

Hur Operations in Sindh

Wisal Muhammad Khan (Retd. Major General)



*Reproduced by
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WISAL MUHAMMAD KHAN
(Major General Retired)

In 1942 the population of Sindh consisted of approximately 73% Muslims, 25% Hindus and 2% others. The Majority of the Hindus were business men and shop-keepers and were therefore financially better off than the average Muslims. The former resided in the towns and large villages and the latter in small villages and isolated huts. The Hindu Muslim relations were most cordial and the land owners exercised great influence over their tenants.

The Hurs² are of Arab origin and are said to have migrated from Central Asia, initially settling along the Arabian Sea coast and then spreading all over the Province of Sindh. There are also a large number of Hurs in the states of Rajputana. They are sturdy, ruthless, cruel and fanatic always prepared to lay down their lives for their cause. The pick of the staunch Hurs are classified as Fakirs and Ghazis and their Namaz-e-Janaza was offered in their life time.

In Sindh there are many hereditary saints of different shades and character and they have exercised great influence over their followers. The masses in general are disciples of one Pir or the other. No one in Sindh seeking religious guidance is without his Pir. The most celebrated of these Pirs was Sabghatullah Shah, Pir Pagaro of Kingri. He was a very strongly built man with penetrating eyes, broad shoulders and a few small-pox marks on his face and was gifted with an excellent personality. He was invariably immaculately dressed. When giving an audience to his followers he wore a cap covered with gold and jewels and an expensive embroidered coat. He was alleged to have been fond of shooting and damsels and hence on visits to various areas, when unaccompanied by his family he honored well dressed pretty spinsters offered to him for his nocturnal comfort.

Pir Pagaro had tremendous influence in Sindh and in the States of Khairpur and Rajputana. The Hurs considered him almost a super natural being. He was literally worshipped - something entirely against Islam and its teachings. The influence, which varied from Pir to Pir, was mostly hereditary and in case of Pir Sabghatullah Pagaro was partly due to his dominating personality. At this juncture I would like to state that

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² Hur is an Arabic word meaning free. Ahrar is its plural. This is title given to the brave disciples of Pir Pagaro by Syed Ahmed Shah and Shah Ismail on their way to Balakot during Sikh occupation of the Punjab and Frontier. Hur does not mean a murderer or terrorist. - *Editor*

it is beyond my comprehension as to how highly intelligent and educated and highly cultured people could become staunch followers of such Pirs.



Pir Pagaro seldom visited his followers in distant places but sent his Fakirs for the collection of his dues from distant disciples. Those who lived close to Kingri offered their periodical salutation and financial sacrifices in person. The murids raised money by the disposal of their best cattle and ornaments whereas in some cases ornaments were left, by the female folk at the appointed place.

The Government officials in Sindh displayed great regard for the Pir but a few Police officials took an active part in spreading wide propaganda damaging to the reputation of the Pir who was eventually attested in 1930. On August 28 he was awarded eight years imprisonment for keeping his boy servant in a box and for being in illegal possession of arms and ammunition in spite of the fact that the witnesses failed to give evidence in the Court of Law to substantiate these allegations. The main reason for this state of affairs was that the British Government was bent on the arrest and punishment of the Pir and hence the every kind of evidence was concocted and fabricated and the witness failed to utter lies and corroborate evidence in the presence of the Pir.

The Pir was then removed to a Jail and the Government imposed considerable restrictions on the Fakirs, who kept and stuck to the faith and devotion to the Pir irrespective of the consequences. They decided to sit and starve themselves to death in front of the Government Offices so as to force the administration to release the Pir, but all in vain. However, the Pir returned to the area in October 1936 after the expiry of his sentence. The treatment accorded to him by the British Government made him very bitter and more anti-government, and thus he was an eyesore and his movement had to be kept under observation.

Soon after his return the Pir secretly carried out large scale enrolment and preparations for the over throw of British Government in Sindh; and he is alleged to have stated that he was destined to become the King of Sindh. The Raput Rulers presented him with

considerable amount of arms and ammunition which was distributed among his Fakirs in that area -- as no gun license was required in this area. The Pir's Khalifas also collected large sums of money from the people for waging a holy war against the Government of usurpers. Knowing full well the consequence of the preparations for war he instructed the Fakirs that they should not be surprised in case the Pir was arrested but should continue to carry out sabotage work on a large scale.

