

RESTRICTED

# BRIEF NOTE

ON

## OPERATION 'GIBRALTOR'

By :

*Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan*

RESTRICTED

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BRIEF NOTE ON OPERATION "GIBRALTER"

This is a brief appreciation of the famous operation "Gibraltar". I had access to quite some information, first hand, as I had on my own associated myself with the operation right from its preparatory stage till the fateful end. Having seen through it I was constrained to put on record these observations for reasons quite understandable.

There was, at that time, no time to advance any counter arguments to those justifying such haphazard action that ultimately jeopardised our national approach, interest and even zeal for resolving that basic issue. Many a fundamental questions still remain to be answered. Why was it so ill-planned; why no allowance was made for enemy reaction; why did it not provoke any local uprising in the occupied territory as was expected; how was it that the enemy knew of this plan well ahead and had instructed the defence forces to let the 'infiltrators' come in unobstructed; why no worth-the-name political leadership on both sides of the cease-fire line was not even told what was happening not to speak of taking them into confidence rather associating them with the action even after it had been launched; why was the leadership of this side kept deliberately at a distance from it and why were the Kashmiris blamed of non-cooperation for the drastic draw-backs of the plan itself; why fake, fictitious and fabricated news of victory and success of the operation was so over publicised here in the country; why was it deliberately left open for the enemy to move into Hajipoor Pass while it was duly brought to the notice of the Command and could very very easily be preempted and averted and why even the ordinary matter like logistics was simply ignored? Looked into in detail it would not at all be accepted as any purposeful military operation no more than a mere childish affair.

However these are the questions that arise only if the very intentions were not doubted. Or else one has yet to know as to who conceived that plan, where was it hatched and what after all were the motives behind it? There are strong conflicting opinions on that also but this appreciation did not take into account all that. It is based on the assumption of honesty of purpose and drawbacks in the plan from the military point of view and a pragmatic appraisal only. Otherwise people like late Ch.

Mohammad Ali, a man of known probity and soundness of his meticulous views held a view altogether different and believed in the very malafide of the intention, which he discussed with me directly and there seemed to be quite good logic and wisdom in it. According to him the plan was conceived and hatched in a world renound capital for the sole purpose of causing final disappointment by defeating the last hope of the people both in Kashmir and Pakistan, to secure freedom of Kashmir by war. One can hardly doubt Ch. Mohammad Ali but even if it be considered going a bit too far one thing is of course undeniable. The way this failure was explained. Entire stress has been 'we have fought twice for Kashmir risking Pakistan itself but the Kashmiris did not come up to the mark; what else can we do and how long can we risk this country for the sake of Kashmir'. This argument caught up the country like the jungle fire and finally disappointed all and sundry in any future adventure or sincere effort. This is exactly the view that was held by late Ch. Mohammad Ali.

Incidently as there was a lot of bitterness existing between the Federal Government and myself this document is tinged a little with that colour also. In 1968, however, I was required by Field Marshal Mohammad Ayyub Khan to discuss the paper with the then C-in-C and some others but I refused to do so as it would have only added to bitterness and frustration that would in turn only strengthen the enemy hands.

Sd/- (Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan)

PRESIDENT

Azad Jammu and Kashmir

.....March 1987

PRAGMATIC APPRAISAL OF OPERATION  
"GIBRALTER"

Although, despite my sincere longing since after the cease-fire in 1965, it is very late yet pressed by the sense of national duty, I wish to put on record my appreciation of the experiment in 1965 and the consequential effects that may have far-reaching reflection on any future planning that we may undertake to execute. The information contained is based on my direct knowledge of the facts and would be corroborated by any impartial inquiry or research whenever made. Therefore, I wish that the note may please be read in that spirit and no other motive whatsoever be attached to it. A dispassionate analysis only would explain the motive and the significance of my effort that I know, under the circumstances (prevailing in and around 1965), could also be misconstrued causing unpleasantness.

If considered in the prospective of honest motive only, to me, our action in 1965 could possibly have a dual purpose; one, a test of strength of the armies facing each other and two, in the least, to revive the Kashmir issue so as to drag it closer to a possible solution by making it difficult for India to remain inside Kashmir. I would, however, discuss the matter with regard to this second part and point out certain salient features of lapses and omissions which if avoided may vouchsafe success of any future venture.

