



EAST INDIA : WAZIRISTAN

# TRIBAL DISTURBANCES IN WAZIRISTAN

(25th November, 1936—14th June, 1937)

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It will be convenient first to summarise briefly the events which led up to the outbreak of the disturbances and which have marked their course, so far as they are relevant to an appreciation of the underlying causes.

In 1935 the Tori Khel tribe in North Waziristan entered into an agreement that in return for an increase in their allowances they would permit full access to the Khaisora Valley, and give no harbourage to outlaws or persons hostile to Government. In 1936 a Tori Khel mullah called the Faqir of Ipi (a place in the Tochi Valley) was active in stirring up unrest in connection with the case of a minor Hindu girl alleged to have been converted to Islam; a Mohammedan was put on trial (and subsequently convicted) at Bannu, on a charge of kidnapping this girl, and at the same time the girl's parents brought a civil suit for her restoration to their guardianship. In April, 1936, the Faqir collected a tribal *lashkar* in the Khaisora Valley in order to bring pressure on the authorities in Bannu in connection with these cases. The dispersal of the *lashkar* was secured by the intervention of the political authorities. The Faqir took refuge in the Lower Khaisora, where he continued his propaganda, accusing the Government of interference with religion and seeking to make capital out of the case of the Hindu girl and also out of that of the Shahidgunj Mosque at Lahore. This is an old and unused Mosque in the grounds of a Sikh Gurdwara; when the Sikhs to whom control of it had passed in 1762 and whose ownership of it had been confirmed in the Courts, started to demolish it in 1935, the incident led to prolonged rioting between the Muslim and Sikh communities.

In September, 1936, in the civil case regarding the Hindu girl an appellate order was passed by the Judicial Commissioner (the highest judicial authority in the North-West Frontier Province) consigning her to the custody of her Hindu parents. The Faqir thereupon intensified his efforts to arouse religious excitement both among the Wazirs and the Mahsuds. In order to restrain these dangerous activities, endeavours were made to induce the Tori Khel to expel him, but the leading men in the tribe, while admitting their responsibility, professed themselves to be unable to control him unless Government made some demonstration in accordance with the rights secured by the 1935 agreement. It was accordingly decided to march troops through the area. This demonstration march took place on 25th November, but, in spite of the professions which had been made, it was strongly opposed and casualties were suffered by our troops. Accordingly it became necessary to undertake military

operations in the Tori Khel country. These were soon concluded and on 15th January, 1937, a settlement was made with the tribe, as a result of which it was hoped that peaceful conditions had been restored.

The anti-Government propaganda of the Faqir, however, still continued. The Tori Khel failed to expel him from Aرسال Kot in the Shaktu Valley, which he had made his headquarters, and hostile *lashkars* and gangs, largely Tori Khel, continued to operate in their country. Moreover, on 6th February, Captain J. A. Keogh of the South Waziristan Scouts was murdered in Mahsud country, and on 7th February Lieutenant R. N. Beatty, Officiating Assistant Political Agent, North Waziristan, when proceeding up the Tochi to pay khassadars (tribal levies), was ambushed on the road and murdered, together with some of his tribal escort, by a gang of Madda Khel tribesmen. These events stimulated still further the tribal unrest which, owing to the activities of the Faqir, was spreading in various parts of the country. A series of outrages took place. There were numerous raids into administered and protected areas in which British subjects were kidnapped and life and property were destroyed. It may be mentioned that during the period of the disturbances the total number of raids into the administered districts and protected areas, including roads, has been approximately 29, in which 31 persons have been kidnapped (23 Hindus, 7 Mohammedans and 1 Sikh), 10 Hindu civilians have been killed, about 60 Hindu shops and houses have been looted or burnt, a large number of cattle and sheep have been carried off and several lorries have been looted and destroyed.

In the period following the Keogh and Beatty murders frequent attacks were also made on our forces and communications, culminating in the attack on 9th April on a convoy in the Shahur Tangi, between Jandola and Sarwekai. During this period every effort was made to restore peace and order by means of political pressure and by negotiations with the Tori Khel and the Utmanzai Wazirs (of whom the Tori Khel are a section). Eventually, however, as the Tori Khel failed to give assurances for the good behaviour of the Faqir or to expel him from their country, it proved necessary again to undertake military operations against the tribal forces in that area, which consisted partly of Tori Khel and partly of bodies of hostiles from other tribes. These operations lasted from 23rd April till the beginning of June, and in the course of them Aرسال Kot was occupied, though the Faqir fled and remains in hiding. On 5th June a suspension of hostilities was granted to the Tori Khel at their request and on their undertaking to desist from hostilities, to make themselves responsible for the hostile individuals in their country, not to allow the Faqir to return to their limits and to release kidnapped Hindus. The question of permanent terms of settlement is

under consideration. Discussions are now also proceeding with the Mahsud sections, members of which have been prominent in the hostile *lashkars*.

