tribesmen were pushed out of the Kashmir Valley, and the subsequent war failed to advance Pakistan’s claim. The indiscipline, looting and abduction that accompanied the tribesmen’s invasion was too widely acknowledged, including by some of the Pakistani architects of the operation, to be denied. It’s difficult to make heroes out of marauders. On the whole, Pakistani accounts have either maintained a silence about the extent of the robbery and rape, or have sought to blame tribal indiscipline while disavowing any official Pakistani role in instigating or directing the attack. The profound impact of Kashmir on politics within Pakistan’s armed forces, and on the tension lines between army and civilian politicians, has also clouded the narrative of the 1947–48 conflict. Akbar Khan and several others involved in providing military leadership to the lashkar were implicated in the Rawalpindi conspiracy case of 1951, the first military attempt to overthrow Pakistan’s government. Akbar Khan himself spent four years in jail. He couldn’t easily be promoted as a national hero. Indeed, Pakistan’s most scholarly history of the lashkar places the blame for Pakistan’s failure to capture Kashmir on a single factor: ‘the faulty leadership of the tribal horde—or the lack of it. This was the only mistake, and a decisive one at that, for which those who organized the invasion

(no one knows who did) should bear responsibility.’ This same historian concludes that whatever the lashkar’s excesses, they succeeded in establishing Pakistan’s control over part of the former princely state. ‘The tribesmen were guilty of many sins, and heinous ones too, but it must be acknowledged that, whatever territory in the west is with Azad Kashmir, it is due to the tribesmen.’⁴⁰

If Ian Stephens was the commanding newspaper editor at the time of the transfer of power, for the next generation, Frank Moraes took that role. He was born in Bombay in 1907, educated at Catholic schools in India and then at Oxford University, and in 1950 he became the first Indian editor of the *Times of India*. Frank Moraes had been an intimate friend of Margaret Bourke-White. Whether it was her account of Baramulla that prompted him to visit the town is a detail lost to history. But when in the spring of 1958, Frank Moraes travelled in Kashmir to gather material for a series of substantial articles about political integration and social development, one was entitled: ‘The Burning of Baramulla’.⁴¹ He recalled how ten years earlier ‘tribal raiders, aided and abetted by Pakistan, poured into this small township . . . and for nearly a week indulged in an orgy of burning, pillage, looting, rape, and murder’. Moraes came across ‘few vestiges of those days of horror’ when he visited what he found to be a ‘sleepy township’. He saw the memorial to Maqbool Sherwani, and briefly reprised his tale. But he spent most of his few hours in Baramulla at the convent and hospital, piecing together the story of the attack on the mission from three nuns who had lived through the incident—one Italian, another German and the third Spanish. ‘In my day, I have seen some violence, particularly as a war correspondent in the last war,’ Moraes wrote. ‘But there was something strangely and deeply moving in the accounts of these three women who ten years after their nightmare experiences could retail them placidly to a stranger and recount some of them with even a trace of whimsical humour.’

Frank Moraes’s account of the attack on the mission, based solely on the testimony of the nuns, is powerfully written. It is, for the most part, a record of their memories, made more vivid in its rendition by the simple, unadorned effectiveness of the writing, and the evident grace and forgiveness of Moraes’s informants. But he also had a political message to deliver—part of which he placed in the words of one of the sisters. ‘As they looted and attacked us, the raiders kept shouting “Pakistan has come”, said the Italian nun. I only knew that the devil had come.’ Moraes topped and tailed his article with references to the UN Security Council’s reluctance to describe the lashkar’s invasion of Kashmir as

aggression. 'The nuns are still [in Baramulla] and presumably can be questioned by any U.N. representative,' his article concluded. 'And yet the Security Council, shutting its eyes to facts such as these, complacently continues in refusing to admit that there was any aggression in Kashmir!'

The following year, an All India Radio team followed in Frank Moraes's footsteps. They spoke, almost certainly, to the same three nuns at the Baramulla mission, and also to Monsignor Shanks in Srinagar. The resulting programme was broadcast on 26 October 1958, the eve of the eleventh anniversary of the attack on the mission. It formed the basis of a substantial illustrated article in a magazine published by the Indian ministry of information and broadcasting.⁴² Much of the article was a recitation of the survivors' recollections of the attack. But the context offered was one of Pakistan-instigated terror. The programme was broadcast to mark the anniversary of the attack 'when Pakistani irregulars aided by the Government of Pakistan put this predominantly Muslim town to fire and sword'. The four foreign survivors had 'lifted the veil on a brutal tragedy which invaders from Pakistan perpetuated upon an innocent and peace-loving people'. The 'peace-loving people' themselves, the people of Kashmir, were not given a voice in the article.