While writing it out, it has always been at the back of my mind, that by admitted habit, we defend our guilt and not only that we insist that a certain wrong act was the only correct recourse but also if we cannot get away with it, as a last resort, we throw the burden on some one else's shoulders. This had always resulted in conceiving incorrect conclusions for future reference and planning. There is hardly a person who would admit his guilt and would like to be corrected. Kashmir operation is mainly a display of this characteristic.

To my knowledge, whenever in Kashmir, we had a reversal the Kashmiris alone were blamed for it and the actual causes never taken into account. There was always the fallacious and misleading notion propagated, to our worst disadvantage, that the Kashmiris did not act positively and objectively. As no information to the contrary is admitted, every one is infested with this depressing idea on one hand

and those actually responsible for the disaster are, instead of punishment, usually awarded and rewarded as heroes, on the other. Then whatever little good had been achieved elsewhere, the clever Indian propaganda always puts Alice into wonder land; it turns our victories into defeats and its own defeats into victory. This process is bound to have, in our people, its highly depressing effects which would disfigure our entire thinking and take the wind out of our sails - an object that evidently is inherent in the process. It is stranger still that this feature is found as a common characteristic in both the operations of 1948 and 1965. Strange that the lapse of a quarter of a century did not make any difference with us.

The actual causes of our bitter failures here and there are generally so minor that, with a bit of careful regard of the obvious and unavoidable factors while planning, could have avoided many a possible show down. Certain faults could even be rectified during the action itself. A careful scrutiny of these causes, if undertaken, would make things easier for us and give a new image to this mutilated figure provided there is the desire to face facts and reshape the future accordingly with sincerity of purpose.

Spreading it out on to a bigger canvas, it would appear that little or no attention was paid to the geographical and psychological aspects of the people on either side of the cease-fire line. This would always be complementary to failure of any high sounding operation, prepared in cosy control room. Similarly no attention was paid to counter balance the enemy's preponderance in arms and manpower. This statement would, to some extent, provide answers to some such questions without myself embarking, unnecessarily, upon authorship of a positive plan vis-a-vis the drawbacks pointed out. However, I am, with an unflinching faith, an antagonist to the idea that we cannot fight India in Kashmir or that the conflict cannot be localised. For those believing, honestly, in the otherwise, it was always a product of fear-cum-wrong assessment of enemy's prowess and our own capabilities.

1) In 1947, every singular success, whether momentary or permanent was attributed solely to the skill and intellect of superior commanders of the regular army without cutting a slice for the local forces committed to the battle. Surprisingly enough, the responsibility for any major or minor set-back or failure was thrown in the lap of local people. After 18 years i.e. in 1965 a display of similar mentality spelt out the moral that local people, inspite of their sacrifices and sufferings, were

not only devoid of all that was good, but were also composed of elements symbolic of cowardice, deceit, insincerity and lack of faith in their own cause. This make belief conjecture is preached like gospel and some people like to substantiate it by vague arguments many times. With this idea in our heads, we cannot execute any operation successfully, however brilliant master-piece efforts of any modern Von Meinstein it may be. So I would advise to pause a little and readjust our mental bearings afresh. When any two forces fight side by side, each must have other's complete confidence and mutual trust. They should have equal responsibility for victory and defeat. It should not be difficult to reassess the whole thing, if only we want to put the horse in its only correct position i.e. before the cart and not after it. I may also point out here that it was right in early 1948 that, after serious arguments on both sides, the Government of Pakistan took the most unfortunate decision to conduct the Kashmir show in a manner drastically opposed to the concept of supporting the Peoples' Movement as it was in 1947. Therefore, the entire control was given to the bureaucrats who were at that time still assisted by the outgoing master, the British, whose designs about this sub-continent were never secret. This clearly meant that the Kashmiris would neither be trusted nor even allowed to fight for the liberation of their own home land. The Government of Pakistan thus landed itself in the middle of the 'marsh' that the Anglo-Americans wanted Pakistan to be in. This also gave, and continues to give, the impression that Pakistan wants, like India, to militarily conquer and capture the State of Jammu and Kashmir by force, therefore, as a natural corollary it neither deserves the sympathies of the State people nor can it be assisted by the pretending allies, against India, a big country where the Anglo-Americans have greater stakes.