The primary and underlying causes of the disturbances may be analysed as follows:—(1) The primary cause has been the anti-Government and anti-Hindu propaganda of the Faqir who has based his appeal to the ignorant and credulous tribesmen on the allegation that Islam is in danger. (2) The more youthful and turbulent elements in the tribes (to whom the unrest has for the most part been confined) are rendered receptive to such propaganda by the religious excitability and impatience of any control which always actuate them. The Maliks (leading men of the tribe) have in the majority of cases endeavoured to exercise control, but they have been powerless against the religious appeal. (3) Moreover, these less responsible and more excitable elements, who have little to lose and have found the recent prolonged period of peace in Waziristan irksome, have welcomed the chance of trying conclusions with the Government forces, and have also been influenced by the hope of securing rifles and other loot. (4) There has been dissatisfaction, especially among the Tori Khel, with the existing internal distribution of the allowances which are paid to a tribe by Government and are designed to give them a stake in the maintenance of peace and order. (5) Lastly, there appears to have been some feeling among the tribesmen that the constitutional changes in India indicated weakness on the part of the Government.

The casualties sustained by British and Indian troops during the period from 25th November, 1936, to 9th June, 1937, apart from personnel evacuated through sickness, are shown in the following table:—

	<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
British Officers ... ..	13	15
British Other Ranks ... ..	17	55
Indian Officers ... ..	4	11
Indian Other Ranks ... ..	129	359
Total ... ..	163	440

The total number of fighting men of all arms engaged is approximately 32,000 Regular Troops and 5,000 Irregulars (Tochi and South Waziristan Scouts). The number of casualties sustained by the fighting tribesmen is not known with certainty, but the number of killed and seriously wounded is estimated at approximately 720 and 660 respectively. So far as has been substantiated, no casualties are known to have been caused to non-combatants, though some unverified reports have been received that a few were injured in areas of danger from which the inhabitants had been ordered to remove themselves.

As regards air action against villages, it should be explained that, apart from action by our aircraft against tribal forces actually engaged in hostilities, it has on occasion been found necessary in the conditions which prevail on the frontier to employ air action of the following kinds (after due warning in each case so as to avoid casualties), with a view to obviating the necessity of more elaborate military operations, which would inevitably involve casualties. These types of air action are— (a) action against villages (which are in effect the forts and headquarters of the tribal forces) either to prevent their use by tribal forces or for a short defined period to cause damage to buildings as a penalty for specific outrages; (b) the proscription of small defined areas; in such cases all the inhabitants, their families and livestock are ordered to evacuate the area, the object being either to reinforce political pressure against offending sections or to make it possible to attack hostile forces in the area without risk to non-combatants; in each case convenient and adjacent asylums outside the proscribed area are available for the non-combatants; (c) the air blockade of the territory of a hostile section (naturally small in extent), the object being to exclude the offending tribesmen from their villages and from the use of their usual amenities and the interruption of their normal habits of life until they comply with specified terms. An air blockade applies to the whole territory of a section, and its use is similar to the proscription of an area, except that specified terms are declared compliance with which will secure the cessation of the blockade. Air blockade in this sense has not been used in the course of the present disturbances, though there has been some confusion in Press reports between it and the proscription of areas.

It must be emphasised again that these three types of action are chosen with a view to the avoidance of casualties and not to causing them, and that action is invariably preceded by the distribution of notices which set out the reason and nature of the action to be taken and warn the tribesmen to keep themselves and their families out of the areas of danger which are clearly defined; air action does not begin till a sufficient period has elapsed to allow the area of danger to be evacuated and the inhabitants to find safe refuge in the neighbourhood, and experience shows that they do in fact find it in caves or the territories of neighbouring sections. During the course of the recent troubles, apart from the use of (b) above, air action of the type described under (a) has been taken against the following villages:—Arsal Kot (on 31st December and 1st January), which was harbouring the Faqir; three villages of the Madda Khel (on 10th, 11th, 23rd and 24th March), which were guilty of harbouring the murderers of Lieutenant Beatty; a village in the neighbourhood of Spinwam post (10th-12th April), which had been guilty of hostile action against the latter; a village in

Mahsud country (17th-19th April), which had been guilty of an attack on Tiarza Scout post, and four villages in Bhattani country (1st and 2nd and 12th-14th June), which had been guilty of harbouring raiders and kidnappers. As a result of the warnings given no loss of life, so far as is known, was caused in villages, but there was some destruction of buildings, this being the object of the action taken; and in the open in proscribed areas there was some loss of livestock and some casualties to hostile tribesmen who remained in the areas in defiance of the warning orders issued.

The authorities in India have at present under their consideration the question of the permanent terms of settlement with the sections which have been guilty of the recent disturbances or whose members have participated therein. The standing object of the general policy of the Government of India in regard to the frontier is to preserve the peace of the border and to foster good relations with the tribes with a view to their gradual pacification, civilisation and economic betterment.