

The People's Militia: Communists and Kashmiri nationalism in the 1940s

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'The people's movement of Kashmir', declared the British communist Rajani Palme Dutt in the summer of 1946, 'is the strongest and most militant of any Indian State ... Its leader, Sheikh Abdulla [sic], impressed me as one of the most honest, courageous and able political leaders I had the pleasure of seeing in India.'¹ This was warm praise from the austere Palme Dutt. His week-long stay in the Kashmiri capital, Srinagar, in July 1946 came at the end of a five month visit to India which was intended largely to guide and instruct the Communist Party of India (CPI).² It arose from a personal invitation from Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference, the main nationalist party in princely-ruled Kashmir. By the time Dutt reached the Kashmir Valley, Abdullah had been arrested for leading a mass protest campaign against the maharaja. The same issue of Dutt's *Labour Monthly* that published the account of his trip to Kashmir also carried Sheikh Abdullah's speech in his own defence at a trial in which he was sentenced to three years imprisonment for making seditious speeches.³

Dutt, the British-born son of a Bengali doctor, was a doctrinaire exponent of orthodoxy within the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).⁴ In the British party, he was more feared than loved; in the Indian party, his stock was much higher. Palme Dutt's *India To-Day*, a huge book first published in 1940 at which time the author had never set foot in India, was enormously influential there. Dutt acted as mentor to the younger party, and the CPI leadership would have taken careful note of his comment that Kashmir was 'the political storm-centre of the Indian fight for

freedom'. In his *Labour Monthly* article, Dutt made much of the resemblance of the National Conference⁵ emblem, a red flag with plough, to the red flag with hammer and sickle which flew over the bonnet of his car on the arduous road journey from Rawalpindi to Srinagar. In the Kashmiri capital, under the thrall of what he described as a 'reign of terror' established by the maharaja, he attended Sheikh Abdullah's trial:

the sympathy even among the soldiers and armed guards for Abdulla was visible. When Abdulla entered the court, the entire court with the exception of the judge stood up in his honour – which was more than they had done for the judge. He saw me as he entered and moved away from his guards to shake me by the hand, and we exchanged greetings and I was able publicly to express to him the admiration and support felt for his stand. The proceedings were held up till we had completed these greetings.

A few days later, Dutt button-holed Jawaharlal Nehru, a friend and ally of Abdullah, to advise him against 'letting down the Kashmir fight'. By the end of the following year, Nehru had become the first prime minister of independent India and Sheikh Abdullah was in power in what had become Indian Kashmir.

Rajani Palme Dutt's ringing endorsement of Sheikh Abdullah and the movement against autocracy in Kashmir both reflected and gave impetus to Indian communist activity in this out-of-the-way valley in the Himalayan foothills. Communists helped to shape Sheikh Abdullah's radical campaign against princely rule. In turn, Palme Dutt, it has been suggested, saw in the mass action in Kashmir a potential model for left campaigns, midway between insurrectionism and the restraint advocated by Nehru's Indian National Congress.⁶ Yet in the year following Dutt's visit to Srinagar, communists in Kashmir took the lead in organising a popular armed force. Hundreds of young Kashmiris enrolled in the militia, and some saw active service while helping to repulse an invasion by pro-Pakistan irregular forces. The militia bore such leftist imprints as political officers, a women's wing, and a linked cultural front staging popular dramas and organising propaganda.

The establishment of a volunteer force was a remarkable innovation in a part of India where there was no martial tradition. The involvement of women in the militia was even more of a breach with convention in such a conservative region, with little space for women in public life. For Indian communists, too, this was new territory. The party had little history of armed activity, and was sharply critical during the Second World War of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, a force raised outside Indian soil which fought alongside Japanese troops. The militia in Kashmir was a revolutionary force – part of a political mobilisation which saw a new political order take shape there. Sheikh Abdullah's advent to power marked the end of more than a century of princely rule, and he became the first Kashmiri Muslim to hold the reins of power for well over three hundred years. The volunteer force, however, was not a challenge to the newly independent Indian state; rather it was established to support Kashmir's accession to India and was equipped and trained by the Indian army. It was a defence force, intended to safeguard the Kashmiri capital from a very real threat of occupation and ransacking by armed Pakistani tribesmen, rather than a propagator of insurgency. When after a few weeks the immediate danger to Srinagar abated, so too did the temper of militia activity. The women's section disbanded, and the men's militia was eventually incorporated into the Indian armed forces.

Kashmir had not been a focus of communist activity prior to the mid-1940s, and it largely disappeared from the party's horizons within months of Sheikh Abdullah's political takeover. When at the close of 1947 the CPI moved towards a policy of promoting a popular uprising in southern India, this amounted to a repudiation of the policy pursued in Kashmir. The communist approach to Kashmiri nationalism in the mid-1940s harked back to the Popular Front period – a practice of working within progressive parties which had mass support. Although communists in Kashmir made no secret of their political allegiances, they did not seek to organise as a separate party. Their influence within the National Conference was considerable, and endured into the early years of Sheikh Abdullah's period in office. As well as their leadership of the militia, communists also

shaped an exceptionally radical political programme with the 'New Kashmir' manifesto of 1944. The land reform measures outlined in the manifesto were eventually implemented, and are widely seen as one of the most radical and successful measures of political and social empowerment in South Asia. This article looks at the means by which communists gained influence within the Kashmiri nationalist movement, the nature of the militia which it helped to establish, and the reasons for the failure to develop a mass-based communist movement.

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The mountain valley of Kashmir was 'great game' territory, part of that inaccessible region of Asia where China, Tibet, Russia and the British Raj all met. The principality of Jammu and Kashmir took shape from the mid-1840s. A century later it was the biggest by area, and second biggest by population, of all India's princely states. The ruling family were Dogri-speaking Hindus from Jammu – in other words, outsiders in the eyes of many Kashmiris – who managed to agglomerate, though never quite bind together, a huge area stretching north from the Punjab plains, through valleys in the Himalayan foothills, to some of the high mountain ranges. The Kashmir Valley was the heartland of their fiefdom, though it accounted for well under half of the princely state's total population and less than a tenth of the land area. It was the centre of the Kashmiri language and culture and of a tolerant Sufi-influenced form of Islam, the religion of more than ninety per cent of the Valley's population. The maharajas were, by and large, wealthy, sporting Anglophiles. They presided over an autocracy where the Muslim majority was disadvantaged, facing heavy taxes and other feudal-style impositions and with little prospect of education or advancement.⁷