There is yet another aspect to be taken note of. Soon after control of the Movement in 1948 was thus transferred, a serious situation resulted immediately. Some one wanted to be the conquerer of the State and thus succeed the Maharaja; some one wanted to act as 'Viceroy', a position higher than that of Maharaja; and some one else would naturally aspire to succeed the British Crown. This tussle shifted the entire momentum from the battle-field in the State to drawing rooms in Rawalpindi, and thus came the end of it. It is also strange that while the locals were fighting on their own, almost 3/4th of the State was conquered and held by them, but soon after the organised assistance was brought in we were left with only 1/4th i.e. the present Azad Jammu and Kashmir. This way the whole complexion was changed.

A Peoples' Movement for freedom was converted into a conventional war and a struggle to conquer a foreign territory, a position neither workable nor acceptable. All this needs a good deal of patient and realistic study.

2) During the first stage of recruitment in Azad Jammu and Kashmir in 1963, being indicative, to a watchful eye, of a future adventure, I tried my best to point out that both, the stock material as well as the method of the recruitment were inconsistent with the requirement and would only jeopardise the movement. By making it a personal issue, contrary to my advice, the procedure was most strictly adhered to. The results which followed two years later amply supported my view. But as I said earlier, strange interpretation must have been adduced to cover the blunder committed in initial stages. The bulk of this new material, when in action, remained far behind the allocated task, thus jeopardising the whole plan and causing great dis-illusionment. The men were far below the mental and physical standards required for the conspicuous task. This did not mean the required standard was not at all available. I can say with full responsibility and the events that followed would bear me out, that a much better stock equal to the task was available all the time. Thus the tragic failure of the efforts that would be extremely difficult for us to repeat !

3) The planners nursing mistrust, garbed of course in the false plea of security purposes, against the people of Jammu and Kashmir on either side of cease-fire line, lacked skill in calculating geographical and psychological aspects of the operational areas, the essential for success of any such operation. Some pragmatically very important operations had already suffered this drawback in 1948 of which I had first hand knowledge and experience. Failure of the famous Poonch Operation remains a typical example of this weakness.

4) The contacts with the people inside occupied Kashmir have all along been maintained exclusively through a particular official section and all care had been taken not to associate anyone from Azad Jammu and Kashmir which if done could have on the other hand provided encouragement and stimulus to the people inside the enemy area; and that would be the only correct thing to have been done. The facts cannot be lost sight of that, both the wings of Kashmir are so inter-dependent for any liberation efforts that none of them could do the job alone. People inside the State have a typical aptitude, characteristic and admirable, rather un-paralleled, stamina

for a passive resistance whereas the people in Azad Jammu and Kashmir are just the otherwise - all for violence and armed resistance or actual fighting. Therefore, any successful movement would require both the hands put together in action. This was not being thought of. In fact a poetic or Allah Din's lamp like things seemed to have been visualised, which only met its natural fate.

5) As it appeared in the field, no serious plan was devised to meet the enemy's counter activity. Some very important aspects seem to have been completely ignored or not bothered about. With a limited force but proper foresight about the ground, a better part of the situation could have surely been saved or controlled.

6) It is very significant that the attack on Pakistan came well after, and NOT before, the Indian army had brought the Kashmir situation under control. This could have been anticipated and a counter plan should have been kept in hand to keep up the tempo inside; as this was the trump-card and the crux of the whole project. The action in Jaurian did not fulfil the requirements. May be, to me, it was uncalled for. There were some other more strategic positions and effective means that should have been considered instead. This is where a full-scale confidence in the tried local population and consultation with them was just inevitable.