The author of this article also recited what has come to be a standard constituent of partisan Indian accounts of the attack on Baramulla. 'According to one account,' the article stated, 'out of its nearly fourteen thousand inhabitants, only one thousand survived.' The source of this assertion, with its clear implication that more than 90 per cent of Baramulla's residents were killed by the lashkar, was a report by Robert Trumbull of the *New York Times*. After visiting Baramulla in the wake of its capture by Indian troops, he wrote: 'Today, twenty-four hours after the Indian Army entered Baramulla, only 1,000 were left of a normal population of about 14,000. These still were huddled fearfully in the empty wrecks of their homes.'⁴³ Trumbull was not saying that all but 1,000 of Baramulla's pre-invasion population had been killed. The figures he cited were a reflection of the exodus from the town as people sought sanctuary elsewhere, rather than of an all-out massacre. Trumbull in the same article offered a hearsay figure for casualties in Baramulla. 'Surviving residents estimate that 3,000 of their fellow townsmen . . . were slain,' he reported—still a shocking figure, and indeed a considerably higher estimate than other accounts.

Trumbull's report from Baramulla featured prominently in the Indian government's March 1948 White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir, a ninety-page compendium of news articles, extracts from official

documents and communications, and personal testimony (some from captured tribesmen and their allies), intended to buttress both India's claim to the former princely state and its assertion that Pakistan was the aggressor. This was an impressive, if selective, presentation of evidence that supported the Indian case. Although consisting mainly of official documents, it included snippets not only from the *New York Times*, but also from Sydney Smith's reports in the *Daily Express*, and from *The Times*, the *Observer*, the *Times of India* and the *Hindustan Times*, along with, somewhat cheekily, some Pakistani titles, including *Dawn*. For many writers on Kashmir over the years, the white paper has served as primary source material. It has also formed the basis of many diplomatic speeches and representations which in turn made reference to Baramulla, the loss of life there, and the desecration of the convent and hospital. The reportage the White Paper included has been repeatedly recycled, while the articles it chose not to include have been largely overlooked. The White Paper quoted Trumbull accurately, citing both his sets of figures and also his brief account of the attack on the mission, but others relying on it were sometimes misleadingly selective. V.P. Menon, the senior Indian civil servant responsible for signing up the princely states to join India, was paraphrasing Trumbull for his own purposes when he declared: 'When the Indian troops entered [Baramulla] they found that it had been stripped by the tribesmen of its wealth and its women. Out of a normal population of 14,000 only one thousand were left.'⁴⁴ The attempt to suggest that the tribesmen had decimated Baramulla's population, and to cite a foreign correspondent perceived as neutral was a propagandistic remoulding of Trumbull's journalism.

The extent of the devastation at Baramulla, however, was beyond question. There can be arguments about the number of lives lost, and about the exact extent of the destruction, but no doubt about the brutality of the attack. From the moment of the Indian army's entry into Baramulla, the violence the town had witnessed at the hands of the invading forces was publicised and recited as evidence of their—and their instigators'—cruelty and callousness towards Kashmir and its people. The attack on the mission was highlighted above all other aspects of the town's plight. The victims were not Kashmiris and were clearly in no way party to the conflict. The fate that befell them was well attested. As foreigners, their ordeal more readily attracted international censure as well as condemnation in Kashmir and elsewhere in India. From the initial visits to Baramulla of India's prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his key Kashmiri ally, Sheikh Abdullah, the plight of the Catholic mission was



presented as an emblem of the rapaciousness of Pakistan's desire for Kashmir. References to 'the sack of Baramulla', 'the horrors of Baramulla' and 'the rape of Baramulla' became a common refrain.

When Sheikh Abdullah delivered the opening address to the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly in November 1951, he made specific reference to the attack on St Joseph's:

It was not an ordinary type of invasion, inasmuch as no canons of warfare were observed. The tribesmen who attacked the State in thousands, killed, burned, looted and destroyed whatever came their way and in this savagery no section of the people could escape. Even the nuns and nurses of a Catholic Mission were either killed or brutally mistreated.⁴⁵

Half a century on from the attack, Sheikh Abdullah's son and political heir Farooq Abdullah told me how he remembered first hearing of the violence at Baramulla. 'Suddenly we realised we were being invaded. We would hear just these stories that they have reached Baramulla and they have done all sorts of things at Baramulla. We were frightened as kids because of Hitler. When our mother had to put us to bed, she used to say: Hitler is coming. This time we saw [a] real Hitler.' His contemporary Karan Singh, then Kashmir's crown prince, shared similar memories of the raid. 'This was being done by tribesmen. They were people from outside. They came in plundering and killing and raping, including the convent at Baramulla. It was a terrible time.' The association of the forces from Pakistan with terror and plunder has proved powerful. It is perhaps an irony that even when talking of terror in Kashmir, those Kashmiris who suffered have had to relinquish centre stage to outsiders.