The opening of the Jhelum valley road in 1890 for the first time allowed access to Srinagar by wheeled transport and started to chip away at Kashmir's political and intellectual isolation. From the 1920s, increasing numbers of civil servants and army officers descended on Srinagar during the summer to escape the blistering

heat of the plains. There was travel in the other direction too. The offspring of Kashmir's tiny Muslim middle class started to secure an education in Punjab or further afield. From the beginning of the 1930s, popular politics began to take root in the Kashmir Valley, and achieved some concessions from autocratic princely rule. Newspapers and public gatherings for political purposes were permitted from 1932. From the start, the example of the Russian Revolution loomed large in the thinking of Kashmir's small group of politically minded youngsters. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the son of a shawl maker, was the most prominent Kashmiri political leader from the early 1930s until his death in 1982.⁸

Sheikh Abdullah was a graduate of Lahore and Aligarh universities and a charismatic leader and orator who rejoiced in the title *Sher-e-Kashmir: the lion of Kashmir*. The initial political mobilisation, in the face of often severe repression, was largely communal. Sheikh Abdullah's party was initially known as the Muslim Conference, but in 1939 it was renamed the National Conference, marking an important turn from a community-based identity to aspiring to represent all Kashmiris. The party made an open appeal for support from the Kashmir Valley's small but influential Hindu and Sikh minorities. From the late 1930s, Sheikh Abdullah developed a strong bond with two of South Asia's commanding nationalist leaders: Jawaharlal Nehru, who was himself of Kashmiri Hindu ancestry, and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the 'Frontier Gandhi', who like Abdullah was an inspirational, secular-minded leader in an overwhelmingly Muslim region. This was an alliance of progressive nationalists, who courted popular support and were willing to tackle feudal privilege. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League and its allies, the political forces which secured the creation in 1947 of the explicitly Muslim nation of Pakistan, had significant support in the Kashmir Valley, but never managed to rival Sheikh Abdullah's mass appeal.

There was another factor encouraging and sustaining Sheikh Abdullah's turn to a more socialist-minded style of politics. Left-leaning intellectuals from Lahore began to congregate in Srinagar. Some came during the summer; others settled there. As the temper of

politics in Kashmir quickened, so did their interest and involvement. In 1941, Sheikh Abdullah himself performed the nikah or Muslim marriage ceremony in Srinagar of his friend, the renowned progressive poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and a London communist, Alys George. Her sister Christobel was already married to a prominent Punjabi marxist, M.D. Taseer, who became the principal of Kashmir's most prestigious college of higher education. Her memoir of the Valley includes a group photograph of a remarkable constellation of coming leftist literary talent, among them Faiz and the novelist Mulk Raj Anand, taken in Kashmir in 1938.⁹ Most were close to the CPI and several came to be active in the Progressive Writers' Association or the Indian People's Theatre Association, organisations of enormous influence in Indian literature and cinema. The actor and writer Balraj Sahni, a party member, was also an influential figure, and the family home in Srinagar was another gathering place of left cultural figures. 'Since I had come from Bombay, where the Central Office of the Communist Party was,' Sahni wrote, 'the Srinagar comrades used to treat me with a deference, which was out of all proportion.'¹⁰

Another communist couple began to travel up from Lahore and came to be key players in Kashmiri politics. B.P.L. Bedi was a Punjabi Sikh who as a student at Oxford had met a woman from Derbyshire, Freda Houlston. 'Barely a week after finishing Final Schools', she reminisced, 'we were married in the dark and poky little Oxford Registry Office.'¹¹ She wore a sari as her wedding dress, and in the autumn of 1934, the Bedis and their four-month-old baby moved to India. They were a striking couple, politically committed and socially outgoing, and to this day warmly remembered by the few survivors of their once large circle of friends. 'In the summer months', reminisced Christobel Bilqees Taseer, 'the Leftists from different parts of India would also be there [in Kashmir], mixing with and influencing the National Conference workers. One particularly popular couple were the Bedis ... Both husband and wife were dedicated Marxists.'¹² 'Baba' Bedi was gregarious and forceful – 'very funny character, very happy go lucky type ... he had a big smile on his face'.¹³ Freda was courageous, clever and her beauty was much commented upon. In the words of her younger son, the film star Kabir Bedi, 'she was blue eyed,

white skinned and fighting the British'.¹⁴ They became close friends of Sheikh Abdullah and part of his immediate political circle.

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Organised CPI activity in the Kashmir Valley appears to date from the late 1930s. Prem Nath Bazaz, who was both a historian of and a participant in Kashmir politics in this era, recorded that two 'Moscow-trained' workers from Lahore spent several weeks in Srinagar in 1937 but achieved little. In the early 1940s, several small socialist-minded discussion groups were set up by students in Kashmir.¹⁵ In this more propitious climate, the CPI made another attempt to recruit. 'In September 1942, Fazal Elahi Qurban, the well known Communist from Lahore organized an anti fascist school in a house boat in Srinagar', according to an Indian intelligence report, 'and the party's influence was slowly being extended.'¹⁶ Pran Nath Jalali, a schoolboy at the time, attended the sessions: 'I ran away from my home to join the first study circle, they called it, which was held in Dal Lake. It was in a boat. We had the first schooling on communist ideology in that doonga [boat].'¹⁷

Jalali had expected to be taught how to make bombs, but instead learned about topics ranging from evolution to the French Revolution. He recalled about fourteen participants in the classes, most of them students.¹⁸ Among those attending were two future chief ministers of Indian Kashmir and key lieutenants of Sheikh Abdullah. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad's association with the communist movement was brief. G.M. Sadiq's links were much more long lasting.¹⁹ Small numbers of communists became active particularly within the students, youth and labour wings of the National Conference. 'They did not raise their hand that here we are, communists', Pran Nath Jalali recalled. 'Except that everybody knew. Even Sheikh sahib [Sheikh Abdullah] knew ... There was no ban as such. But we were conscious not to run Sheikh sahib on the wrong side because he was very sensitive about any parallel political activity.'