7) The inferiority complex with its natural manifestations to which the Azad Kashmir troops have been subjected since 1949, should have been removed well in time and the men prepared mentally for the task ahead. No unhappy army could go into a hazard like that. This required 'equal responsibility and equal remuneration'. If not the latter, the former alone could have, for the moment, forged the weapon to regain the lost confidence. In a conference with commanders at Muzaffarabad I talked of this necessity but someone dubbed it as politics - a common excuse for the unwilling horses. It would have turned tables if my advice was accepted as I was closer to the heart of the men, who had under my command, without even the idea of wages and without arms successfully beaten away the far stronger and mighty Indian army in 1948. The same, however, was done but after the battle. This is exactly like the famous Verse:

My other suggestion to recall the brave and outstanding officers who had been sent away on flimsy grounds, quite recently then, was accepted but the cease-fire came



the importance of the task and made them happily help the battalion to the top. Yet, quite a good portion on this route was motorable but no transport whatsoever was laid on. The same day I met the Commander who was just shocked to learn about it. He would hardly believe that the motorable portion was also handled manually, while a good number of jeeps was supposed to be there. How could this criminal neglect be explained, I am still at a loss to understand. What I did, was none of my responsibilities. It was sheer chance that I happened to be there. Fighting on chances have been our lot almost everywhere! But were we really fighting this time remains to be explained.

ii) On account of the rainy season, our L of C, mainly handled manually, had to be badly extended to beyond capacity, particularly on Palandri-Hajira-Abbaspur Palangi route. I saw the Division Commander and asked him for technical assistance so that the 15 miles belt recently built for civil traffic between Hajira and Abbaspur might be made traffic-worthy by stone-pitching. I offered to collect more than ten thousand men and expected the job to be over in no time. That would have helped immensely on the long route to the forward areas. The Commander sent for the engineer, who to my utter surprise and dismay, refused to accept the very existence of the fifteen mile long road between Hajira and Abbaspur. What an engineer ! It may appear fantastic accusation. But I have no purpose to make false allegation like that. When the Commander got annoyed with him, the gentleman only agreed to check up and report. It was two months after the cease-fire that I was approached to fulfil my commitment. I had no means to express my resentment over it. No one had ever taken the trouble to see whether our roads and bridges were capable of taking heavy vehicles, thus leaving it open to grave traffic confusion, almost jeopardy, when the movement started.

10) When the situation grew more serious and the L of C had to be maintained by the civil population, another horrible confusion was created by criminal inefficiency of the civil authority in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Army was pressing for porters without whom it was not possible to keep our troops on the F.D.L. The civil authority, except of course some good officers, seized the opportunity to make hey while it shines. It need yards of canvas to depict the entire picture but I only say that large funds acquired for porters were, for the most of it, embazzled and mis-appropriated and the arrangement made in such a peculiar manner that thousands of men were

kept moving but only a few were usefully employed. As a result while the Army remained badly pressed all the time for want of rations, funds were lavishly wasted and the people demoralized in aimless movements here and there. It so happened commonly that a number of men were taken towards a camp and then returned from half way as not yet required but when they hardly reached their homes they were called out again, all hungry and tired. Their standing crops were also damaged for lack of attention causing an additional and constant worry for the population that depends mainly on that crop. It seemed as if there was a fifth column doing the planned sabotage work in our lines. On top, there were instances when the civil authority resorted to imposing fines on people failing to respond to join the porters. But one is surprised to note that the most of the people fined were those who kept moving about as porters all the time. What a resentment could have ensued, was evident. A school-boy, an aged man and people of all other professions joined voluntarily in this with all the enthusiasm but the stigma of non-cooperation would all the time remain pinned on these unfortunate people.

11) Regardless of the fact who commanded these positions, our failure to defend Titwal and Hajipir also needs a dispassionate study. With reference to the information I could collect, as a person almost on the spot, I have no hesitation to say that there could be no human justification for those set backs; and but for these failures the entire picture would have been different. The Indian army would have nothing to be proud of and the tempo inside Kashmir could have been kept up. It is not that we suffered on account of insufficient manpower on these positions. At Titwal a childish mess of things was made and we had to vacate and give in to a far smaller force without giving a battle, whereas much smaller force was enough to contain these naturally defended hills; even a few good snipers would have done the job. But it was a mystery that might never unfold. Our men at Hajipir gave an excellent account of their valour. The enemy exploited the situation successfully. A small re-inforcement, could have had the desired effect. This was not done. In the same manner many other incidents were also abegging explanation.

12) Unless the object was to capture and consolidate, which I think it was not, the number of troops employed was more than required; and as a result they went out of gear and caused the disaster and confusion. Moreover, as it appeared from the operation itself, the movement did not conform to the time thus resulting into confusion. It appeared that everything had been rushed in on an undefined objective.