In November 1939 riots started in Sukkur at the instigation of the Pir who felt that the Government was fully engaged in World War II and would not be in a position to put up resistance and hence he will be able to achieve his aim. With this end in view he directed all his efforts towards the creation of a serious law and order problem in the Province. In October 1941 the Pir was detained and later interned outside the Province. Prior to his removal from Karachi he managed to pass instructions to his Fakirs to play havoc in the area by carrying out large scale disruption activities so as to I secure his release from detention.

The Fakirs planned to paralyze the Government by looting, breaching canals, attacking railway stations and killing of staff, committing decoities and eliminating trackers and informers working for the Government. For sobering and curbing the Hurs and other masses in the area, the police arrested a large number of people and put them through mock trials which resulted in exemplary punishments. Such an action did not deter the Hurs from carrying out their activities.

On 29th March 1942, after the completion of the Army Intelligence Course at Karachi, I decided to return to Lahore by the ill-fated Lahore Mail which was derailed in area Chaprao north of Hyderabad at about 9 p.m., by removal of the railway fish plates. The Hurs had apparently divided themselves into two parties that is the raiding and covering parties. The former under effective covering fire from the latter, entered the compartments and started looting and eliminating the passengers by the use of axes, guns and rifles. The total casualties being 32 killed and 100 wounded.

In the area of the incidents the railway line was on a high embankment and therefore at the time of derailment our compartment toppled over the top of a tree. The doors of the compartment got jammed so I broke the window pane and came out and then helped Capt. (Late Maj. General) Akhtar Malik to crawl out of the compartment, as we were exposed to the fire of the Hur covering party. The servants compartment was completely smashed so I started removing planks in search of my bearer Sahib Dad whom I presumed to be dead. Luckily I succeeded in my efforts and I was delighted to note that he was alive and not very seriously hurt. At his suggestion I went under the compartment and started looking for the Captain's orderly. The girders of the compartment had telescoped and it was a problem to remove the planks. However, after removing a couple of planks, I found the orderly in a crouched position, with a

copy of the Holy Quran in lap, without an injury or scratch All that I saw was beyond my comprehension. I thought this was a miracle.

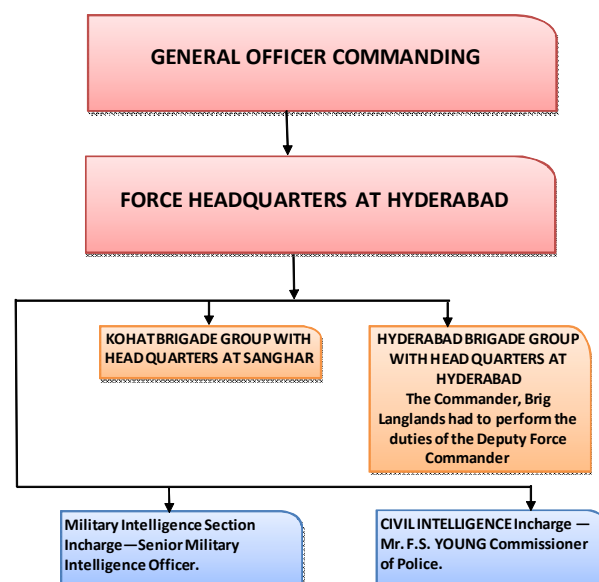
Through the covering party's cordon I slipped two small parties towards the railway stations, on either side of the scene of incident, with a view to contacting senior railway officials for assistance through the Station Masters. The effort failed to pay dividend as the telephone lines had been cut in accordance with a well thought out plan. In the meantime we were busy rendering first aid to the casualties using the passengers turbans for bandages. It was due to sheer luck that we did not come across the raiding party otherwise we would have been mutilated like the other passengers.

Approximately half an hour after the derailment, a strong beam of light appeared from the direction of Sukkur which gave the Hurs an impression that a relief train was approaching and hence they quickly disappeared from the scene before the said light faded away. The light could not be of the relief train as it arrived at about 11 a.m., the following morning. Now the question arises as to what could it be? The Providential miracle or a Car, with a very strong light approaching behind a crest. So far I have been unable to find a satisfactory solution to this phenomenon and hence I leave it to the readers and their guess work would be as good as mine if not better.