A disproportionate number of these pioneer Kashmiri communists were, like Jalali, Pandits – that is, high caste Kashmiri speaking

Hindus, a community which at that time made up less than a tenth of the Valley's population. One Pandit communist, Niranjan Nath Raina, achieved prominence both within the National Conference in Srinagar and in the local trade union movement. 'I admired him because he had great intellect ... he was a man of calibre', recalled Mohan Lal Misri; 'he was the number one communist' in the recollection of Mahmooda Ahmed Ali Shah.²⁰ Raina 'had been indoctrinated with the philosophy of communism while studying in the Allahabad University', recorded Prem Nath Bazaz. 'On his return to his homeland he became the staunchest propagandist of the creed. Through his efforts, the party gained dozens of adherents among the intelligentsia of the Pandits.'²¹ Nevertheless, Kashmiri communism was a secular movement which sought to embrace all communities, with secularism at the root of its political purpose.

The most powerful evidence of communist influence within the National Conference came with the party's adoption in September 1944 of the 'Naya Kashmir' (New Kashmir) policy document. According to some of those involved, communist allies of Sheikh Abdullah had urged the National Conference to develop a policy platform. 'In order to get it in a concrete shape', one veteran commented many decades later, 'the National Conference party invited from its members their opinions, articles, suggestions and view-points, all in writing. When a bulk of such material was collected, it was sifted and all good things accepted, compiled and given a proper shape. It was then prepared into a well arranged document with the help of a communist leader, B.L.P. [sic] Bedi who ... mixed his own ideological substance with the material.'²² Most accounts agree that Bedi was responsible for the greater part of the forty-four-page manifesto, perhaps in collaboration with prominent CPI members in Lahore. Jalali's recollection is that apart from the introduction, there wasn't much writing to do, because the manifesto was 'almost a carbon copy' of documents issued in Soviet Central Asia.²³

The 'New Kashmir' manifesto has been authoritatively described as 'the most important political document in modern Kashmir's history'.²⁴ In the introduction, Sheikh Abdullah advocated democracy

and responsible government for Kashmir and a planned economy, and made clear where he looked for inspiration:

In our times, Soviet Russia has demonstrated before our eyes, not merely theoretical but in her actual day to day life and development, that real freedom takes birth only from economic emancipation. The inspiring picture of the regeneration of all the different nationalities and peoples of the U.S.S.R., and their welding together into the united mighty Soviet State that is throwing back its barbarous invaders with deathless heroism, is an unanswerable argument for the building of democracy on the cornerstone of economic equality.

There was certainly no shortage of rhetoric. The preamble to what was in effect a draft constitution asserted the determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to 'raise ourselves and our children forever from the abyss of oppression and poverty, degradation and superstition, from medieval darkness and ignorance, into the sunlit valleys of plenty ruled by freedom, science and honest toil, in worthy participation of the historic resurgence of the peoples of the East ... to make this our country a darling [sic] gem upon the snowy bosom of Asia'.²⁵ The socialist tone was emphasised by the front cover, red in hue, with a Marianne-style depiction of a woman, her head covered, holding the National Conference red flag.

The body of the document was much more earnest, incorporating charters for workers, peasants and women. It advocated equal rights, irrespective of race, religion, nationality or birth. Freedom of speech, press and assembly were to be guaranteed. There was particular emphasis on rights for women, which extended to equal wages and paid leave during pregnancy. The main features of the National Economic Plan were the 'abolition of landlordism' and 'land to the tiller', radical measures in any country but exceptionally so in an underdeveloped and partly feudal principality. All key industries were to be 'managed and owned by the Democratic State of Jammu and Kashmir'. The draft constitution proposed universal suffrage for those aged eighteen and over, though the powers of the National Assembly

were to be subject 'to the general control of H.H. the Maharaja Bahadur'. This tolerance of a constitutional monarchy, a deference sharply at odds with the democratic tone of the programme, was further reflected in the decision of the National Conference to present their policy document in person to the maharaja.

'One thing that is difficult to understand is that the programme was not produced in a high tide of mass upsurge', wrote the Kashmiri communist, N.N. Raina. 'On the contrary political activity in 1943-44 had fallen to its lowest ebb ... There was an air of unreality about the whole operation.' Yet the 'New Kashmir' programme, Raina argued, pointed the way for the National Conference and allowed it to establish a mass base, and also found a wider audience for communist ideas. 'By the summer of 1945 the number of copies of *People's War*, [a] weekly run by the C.P.I. sold every week [in Kashmir] reached 270', he wrote. 'This was in addition to about 100 permanent subscribers ... A few tens were communists by conviction and were National Conference office bearers at various levels.'²⁶

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While 'New Kashmir' countenanced the continuance of princely rule in some form, the memorandum the National Conference submitted to a British cabinet mission to India in early 1946 took a more militant tone. In this, the party took strong exception to the terms of the treaty a century earlier, under which a local warlord acquired the Kashmir Valley. It was the treaty which had established Dogra princely rule over the Valley – and the National Conference now demanded what amounted to its annulment: 'We wish to declare that no sale deed however sacrosanct can condemn more than four million men and women to servitude of an autocrat when will to live under this rule is no longer there', Sheikh Abdullah declared in a telegram sent to the cabinet mission while they were in Srinagar. 'People of Kashmir are determined to mould their own destiny and we appeal to Mission to recognise justice and strength of our cause.'²⁷

'Quit Kashmir' was a slogan that resounded around the Valley in the spring of 1946. It was an echo of the Congress's 'Quit India'

campaign of a few years earlier. The target of Kashmir's mass agitation, though, was not the British but their own maharaja. The 'Quit Kashmir' movement seems more formidable in retrospect than it did at the time, and provided no immediate threat to princely rule. Yet it strengthened Sheikh Abdullah's political primacy in the Valley, caught the mood which was increasingly hostile to the maharaja and his family, and wrong-footed rival parties.²⁸ It was arguably the biggest organised political mobilisation the Kashmir Valley had seen – and was the movement that won the attention and applause of Rajani Palme Dutt. The concept of the sovereignty of the people which had been part-expressed in the 'New Kashmir' document was more powerfully achieved on the streets. The maharaja responded to the threat to his rule with repression. Hundreds of National Conference activists were rounded up, and on 20 May 1946, Sheikh Abdullah himself was arrested.