In my opinion most of our success lay in keeping the movement in step and properly consistant with the requirements of the unavoidable counter by the enemy.

13) Some strategic positions it was always possible to keep open for movement on both sides but that was not done. I have reasons to refuse to be convinced about the neglect. Even a single gap could have kept up the morale of our men inside and they could not be taken by the sense of insecurity as they did. I made positive suggestions and also offered to do the job but who should say what was happening.

14) The entire task should have been entrusted to experienced hands. Not that I impeach any commander's capabilities but I had learnt from repeated experience in 1948 that almost all the commanders, who trusted in their academic qualifications, committed biggest blunders and caused horrible failures. The grave difference between practical field work and theoretical knowledge and planning had been badly ignored as of no consequence. Therefore, unless there is the American unlimited force to meet every seen and unseen difficulty, every plan which does not take into account this difference is only doomed to failure. There are in-numerable instances to illustrate my view that in both the wars of 1948 and 1965, if of course they had the honest designs as we believe, the above cited aspect had been altogether ignored which resulted in failures without exception.

To end it the following summing up can be counted as positive requirements of the movement:—

(a) Proper selection of the human material so as to keep the movement going on for a long time without involving the regular Azad Kashmir troops unless a capture was aimed at. A proper system and technique to sustain the activity would be a natural thing to be done.

(b) The political situation in Azad Kashmir which had become unbearably obnoxious and was having its adverse impact on the people, was required to be overhauled and where necessary replaced by atmosphere fully conducive to the proposed movement. In fact 1947 spirit should be revived in people. I would point out that no matter what extent of difference or bitterness there be with the Government of Pakistan it would always be the easiest thing to patch up and change the very outlook

in this respect. Long standing bitterness as we know was resolved with the firing of the first shot in 1965. It is unfortunate that this aspect has never been understood. It should be resolved, sooner the better. For any conceivable action a strong political cover is simply unavoidable.

(c) Civil Government in Azad Kashmir should be entrusted to more competent and popular hands. This in itself could have raised immensely the morale of the people on both sides of cease-fire line, and would give tremendous impetus to the movement. The lack of manpower, therefore, would not cost us so much as it did.

(d) Some vital strategic positions should be well defended against any odds. This is even normally possible. Only it is necessary to entrust it to tried and experienced hands and not leave it to anybody already in command there.

(e) Selection of the leaders should be made in conformity with the needs of the field work and not on the grounds of academic qualifications or personal likes and dis-likes.

(f) A special political tempo is also necessary to provide the camouflage and also to keep the movement going.

(g) A direct coordination between the people on both sides, appearing to be without any sanction from the Government, would always be required as a natural part of the strategy.

(h) In a nutshell the horse be placed before the cart. Liberation Movement should be a 'Movement of the People' assisted of course properly by the Government of Pakistan consistent with the strategy of keeping Pakistan out of war and keeping the movement localised in Kashmir.

(i) Arrangements, quite possible, but made difficult to make by the passage of time and the subtle built up by the interested big powers, are also required to be made to meet and provide an adequate answer to the ever-increasing pressure of the big powers in favour of India and against us with particular reference to this issue. In fact all that has so far been done appears to be only conducive and helpful to the

foreign pressure against us. Nothing whatsoever seems to be there on the ground to be counted as a counter, of any degree, to that pressure. This aspect is as vital as anything else in the whole affair.

(j) Finally, we have to have our objectives defined in un-ambiguous terms and pursue them with unflinching faith and unshakeable resolve. There should be no room for a hide and seek game as we have been playing all along.

RAWALPINDI  
December, 1965

Sd/- (Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan)  
PRESIDENT  
All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference

foreign pressure against us. Nothing whatsoever seems to be there on the ground to be counted as a counter, of any degree, to that pressure. This aspect is as vital as anything else in the whole affair.

(j) Finally, we have to have our objectives defined in un-ambiguous terms and pursue them with unflinching faith and unshakeable resolve. There should be no room for a hide and seek game as we have been playing all along.

RAWALPINDI  
December, 1965

Sd/- (Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan)  
PRESIDENT  
All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference