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### **Pak Propaganda**

Sir,

While Pakistan has mounted a large scale propaganda campaign to project its case on Kashmir, we in India seem to have done little beyond affirming and reaffirming that Kashmir is an integral part of our country and that it will be defended at all costs. This gives an impression that our case on Kashmir is only that of possession and our ability to hold it by force. In actual fact, however, India alone has legal and moral right over Kashmir and Pakistan's case is only that of a thief shouting "thief thief".

India's legal rights in Kashmir spring from the fact that Maharaja Hari Singh in exercise of the discretion granted to him under the Indian Independence Act of 1947 acceded his state to the Indian Union. Legally the people's right to self-determination was not part of the process of accession of States. As a matter of fact the question of granting to the people of the States the right of self-determination was not even raised (let alone considered) during the discussions between the Viceroy, and the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, on June 3, 1947 plan, which form the basis of the Indian Independence Act.

This is not to deny the importance of the moral aspect of the issue. The point that needs to be made is that here again it has always been India that has championed this cause not Pakistan. For Pakistan its support to the ideal of self-determination has always been a matter of convenience rather than conviction. It turned a strong votary of self-determination only after it failed to secure the accession of Kashmir through the force of arms. Before this while the Maharaja was still weighing the pros and cons of his difficult options, Mr Jinnah was openly proclaiming that the question of accession depended entirely on the wish of the Maharaja. In this regard a statement made by Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, which was published in *The Statesman* on September 21, 1947, also makes interesting reading and is reproduced below:

"The correct position is that the Indian Independence Act of 1947 has left all Indian States completely free to join either one Dominion or the other to enter into treaty relations with either. Legally and constitutionally, there can be no question of putting limitations on this right of the States. Muslim League leaders before August 15 and the official spokesman of the Pakistan Government thereafter have publicly declared agreement with this view; and have since rigorously stood by it. No objection has been raised by Pakistan to any State acceding to the Dominion of India."

It was on the basis of this stand that Pakistan accepted the accession of Junagarh. That Pakistan could not hold on to the State in the face of the people's rebellion is, of course, another matter. With what face is Pakistan today demanding the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir?

For India on the other hand, self-determination has been a matter of creed. So strongly were the Indian leaders committed to the ideal of self-determination for the State's people that rather than encouraging the Maharaja, (who had a natural affinity towards India), to join the Indian Dominion, they had it conveyed to him through Mountbatten that an accession of Kashmir to Pakistan on the basis of the wishes of the people would not be taken amiss by the Government of India. Then, even after Kashmir fell into their lap as a result of the Pakistani invasion of the State, they went to the ridiculous extent of making the acceptance of accession

subject to the condition that “as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and her soil cleared of the invaders, the question of accession should be settled by a reference to the people”.

The Indian Government then stuck to its promise of ascertaining the wishes of the people even though the Kashmiris support for the accession to India was glaringly visible. Firstly even though there were no troops available for internal security in Srinagar during the crucial days while the request of the Maharaja was being considered at Delhi, the city remained calm and peaceful; not a soul stirring against the State’s accession to India. Secondly, when the first batch of Indian troops landed in Srinagar, they were accorded a big welcome by the people and it was only with local assistance that the troops could be moved to the battle front. And thirdly, during the Indo-Pak conflict that followed, the Kashmiris, without exception, supported the Indian Army wholeheartedly.

However, India’s obsession with the ideal of self-determination did not end here. In its complaint to the United Nations on the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir, it went on to unnecessarily commit itself to a plebiscite in Kashmir, even if it was to be after Pakistani aggression had been vacated. This is what the powers of the Western Block at the UN were probably waiting for. To help their protégé, they bid good-bye to justice and ignoring the basic complaint regarding Pakistani aggression, they started harping on plebiscite. A cease-fire was ordered and consequently Pakistan was allowed to retain the fruits of aggression.

Apparently, its outward professions notwithstanding, Pakistan was not, at that time, interested in a plebiscite in Kashmir. With the memories of the atrocities committed by the Pakistani invaders still fresh in the minds of the Kashmiri people, Pakistan stood no chance of winning a plebiscite. Consequently, Pakistan put every conceivable obstruction in the way of demilitarisation of the State which was a pre-requisite to holding of the plebiscite. How can India be expected to keep its offer of self-determination on Kashmir open indefinitely?

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