In the face of mass arrests, the communist network helped sustain the larger National Conference as an underground political force. Several leaders of the National Conference, including Sheikh Abdullah's principal lieutenant Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and the leftist G.M. Sadiq, managed to sidestep arrest and reach Lahore. From there, they sought to organise protests and publish party literature. Ghulam Mohiuddin Kara (or Qarra) – a founder member of the National Conference who recounted that in 1942 he had been 'won over to the Communist cause through the Bedis'²⁹ – went underground. Kara has been described by a writer not generally sympathetic to the National Conference as the hero of the moment. 'The Government strained every nerve and spent large sums of money to get him arrested but in vain ... He did not hide just to prevent his imprisonment but sustained the Movement in Srinagar.'³⁰ The American photo-journalist Margaret Bourke-White met Kara at the Bedis' home when she visited Kashmir at the close of 1947 and heard stories, legends perhaps, of his underground heroism, and of his affectionate nickname of 'Bulbul-i-Kashmir', the nightingale of Kashmir.³¹

Women filled some of the vacuum left by the arrest or flight of male leaders, acting as couriers and also seeking to maintain morale and a sense of purpose. Freda Bedi memorably dressed as a local

Muslim woman to enable her to conduct an 'underground messenger service' for the nationalists.³² Kashmiri women gained a prominence and confidence that they had never before attained or sought. 'When [the] male leadership was put behind the bars or driven underground', wrote Krishna Misri, herself a young political activist in Kashmir in the 1940s, 'the women leaders took charge and gave a new direction to the struggle ... However, the leaders addressed no controversial woman-specific issues for they did not want to come across as social rebels.'³³ The leading women activists in Srinagar included the pro-communist Mahmooda Ali Shah, who had graduated from Lahore and was later a pioneer of women's education in Kashmir, as well as Begum Zainab and Sheikh Abdullah's wife, Begum Akbar Jehan.

The Indian communist weekly *People's War* paid little attention to Kashmir, even when the National Conference adopted a socialist policy platform. Its successor *People's Age* made good the omission, championing the 'Quit Kashmir' campaign and lionising Sheikh Abdullah. The CPI's young and popular leader P.C. Joshi described Sheikh Abdullah as 'the wisest and tallest among the State people's leaders'.³⁴ In August 1947, the paper carried a photograph of a 'giant meeting at Hazratbal [outside Srinagar] ... addressed by four underground National Conference workers'. But when the following month, a *People's Age* correspondent reported on a stay of several weeks in Kashmir, the tone was distinctly critical: 'The movement at present is nearly wholly disorganised and among the rank and file workers there is great dissatisfaction and confusion. There is even a danger of disintegration.'³⁵

By then the Raj had ended and British India had been partitioned. Nehru had become the first prime minister of independent India, while Jinnah was governor-general of the new nation of Pakistan. Both were preoccupied by the profound loss of life, communal violence, and mass migration that accompanied a hastily executed partition. In the initial post-Raj weeks, the Kashmir Valley was largely unaffected by communal unrest, but there was great confusion about which nation the state would join. In formal terms, the decision rested with the maharaja. He was torn between Pakistan's greater indulgence of princely rulers and the ties of religion which bound him

(but only a minority of his citizens) more closely to India.³⁶ The maharaja dithered and played for time, and Abdullah and many of his supporters were still in jail as India and Pakistan celebrated independence in mid-August 1947.

Sheikh Abdullah was eventually released on 29 September. The rejoicing crowds that paraded through Srinagar were testament to his popularity and political authority. Within days, Abdullah began to make a case for what can only be regarded as a political militia – a startling novelty in Kashmir which had no militia tradition, and indeed where no Valley Kashmiris had been allowed to serve in the maharaja's army. Addressing a public meeting, Abdullah called for volunteers to come forward to establish a 'peace brigade'. Referring to reports of a possible incursion into Kashmir, he advocated 'a volunteer corps to maintain peace and protect "our hearth and homes", irrespective of creed and community'.³⁷ Whether or not the idea originated with communists, they took on themselves the urgent task of organising the volunteer force.

Two weeks after Sheikh Abdullah called for the establishment of a peace brigade, the invasion of Kashmir he had warned of began. A 'lashkar' or tribal army, ill-disciplined but well armed and numbering several thousand fighters, descended from the tribal agencies bordering Afghanistan. They were pursuing a jihad or holy war – and as well as championing Islam, they were also seeking to claim the Kashmir Valley for Pakistan and (for many the most immediate pre-occupation) to seek booty. The extent of Pakistan's complicity in this raid has been hotly debated and disputed. It is clear that the provincial government in Pakistan's North-West frontier aided and encouraged the invasion, as did some in Pakistan's national government and in the army. Aided by Muslim mutineers within the maharaja's forces, the invaders progressed rapidly, capturing Muzaffarabad, advancing along the Jhelum river, and taking the Valley's second town, Baramulla. There the 'lashkar' looted and raped, and caused an international outcry by ransacking a Catholic convent and mission hospital where three Europeans were among those killed. Although the targets were often non-Muslims, the attackers were indiscriminate in their violence and so lost much of the goodwill they

might have enjoyed as self-proclaimed liberators from Hindu princely rule.

The fall of Baramulla and word of the atrocities committed there caused alarm in Srinagar, just thirty-five miles away on a good and flat road. The maharaja, prompted by the Indian government, fled at night in a long cavalcade of cars across a mountain pass to the city of Jammu. Many Kashmiris saw this as an act of cowardice. Once in Jammu, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession by which his state became part of India. Sheikh Abdullah was quick to endorse Kashmir's union with India, but he recognised that the most urgent task was to repulse the invaders. With the collapse of the state's army and of much of the maharaja's administration, Srinagar was undefended. The Indian government began an ambitious airlift to provide some defence for the Kashmiri capital, but Srinagar's airstrip was so basic it was impossible to land more than three or four hundred troops a day.

On the day the airlift began, Nehru wrote a private letter endorsing the volunteer force Sheikh Abdullah had envisaged. 'We shall be sending you more arms for distribution to the civil population', he told an Indian officer sent as his personal emissary to Srinagar. 'Chosen young men, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, should be given rifles and if possible given some simple training. We must do all this on a non-communal basis inviting everyone to joining in defence but taking care of one major factor – to trust none who might give trouble ... These armed volunteers can well undertake the defence of, and the duty of keeping order in Srinagar and other towns in the Valley ... This would leave our troops for more active work.'³⁸

The following day, newspapers reported 'hundreds of "National Conference" volunteers' in the streets. Two days later, 'several scores of them appeared armed for the first time with standard .303 rifles which a spokesman said they had obtained from "friendly sources"'.³⁹ Sheikh Abdullah reminisced that 'Hindus and Muslims alike were prepared to guard their national honour, having heard about the atrocities inflicted on the innocents by the tribal people ... Girls also joined with the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh boys, and all were strictly ordered to guard the non-Muslim households.'⁴⁰ N.N. Raina, a

prominent Kashmiri communist, gave a sense of the excitement as young Kashmiris enrolled in the militia:

Within a few hours the whole atmosphere in the Valley changed. Young and old started marching, and offering for guard duties on bridges and in bazaars, banks, telephone and telegraph exchanges ... The exhibition ground was used for training and lodging of volunteers, many of whom were from the Srinagar factories, schools and colleges. Gole Bagh was used for training lady volunteers.⁴¹

He recounted that military veterans and others with relevant experience were brought in to train the volunteers, and cars and motorbikes were requisitioned for their transport.