Immediately on the arrival of relief train the medical unit on board the train rendered first aid to the casualties and then evacuated them to various hospitals enroute. The other passengers rushed and occupied seats in various compartments. So far the idea of a cup of tea or food had not entered my mind as I was busy looking after the passengers but now all of a sudden I felt hungry and famished and I started in search of a first class restaurant on the railway station. The hunger of the other first class passengers was even more than mine as they swallowed whatever they could get from the hawkers on the railway station. However, we travelled merrily along departing at our respective railway stations to mark our hazardous journey and terrible experience.

HUR OPERATIONS IN SINDH Martial Law-1942

Owing to the pernicious activities of the Hurs the Civil Administration in Sind had completely broken down and there was a serious law and order problem in the area. The situation warranted the promulgation of Martial Law so the needful was done on 1st June 1942. A force called the upper Sind force was raised and placed under the command of Maj. Gen. R. Richardson. The force consisted of two Brigade groups and attached troops, its organization in broad outline was: —



As the success or failure of the formation depended largely on the intelligence work hence it is imperative that some light should be thrown on the Intelligence set up of the organization. F.S. Young, Commissioner of Police, was assisted by his special team and the Sind Police. The information emanating from this source was normally biased and had to, be taken with a pinch of salt. Young being an experienced and capable officer sifted the information effectively and hence little damage was done. The officer being a controversial figure necessitates a bit of his introduction.

Young was a successful dacoit in England and as the Government was incapable of arresting him. His Britannic Majesty gave him a pardon on the specific condition that he would go to India to round up and arrest the dacoits in that country. He accepted the offer and performed his task admirably both in Rajputana and Sind. He was a strange character a bachelor and a tectotaller who relished *lassi* and spinach. He was devoted to the task allotted to him by His Imperial Majesty and spent almost all his surplus income

on his special team and informers. He had some sterling qualities and was a lovable person in spite of his shady profession in his young days.

On 9th June 1942 I was appointed Senior Military Intelligence Officer of the force. The intelligence Section consisted of three officers, three British other ranks and four Indian other ranks. Our duty was normal, that is, collection, collation and dissemination of information. Our task was made difficult by the notorious Police officials who were spreading vile rumors to damage the reputation of the Pir and his followers. Our other headache was the in-accuracy of the maps of Sind and therefore we had to spend considerable effort in producing maps of Nara area from the air photographs for the troops operating in that area.

Some of the Hur Fakirs were very shrewd and had organized an excellent intelligence system of their own. They used all possible sources for collection and dissemination of information. They deployed their informers consisting of men, women and children even in the areas occupied by the troops and also utilized the services of some of the government informers. A large number of the harmless Hurs and other people in the area also cooperated with the Fakirs. The employment of trackers for obtaining information about the troop movement in the desert area saved their skin on numerous occasions.

Night curfew was imposed and orders were issued for depositing of arms and ammunition in the nearest police stations. Information about the fakirs and Hurs whereabouts had to be passed on to the nearest troops in the area. Non-compliance with these instructions was to result in drastic action against the defaulters.

.... The Hurs did not have much respect for these orders as their morale was very high. They rightly thought that the Martial Law was the result of their efforts which had completely paralyzed the civil administration and thus rendered it ineffective. Their knowing of the bashing the British were receiving at the hands of the Germans and the Japanese in World War II gave them the impression that they will have no alternative but to vacate their aggression against India and thus Sind will be handed over to the Pir. This impression raised their tails considerably and therefore they decided to wait for an appropriate moment. In the meantime they decided to display some sort of cooperation by surrendering their useless or surplus weapons, ensuring that each man had an axe or a gun for his own use.

The general impression amongst the Hurs was that soon the Germans would invade London and the fall of the capital would result in the capitulation of the British Army. As a result of which the countries of the Common Wealth wrongly possessed by the Englishmen would be free from the usurpers. In such an eventuality the Government will have no alternative but to hand-over the Province to Pir Pagaro. They appreciated that under these circumstances the best course would to avoid confrontation with the

troops and achieve secrecy of information about the brotherhood. At this juncture I would like to state that if Hitler had not stopped Rommel's advance on Antwerp then the story of Dunkirk would have been different as the Englishmen would have been more seriously mauled than hitherto. To the best of my belief most of the credit for sound appreciation and planning goes to the Pir himself.

The Fakirs resolved that they should continue to strive in the name of the Pir and be prepared to sacrifice their lives for their cause. Therefore they continued their dangerous activities with complete disregard to Martial Law. The force retaliated by burning huts and hamlets and arresting indiscriminately the people suspected in the area. In order to facilitate the work of the troops all the people in the area were ordered to move east of the Nara canal within a period of ten days. After the specified time anyone found in the prohibited area was liable to be shot at sight. The said move inflicted untold miseries on the affected people and cattle.

The Hurs for their protection depended on sinking sand, and the lakes and the Jungles. They established their base in the Makki Dand Area in Sanghar for their operations. The terrain was very difficult for troops to operate hence it was considered safe. However, large scale air reconnaissance and troop movement by day and night in difficult terrain had a sobering effect on the people who through fear decided to follow the orders so as to avoid confrontation with the troops.

.... On 01 July 1942 we dropped a company of a Gurkha (Para) Battalion in the area to thoroughly comb the impregnable defenses of the outlaws. In the meantime the troops of Kohat Brigade successfully linked with the para troops, burning all the huts enroute.

The molestation of impregnable positions of Hurs had a considerable terrorizing effect on the people and therefore in order to keep up their morale the Hurs carried out raids on various villages and killed people suspected of spying for the troops. Their men killed in troop operations were called martyrs and buried with great respect whereas the casualties they inflicted on the people around were despised and condemned as traitors. They strongly believed that a spectacular action against the railways was likely to boost up the morale of the people of Sindh.

The Fakirs planned the derailment of Bombay Mail on 6 September 1942, by building across the railway line an obstacle from tree trunks as they had no tools for the removal of fish plates. For the security of the plan the obstacle was to be built just before the arrival of the train. Luckily the train was running to new timing, an hour ahead of the old timing, thus the Hurs miscalculated the timing of the train and therefore could not build an effective obstacle as it was hurled in the air by the engine of the train. However, the derailment party was thoroughly amused by the incident. This incident resulted in the strengthening of the security guards on the trains and effective patrolling of the railway lines as well as important canals to prevent them from breaching by the

Hurs. The extent of floods caused by inundation of canals can be visualized from the photographs.

Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life it, knows how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first great benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world.

Mark Twain

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In order to restrict the operations of the troops the Hurs started closing up a large number of wells leaving only a few intact for their own use. The force retaliated by destroying most of the wells left intact by the rebels thus causing considerable hardships to the people in the area and their cattle as they were left with no sources of water to drink. The Hurs were capable of moving fast in desert area and therefore to equal their mobility the troops were allocated camels. The snag was that the mounted troops could operate only in areas where drinking water was available whereas in other areas we had to depend on the Air Force.

The air reconnaissance was stepped up, huts and hamlets were destroyed by incendiary bombs and the Hurs, moving from well to well, were machine gunned from the air. To shatter their morale the Hyderabad Brigade was allotted the task of destruction of Pir Jo Goth, the palace of the Pir Pagaro. For the said purpose Hyderabad Brigade Head Quarters with a large number of troops including Engineers were employed in area called Kingri. The purpose of this operation was to: –

- a. The Pir and thus lower him in the esteem of his followers.
- b. Incite the Fakirs and Ghazis to avenge the disgrace inflicted on the Pir by launching large scale attacks on the troops.
- c. Display government authority in the area.

All the routes to the house were sealed so as to restrict large scale Hur movement in the area. The palace was inside a fortress and had its own mosque connected with the building. To avoid damage to the shrine the link between the house and the mosque was dismantled by manual labor and then the palace was destroyed by the use of explosives. The photographs pasted below clearly show the various phases of demolition work.

The operation failed to produce the desired results as the Hurs were far too intelligent to bite at the bait as they thought that the best course for them was to conserve their

energies for an appropriate moment and to avoid confrontation with the troops at all cost. Some of the Hurs crossed over to the states of Rajputana to spend most of their time in reorganization of their bands. However, as a result of our large scale operations a good number of Ghazis of upper Sind were caught and the remaining mostly fugitives were left behind.

The General ordered a reconnaissance of Jaisalmir state with a view to collecting first hand information about the Hur activities in that area. I had the misfortune to be allotted the task which was very hazardous and entailed a journey of about three hundred miles, in a treacherous terrain, on camel back. On arrival in the state I was forcibly retained as a state guest for three days and then provided with a pretty one eyed camel and hodal to show that I was being accorded a V.I.P. treatment. In fact the walk of the animal was very heavy and gave me pain in the back when I had hardly covered a distance of a mile. I got rid of the animal and borrowed another camel on which I covered the rest of the journey without a mishap. Later I learnt that the intention of the ruler was to knock me out and prevent me from performing my duties as air intruders could not be tolerated by him.

I learnt that the inhabitants of the desert area were extremely poor and their main diet was barks of shrubs and locusts during the breeding season. In certain areas the drinking water available to them was from ponds and it was shared by them with their cattle. I saw a large number of cattle bathing and urinating in the ponds and therefore I guess that the drinking water could not be even very palatable. As the source of drinking water in the Jaisalmir state capital was of this nature, I decided to live on mineral water as I was given the impression that they were produced from the well water of the palace. After the completion of my task I was horrified to learn that the mineral water was also produced from the pond water to the. Thank God that the revelation came after the journey's end and not earlier otherwise I would have rather perished due to thirst.

One day I was asked to meet the Deputy force Commander at 2-30 p.m. at the Hyderabad landing ground. This order was rather queer therefore I started wondering as to what the game was. However, on arrival at the destination I found that Brig. Langlands and Freddie Young were already there. The latter told me that we were there to receive the Pir Pagaro who was being flown from the Central Jail Nagpur. After a few minutes the dignitary arrived and was moved to Hyderabad Jail in a covered wagon, heavily escorted.

He was tried by a General Court Martial and executed on 20 March 1943. As the proceedings of the Court and Pirs burial place were secret therefore I am refraining from commenting on this aspect in spite of my knowledge of the fact that the said classification should have been downgraded before the creation of Pakistan or soon after.

Publicity was given to the execution of the Pir and his followers were invited to see his corpse, as shown in the photographs above, but they refused to accept the fact. They believed that he had been heavily doped and exposed to them in an unconscious state, and falsely declared to have been executed. They stated that the fact was evident and therefore could not deceive any one. They felt that the Pir was being secretly removed to a Jail outside the province therefore he is being declared dead. The Fakirs thought that by this dirty trick they are being deceived and demoralized as the British Government was hard pressed for reinforcement in Europe and Burma could not afford to lock up troops in Sindh. As a result of their appreciation they came to the conclusion that they should follow Walpoles policy of masterly inactivity and be contented with minor sabotage activities only. They were convinced that the British forces would be destroyed by the Germans and Japanese hence it would be a folly to attack the troops deployed in Sindh.

The unshakeable faith of Hurs in the Pir made it abundantly clear that only a living Pir would be able to control them. The burial place of the Pir was kept top secret as it was considered that the dead Pir could become more dangerous than alive. The said information was kept secret even from me but with the assistance of my section I wangled a copy of a memory sketch of the burial area, which is still in my possession. The General recommended to the Government that two sons of the Pir should be educated in United Kingdom for-a few years and eventually the elder son, Sikandar Shah, should succeed his father. The said recommendation was accepted and the youngsters were sent abroad for education.

As the situation was restored and the civil administration considered capable of maintenance of law and order the Martial Law was lifted. The troops returned to their old stations and I found my way to the 14 Indian Division where I was employed as an instructor of advanced Jungle warfare. Since then I have always tried to keep myself abreast with the situation in Sind. I value the courage of the brave people of Sind who never reconciled and surrendered to the British rule right from its inception In 1843.

