

**Indian Express June 20, 1997**

**British are still at their old game**

Sir,

Thanks for your bold exposition of British hypocrisy through your editorial 'Imperium and the empire' (June 10). British diplomacy has always been heavily laden with hypocrisy and even deviousness and dishonesty. This has been ever so in the case of Kashmir; particularly over the accession issue. For a variety of reasons, they have all along not only wished that Kashmir be made a part of Pakistan but have also covertly made many a concerted move for bringing this about.

As a matter of fact the seeds of the dispute were first sown by Mountbatten when in his advice to Maharaja Hari Singh on the accession issue, he sought to limit the Maharaja's discretion to just signing on the dotted line in accordance with the wishes of the people. To bind the Maharaja to a single option of acceding to Pakistan, he sought to block the other two. He advised the Maharaja strongly against declaring Independence – the wishes of the people in this case notwithstanding – and also apprised him of the assurance, that he had so painstakingly extracted from the Indian leaders, that they would not take it amiss if the Maharaja were to accede to Pakistan in deference to the wishes of the people.

Even when Kashmir got thrown into India's lap as a result of the Pakistani invasion, Mountbatten was not to allow the "dispute" to be nipped in the bud. By withholding his acceptance of the Maharaja's offer to accede to the Indian Union, for full 48 hours, (as per his own admission), even as the raiders were on a free run to Srinagar, the Governor General blackmailed the Union Cabinet into accepting his suggestion for a conditional accession, (without there being any such provision in the Indian Independence Act), as if to grant official recognition to the "dispute".

Subsequently when Srinagar had been saved and the Pakistanis were in the process of being driven out of Kashmir, Mountbatten persuaded Nehru to take up the issue of Pakistan's aggression with the UN – ostensibly in the interest of World peace and the high ideals that the Indian leaders stood for, but actually to grant international status to the "dispute" and keep Pakistan's options open.

Apparently Tony Blair's Kashmir policy is, in fact, a continuation of the British policy of the late 40's, which sought to secure Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

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