Although Sheikh Abdullah had been named by the maharaja as emergency administrator rather than head of government, he quickly took the reins of power. The presence on the streets of a volunteer force loyal to him was tangible proof that the old princely order had gone. The militia's task was to protect the Kashmiri capital from the Pakistani invaders, and in so doing it buttressed Kashmir's accession to India. Militia members patrolled the streets of Srinagar, and sought to defend the main points of entry to the city. A journalist who travelled round Srinagar by jeep reported: 'Every inlet to the city had its posse of volunteers, some of whom were armed with guns, others with swords and sticks.'⁴² In due course, some militia members accompanied Indian troops, serving as guides and translators and occasionally as combatants. Several members of the militia were killed in the fighting. A few volunteers chose to work undercover in areas that had been captured by the tribesmen. Among these was Maqbool Sherwani, 'an adventurer and a bit showy' in the judgement of his colleague Pran Nath Jalali, who was shot by tribesmen in Baramulla and came to be regarded as a martyred hero of pro-India Kashmiri nationalism.⁴³

While there were many non-communists active in the militia and a few in leading positions within it, the predominance of communists and their sympathisers indicates the influence of the left within the

National Conference. The leftist G.M. Sadiq was often described as the pioneer and leader of the militia. His sister, Begum Zainab, was the guiding force behind the women's corps. The military commander was Said Ahmed Shah, a Muslim also known by the Hindu-style name Sham-ji. Colleagues recall him as largely non-political in outlook. Rajbans Khanna, a young communist intellectual from Lahore and friend of the Sahnis, took a directing role – and in due course married one of the women's militia, Usha Kashyap. The teenage communist Pran Nath Jalali was the militia's political officer, a post which bore an echo, by design or otherwise, of the leftist International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War a decade earlier. He had the task of promoting literacy and political awareness.

Indian army officers provided a modicum of training, as well as some basic equipment. Photographs survive of groups of young Kashmiri men drilling and parading, and taking part in rifle practice. A children's wing was formed, the Bal Sena, and a group of enthusiastic youngsters was photographed drilling with wooden rifles in the centre of Srinagar. The women's militia was not intended for active service. It was a self-defence corps, intended to give Kashmiri women of all communities the chance to defend their homes and honour should Srinagar be occupied. 'For them it was a matter of life and death', one National Conference leader recalled, 'because women and wealth were the most coveted targets of the invaders.'⁴⁴ The women drilled (and on one occasion, were inspected with weapons on display by Nehru) and some learnt how to fire .303 rifles and throw grenades. 'When my instructor shot the first fire, we were so scared we ran away', recalled Krishna Misri, who was fifteen years old when she enrolled in the women's militia.⁴⁵ The members also helped with relief work for the thousands of refugees created by the advent of the tribal army and the ensuing panic.

National Conference leaders suggested that as many as 10,000 young Kashmiris enlisted in the militia. This was probably an exaggeration, but many hundreds certainly joined up in what was initially known as the Bachau Fauj (Protection Force). While they contributed to the repulse of the raiders, their military role was not crucial. Their part in maintaining morale and in confirming Sheikh Abdullah's

political ascendancy was more emphatic. The tribesmen advanced to the outskirts of Srinagar. The capital was without power, fuel and newspapers and supplies of food and cooking oil were limited. But the attackers had not expected to face the might of the Indian army, supported from the air, and within two weeks of the beginning of the airlift Indian troops had secured Srinagar and repulsed the tribal forces to the edges of the Kashmir Valley. The maharaja was still the nominal ruler of Kashmir, but his state forces were almost non-existent and his authority in the Valley was minimal.

The success of the militia, both in attracting public support and in bolstering the National Conference's public standing, appears to have emboldened communists to act more openly. They argued that the volunteer force, which was largely restricted to Srinagar, should be extended across the state and given an explicit political purpose. 'Our people should feel convinced that they are not fighting merely for the continuance of the old oppressive order but their own freedom', stated an open letter from the communist group in the National Conference written at the end of October 1947, when the Kashmiri capital was still imperilled by the invaders. 'On the basis of this consciousness we should be able to build a patriotic People's Militia which can launch political as well as military offensives to defeat the politico-military offensive of the enemy. We should be able to organise a network of Village Defence Committees, and thousands of Village Militia Units in every corner of the state.'⁴⁶

The communist press echoed the demand for an effective militia and gloried in its reported successes. At the same time as the communists delivered their open message, the *People's Age* declared that Kashmir's 'freedom fight' could not rely simply on the Indian army. It would require 'the mobilization and active participation of the entire following of the National Conference, of the entire common people of Kashmir and Jammu. It will be necessary to arm the entire mass with whatever weapons one can get, to organise a popular guerrilla warfare against the raiders.'⁴⁷ This call to arms was a new direction for the CPI, which for much of the Second World War supported the allied war effort and was thus opposed to the most formidable of Indian wartime irregular forces, the Japan-aligned Indian National

Army. It was, however, not a call for an insurgency against the Indian state, but for a militia which operated in the name of a non-communist party and alongside the Indian army.

The following week, the communist weekly reported on the mobilisation and activities of the Bachao Fauj, which it said, with boundless optimism, numbered 25,000 volunteers. Later in the month, the *People's Age* gave over its front-page to a series of photographs of the militia under the headline: 'Kashmiris Resist'. An accompanying article recounted that 'these kids who rouse their whole mohalla [district] with the spirit of resistance, come every day to the headquarters demanding jobs to do, and, of course, rifles to fight the enemy with'. It also published a letter from Srinagar (apparently written by Usha Kashyap, though her name was not given) giving a sense of the political energy in the air: 'I am writing this letter to you from the Paladium [sic] Cinema which is our headquarters now', she wrote, supposedly to relatives in Bombay. 'Down below at the crossing, thousands of Kashmiris are always mounting guard with their rifles. The whole city is mad with joy ... Today four of us girls will be taught the use of rifles. Tomorrow we may be sent to the ... front as field-nurses.'⁴⁸

The next issue reported the pushing back of the invaders and the taking by the Indian army of the key town of Baramulla – which meant the lifting of the danger to the Kashmiri capital. The following week, the *People's Age* devoted two pages to photographs of women members of the militia: 'For the first time on the soil of India is there being built an army of women, trained to use the rifle and other modern weapons of war', the paper declared with rhetorical flourish, though it was certainly justified in pointing out the striking innovation of arming and training women volunteers, all the more remarkable in a conservative, mainly Muslim princely state. 'The women in Kashmir are the first in India to build an army of women trained to use the rifle. By their example they have made Indian history, filled our chests with pride, raised our country's banner higher among the great nations of the world.'⁴⁹ The prominence in the women's self-defence corps of communist sympathisers, among them Mahmooda Ali Shah, Begum Zainab and Sajida Malik, again underlines the role of the left in leading and directing this citizen's militia.⁵⁰

Alongside the armed militia, a Cultural Front was instituted, with again communists in leading positions – largely to conduct propaganda against the tribal raiders and in favour of Sheikh Abdullah and his radical policy programme. Simple dramas, what would later be called agitprop pieces, were hastily devised and performed: ‘We used to go to the front and play the local themes’, recalled Usha Kashyap; ‘how these raiders, they’ve come to only kill Hindus, they were doing all sorts, molesting women and all that. And those plays used to be a big, big hit ... And my name turned into, instead of Usha, Ayesha, Muslim name. And they loved me.’⁵¹

‘In Battle-Scarred Kashmir A People’s Theatre Is Born’ read a headline in the *People’s Age*.⁵² The article reported that the first two dramas had been written and ‘are being rapidly rehearsed’, both dwelling on the heroism of the militia volunteers. One told the story of Maqbool Sherwani, the motorcycling militia man who had been shot dead by the raiders in Baramulla. The other was entitled ‘Sara’, portrayed as a ‘true story’ of a young Kashmiri woman who offered to cook for the raiders when they entered her village but instead informed on them:

And in a short while, the volunteers of the National Militia were on the spot. They stormed the house, captured the raiders before they knew what to do. The Chief of the raiders tried to take advantage of the confusion to make good his escape from the back of the house. But Sara had her eyes on him. Hardly had he gone a few yards when she shot him with her own revolver.

Usha Kashyap played the lead role in the drama, which had been written by ‘a young Kashmiri writer’.

In a later issue of the *People’s Age*, Usha Kashyap wrote that the renowned writer K.A. Abbas attended an early performance of ‘Sara’ in Srinagar. Abbas was not a Kashmiri, but recorded in his autobiography how he was determined to join other progressive cultural figures in Srinagar and, with Nehru’s help, got a place on a plane while the emergency was at its height. At Srinagar’s airstrip, Abbas was met by a young Kashmiri Pandit, D.P. Dhar – a communist worker,

according to the *People's Age* – who later became a political figure of great influence in Delhi. Abbas recalled Dhar as ‘a handsome young Kashmiri’ who ‘carried a rifle slung over his shoulder ... who seemed to be doing a dozen things – from training Kashmiri boatmen and farmers into a militia to keep track of the infiltrators who were still prowling about the valley, and looking after the intellectuals who were coming in every day’.

Abbas recalled that an array of leftist writers and artists had assembled in Srinagar. ‘The atmosphere reminded one of Spain and the International Brigade where, it was said, writers had come to live their books, and poets had come to die for their poetry!’⁵³ The International Brigaders in Spain were of course outsiders who fought in solidarity with the Spanish struggle against fascism and Abbas and many others were similarly displaying solidarity with a cause with which they identified strongly but which was not entirely their own. India had not won its independence on the battlefield, but the battle for Kashmir just weeks after independence day became a rallying point for young progressive nationalists. It also became a focus for their creative work in later months and years. Mulk Raj Anand and K.S. Duggal, among others, wrote about the Kashmiri nationalist struggle. Leftist actors and filmmakers worked together to produce in 1949 ‘Kashmir Toofan Mei’ (Storm Over Kashmir), a documentary film about the tribal raid and the popular response to it. K.A. Abbas and Balraj Sahni both played key roles in determining how Kashmir came to be depicted in Indian cinema and culture.⁵⁴

The presence of artistic talent also shaped the visual depiction of the Kashmir movement. Madanjeet Singh, a photographer and painter, was among those who headed to Kashmir, in spite of his looming final exams at Delhi Polytechnic. He had been invited ‘to build the National Cultural front in Srinagar to strengthen Kashmir’s secular culture and help in resisting the invaders’. He recalled that D.P. Dhar and B.P.L. Bedi were the main patrons of the Cultural Front, and found that several Kashmiri poets and writers – notably the ‘coolie poet’ Aasi – were also actively engaged in the movement.⁵⁵ Some of Madanjeet’s photographs of the militia appeared in the communist *People's Age*. When a few months later the Kashmir

Bureau of Information put out a well illustrated propaganda pamphlet entitled *Kashmir Defends Democracy*, it was graced by a striking cover designed by Sobha Singh, then a young progressive and much later in life renowned for his portraits of the Sikh gurus. This combined a photograph of the women's defence corps with a dramatic outline in red of a Kashmiri woman lying and taking aim with a rifle (a portrayal of a Kashmiri Muslim milkwoman known as Zuni). In design and iconography, as well as in political message, it was a bold progressive statement.⁵⁶

The guiding role within the militia of communists and their supporters, however, attracted the attention of their rivals. To judge by the account of N.N. Raina, the authorities in Delhi took fright at the extent of communist influence. Early in 1948, Raina asserted, Sheikh Abdullah's deputy, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, took control of the militia 'virtually through a coup ... and put it under commanders supplied by the Indian Army. Communists were made uncomfortable by various provocations.'⁵⁷ Certainly, in the course of 1948, the militia's independence was curtailed and it never became the people's militia that the left had envisaged.

The Popular Front style of politics pursued by communists in Kashmir also fell victim to an abrupt change of line by the Communist Party of India. In December 1947, the central committee turned sharply to the left, denounced as 'opportunism' the policy of seeking to work alongside Congress and influence the Nehru government, and called for struggle against the 'national bourgeois leadership'. Two months later, at its second congress, the CPI removed P.C. Joshi and installed a hardliner, B.T. Ranadive, as party leader. In a key speech, the party's policy of supporting Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference was condemned. The new emphasis was on revolutionary struggle, and particularly on supporting the rural uprising in Telengana in another princely state, Hyderabad.⁵⁸ The building of influence within progressive non-communist parties was rejected.

In his early years in power, however, Sheikh Abdullah established a reputation for radicalism. One of his first acts was to rename Srinagar's main square as Lal Chowk (Red Square).⁵⁹ The echo of

Moscow was unmistakable – and the name has endured to this day. A much more substantial achievement was the execution in the early 1950s of the most far-reaching land reform in modern India, seeing through the most ambitious of the policy proposals in the ‘New Kashmir’ manifesto. About half of the state’s arable land was taken away from large and medium-size landlords within the initial two years of the scheme, creating hundreds of thousands of peasant proprietors. The main beneficiaries were poor Muslim villagers in the Kashmir Valley. Land redistribution secured Sheikh Abdullah’s power base for a generation and is seen as his enduring political success.

More generally, Sheikh Abdullah was more successful as a political mobiliser than as a statesman or administrator. There had been little in the way of representative institutions in princely Kashmir, and while Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference used the rhetoric of democracy they were not by instinct pluralist in their outlook. Once settled in power, Sheikh Abdullah became something of an autocrat and his critics complained of intolerance and repression. Among the communists who initially surrounded Sheikh Abdullah, B.P.L. Bedi was given a post in charge of propaganda, but after a while there was a parting of the ways. Ghulam Mohiuddin Kara, the hero of the Quit Kashmir movement, broke more decisively and set up his own political party. Pran Nath Jalali found that his growing disillusionment with Sheikh Abdullah’s administration, and concern about corruption and abuse of power, was compounded by the indifference of the CPI national leadership. He came to Delhi to talk to communist leaders but found that they were ‘busy with their own revolution those days ... I came to the conclusion they were not interested in building up a movement [in Kashmir], and the type of movement they wanted, I wasn’t interested.’⁶⁰

Sheikh Abdullah’s personalised style of governance, and the change of outlook by the CPI, together greatly weakened the influence of communists. At the same time, his radicalism and authoritarianism, and the legacy of his close association with communists, aroused deep misgivings among those inimical to the Soviet Union. Josef Korbelt came to South Asia in 1948 as the Czechoslovak member of the five nation UN Commission for India and Pakistan. When a few years

later he wrote *Danger in Kashmir*, the peril he had in mind was the sort of Soviet-style communism which had taken root in his home country. He regarded Sheikh Abdullah as 'an opportunist and, worse, a dictator', and expressed the fear 'that Kashmir might eventually become a hub of Communist activities in Southern Asia'.⁶¹

A similar argument was expressed by local critics of Sheikh Abdullah. In 1952, a pamphlet entitled *Rise of Communism in Kashmir* rehearsed how the left was using Sheikh Abdullah as a 'catspaw' as they prepared to capture power.⁶² The following year Sheikh Abdullah was removed from office as Kashmir's prime minister, largely because India's national government came to regard him as unreliable on the issue of the permanence of the state's accession to India. Concerns about communist influence continued to reverberate. An opposition group asserted that G.M. Sadiq, the most high profile communist sympathiser, had great influence in the new state government and that there were several other communist ministers. '[If] no immediate steps are taken to nip the evil', it warned, 'Kashmir may be lost to Communism.'⁶³

In 1955, the Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin travelled to Srinagar during a visit to India. It was a public demonstration of Soviet support for Kashmir's still disputed union with India – the 'Russians are the first great power to have definitely and clearly gone on record as accepting the accession of Kashmir to India as final', Kashmir's constitutional head of state told Nehru.⁶⁴ In the following decade, G.M. Sadiq served as chief minister, still pro-Soviet by faction and inclination, but successful above all because he was Delhi's candidate. The steady erosion of Kashmir's autonomy, and Delhi's persistent interference and rigging of elections, prepared the way for the separatist insurgency that erupted in 1989. Some Kashmiris sought independence, others wanted to become part of Islamic Pakistan – but disaffection with Indian rule was evident across the Valley. Over the following two decades, at least 40,000 people, more than one in a hundred of the Valley's adult population, died in the conflict between Pakistan-backed militants and Indian security forces.

Over that time, communists have had little visible presence in Kashmir. Many of the youthful communists who enrolled in the

volunteer militia remained loyal to the ideology all their lives. Yet at the time of writing (in the summer of 2009), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has a solitary member of the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly. Sheikh Abdullah's grandson is chief minister of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, at the helm of the National Conference and governing in alliance with Congress. But the strand of militant, pro-India secular nationalism that the Kashmiri communists of the 1940s espoused now has limited resonance. The shifting sands of Kashmiri politics, however, should not be allowed to obscure the substantial role of communists in giving a radical complexion to Kashmiri nationalism in the crucial decade of the 1940s, securing popular support towards ending princely rule and taking up arms in defence of a secular, democratic Kashmir.

Notes

1. Rajani Palme Dutt, 'Travel Notes No. 5', *Labour Monthly*, 28/10, October 1946, pp319-26. The 'Indian States' refers to the princely states which had not been fully incorporated into British India. I am grateful to Ajit Bhattacharjea, Sumantra Bose, Suchetana Chattopadhyay and Matthew Worley for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.
2. Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959, pp240-4.
3. Sheikh Abdulla [sic], 'Not Guilty', *Labour Monthly*, 28/10, October 1946, pp311-14.
4. Dutt's life and career is detailed in John Callaghan, *Rajani Palme Dutt: A Study in British Stalinism*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993.
5. Dutt persistently referred to Sheikh Abdullah's party as the People's Conference – apparently confusing the National Conference with another body in which Sheikh Abdullah was prominent, the All-India States People's Conference, which sought to represent the subjects of princely India and was aligned with the Indian National Congress.
6. Overstreet and Windmiller, pp241, 244.
7. Of the many modern histories of Kashmir, among the best is

- Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2003. An engagingly polemical version is Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, London: Verso, 2002, pp217-52.
8. Ajit Bhattacharjea, *Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah: Tragic Hero of Kashmir*, New Delhi: Roli, 2008, pp29, 42-3, 48.
 9. C. Bilqees Taseer, *The Kashmir of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah*, Lahore: Ferozsons, 1986.
 10. Balraj Sahni, *Balraj Sahni: an autobiography*, Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1979, p143.
 11. Freda Bedi, *Behind the Mud Walls*, Lahore: Unity Publishers, [1947], p1.
 12. Taseer, *The Kashmir of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah*, p38.
 13. Pran Nath Jalali interview, Delhi, 11 April 2007. Audio recordings and transcripts of interviews have been deposited in the archive of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London (accession OA3).
 14. Kabir Bedi, personal communication, April 2007. Freda Bedi later became a senior Buddhist woman religious. B.P.L. Bedi also turned to religion in later life, in his case to the faith he was born into, Sikhism.
 15. Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, Cultural and Political*, Srinagar: Gulshan, 2003 (first published c1953), p421. Accounts of these small groups can be found in Asifa Jan, *Naya Kashmir: An Appraisal*, Srinagar: Zeba, 2006; N.N. Raina, *Kashmir Politics and Imperialist Manoeuvres, 1846-1980*, New Delhi: Patriot, 1988.
 16. Sandeep Bamzai, *Bonfire of Kashmiriyat: Deconstructing the Accession*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2006, p106. The author makes extensive use of official documents in his family's possession assembled by his grandfather, K.N. Bamzai, a Kashmiri Hindu who was a close confidante of Nehru.
 17. Pran Nath Jalali interview, Delhi, 30 March 2007.
 18. Jan, *Naya Kashmir*, pp73-4.
 19. According to his son, Sadiq came into contact with communist intellectuals while a student in Lahore in the 1930s and was one of the points of contact with Punjabi communists during the repression of the mid-1940s. Rafiq Sadiq interview in the *Kashmir Sentinel*, February 2003.

20. Mohan Lal Misri interview, Faridabad, 12 June 2007; Mahmooda Ahmed Ali Shah interview, Srinagar, 18 June 2007.
21. Prem Nath Bazaz, p422.
22. Maulana Masoodi quoted in Jan, *Naya Kashmir*, p78.
23. Pran Nath Jalali interview, Delhi, 30 March 2007.
24. Bose, *Kashmir*, p25.
25. *New Kashmir*, New Delhi: Kashmir Bureau of Information, n.d., pp7, 12.
26. Raina, *Kashmir Politics*, pp121, 125.
27. *Kashmir On Trial*, Lahore: Lion Press, 1947, p224.
28. The Quit Kashmir campaign has been described by one historian as 'something of a flop', largely because major disturbances were confined to four towns: Srinagar, Anantnag, Pampur and Sopore – see Ian Copland, 'The Abdullah Factor: Kashmiri Muslims and the crisis of 1947', in D.A. Low (ed.), *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan*, London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 218-54. This seems a harsh judgement.
29. Taseer, *The Kashmir of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah*, pp174-9.
30. Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, Lahore: Ferozsons, vol 1, 1977, p686.
31. Margaret Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom: A Report on the New India*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949, p200.
32. Ibid, p201.
33. Krishna Misri, 'Kashmiri Women Down the Ages: A Gender Perspective', *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, 6/34, 2002, pp3-27.
34. *People's Age*, 13 April 1947.
35. *People's Age*, 7 September 1947.
36. For contrasting accounts of the origins of the Kashmir crisis in 1947, see Andrew Whitehead, *A Mission in Kashmir*, New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2007; Alastair Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: The Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute, 1947-48*, Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1997; and Prem Shankar Jha, *Kashmir 1947: The Origins of a Dispute*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
37. *Times of India*, 9 October 1947.
38. Nehru to Hiralal Atal, 27 October 1947, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal*

- Nehru*, 2/4, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, pp283-6.
39. *The Times*, 28, 29 and 31 October 1947.
40. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, *Flames of the Chinar: An Autobiography*, New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 1993, pp93-4.
41. Raina, *Kashmir Politics*, p152
42. *Statesman*, 8 November 1947.
43. For an early telling of the Maqbool Sherwani story, see Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom*, pp210-11. His death was the inspiration for a novel by Mulk Raj Anand, *Death of a Hero: Epitaph for Maqbool Sherwani*, first published in 1963. The mythologising of his life is discussed in Whitehead, *A Mission in Kashmir*, pp212-7.
44. Mir Qasim, *My Life and Times*, Bombay, 1992, p37.
45. Krishna Misri (nee Zardoo) interview, Faridabad, 26 May 2007.
46. Raina, *Kashmir Politics*, p156.
47. *People's Age*, 2 November 1947.
48. *People's Age*, 23 November 1947.
49. *People's Age*, 7 December 1947.
50. The women's self-defence corps is discussed briefly in Nyla Ali Khan, *Islam, Women and Violence in Kashmir: Between India and Pakistan*, New Delhi: Tulika, 2009, pp118-23.
51. Usha Khanna (nee Kashyap), telephone interview, 31 August 2008.
52. *People's Age*, 21 December 1947.
53. Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, *I Am Not an Island: An Experiment in Autobiography*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1977, pp304-6.
54. I am grateful to Meenu Gaur for her expert observations about the progressive cultural movement and Kashmir, which is discussed in her coming University of London doctoral thesis.
55. Madanjeet Singh, *The Sasia Story*, Lalitpur, Nepal: UNESCO/Himalmedia, 2006, pp48-54. There are also photographs of the Cultural Front and its productions in Usha R. Khanna, *The Making of Samovar*, Worli, India: Spenta Multimedia, [n.d.], pp8, 11.
56. *Kashmir Defends Democracy*, Delhi: Kashmir Bureau of Information, [c1948].
57. Raina, *Kashmir Politics*, p160
58. Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, pp265-74.

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59. *Times of India*, 8 November 1947; *Hindustan Times*, 12 November 1947.
60. Jalali interview, 30 March 2007.
61. Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, pp97, 198, 207. The book was first published in 1954.
62. *Rise of Communism in Kashmir*, Delhi: Kashmir Democratic Union, 1952, pp31-2. The author, who was probably either Prem Nath Bazaz or an associate, suggested that there was a sharp rift in Kashmiri communism along religious lines, with rival factions lead by N.N. Raina and G.M. Kara.
63. Jagan Nath Sathu, *Red Menace in Kashmir*, Delhi: Kashmir Democratic Union, [c1954].
64. Karan Singh to Nehru, 11 December 1955, in Jawaid Alam (editor), *Jammu and Kashmir 1949-64: Select Correspondence Between Jawaharlal Nehru and Karan Singh*, New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2006, pp182-3.