HUR OPERATIONS IN SINDH POST MARTIAL LAW

The civil administration was rehabilitated and the troops replaced by the frontier constabulary and Sindh Rifles as it was considered that the Sind Police alone may not be able to cope with the situation. To tackle the civil administration the Hurs decided to introduce corruption and rivalry amongst the petty officials. The senior officials will then have to sort out the problems confronting them and they would not be in a position to concentrate all their energy and efforts against the criminals.

The Hurs further planned to receive useful information constantly and to deny to the authorities information about the brotherhood. In order to achieve their aim they decided to eliminate the faithless disciples and other locals who were spying on them. They soon caught up with such undesirable element and killed them ruthlessly. Some of the traitors claimed police protections for their own security but even there most of them were written off. The civil administration followed the footsteps of the Martial Law Regime and removed people from huts and hamlets in the area surrounding Sanghar to a few concentration Camps and large villages with the government agents deployed in the area.

In July 1946 the Hurs planned to derail the Lahore Mail and therefore removed the fish plates from the railway line in Bahawalpur State area. As the said train was running two hours late and a goods train preceding it got derailed. The administration decided to trap the Fakirs and to the best of my knowledge it succeeded in its efforts to a great extent. The administration also concentrated their energy on recovering the Pirs treasure, arms and ammunition alleged to have been buried in various places but all in vain, as nothing was found. The said information was also palmed on to us but we did not bite at the bait so we rejected it as concoction and therefore treated it with contempt it deserved.

Even after the creation of Pakistan the Hurs continued their rebellious activities therefore it became apparent that they were not satisfied even with the new State. It now dawned on the civil officials that only a living Pir could keep the brotherhood in control. The main problem was that the Hurs would not accept a Pir as long as they believed that Pir Sabghat Ullah was alive. Hence considerable publicity was given to the death of the said Pir and to the accession of his eldest son, Sikandar Shah, to the gadi, the spiritual throne. Luckily he was accepted by the Hurs as the rightful successor of his father and so they settled down looking forward to their Pir for spiritual guidance.

After the accession ceremony for some time a few Hurs continued their activities either for the sake of the thrill they got out of it or ignorance of succession ceremony. During

my contact with the Hurs I was so much impressed by their chivalry, desert mobility, efficient appreciation of the situation and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their cause that I strongly recommended them for employment during Indo-Pakistan war 1965. On the basis of my recommendations the Commander-in-Chief of the Army requested the Government for employment of the Hurs, in a guerrilla role. The request was acceded to and Lashkars of Hurs were attached to the Army for operations in the desert area.

The situation at the time was that the Indians had invaded Sind along the Jodhpur railway line in the Thar Dessert. To check their advance we deployed a Brigade group against them. The Hur Lashkars were to operate against the flanks and rear of the every with the task of harassing and gitting the enemy by: —

- (a) Attacks on his lines of communications.
- (b) Soiping at camps at night.
- (c) Threatening his vulnerable flanks.
- (d) Infiltration in their administrative area and sabotage of his suppliers.

The Hur operations were greatly facilitated by our air superiority. They knew the area intimately and were capable of keeping their movements secret both by day and night. They were literally thrilled by the task allotted to them. They appeared in strength from nowhere and stormed the enemies lines of communications and logistic areas, thus breaking down their supply system and forcing them to reback. The invaders having become gittery withdrew beyond the Indo Pakistan border and thus exposing their own desert area to our heroes. As the Marwar desert area was also will known to our heroes therefore they dominated it with comparative case forcing the Indians to withdraw from their forward positions. As a result of the havoc they played with the enemy we had a large tract of the Indian desert in our possession at the time of declaration of cease fire.

In my capacity as the Quarter Master General of the Pakistan Army I was in the nerve centre of G.H.Q. and hence in a position to obtain a firsthand information about the activities of the armies. It was in the said capacity that I kept an eye on the Hur activities during the first Indo Pakistan war. As a result of my close association with the brotherhood I have come to the conclusion that in the desert guerrilla warfare they can be seldom equaled and never surpassed by non-soldiers

HUR OPERATIONS TRIAL OF PIR SABGHAT ULLAH SHAH

Reports emanating from various sources indicated that the Pir was the Architect of serious law and order problem in Sindh. It was generally said that his intention was to overthrow the Provincial Government and become the ruler of the area. A few police officials went out of their way to malign the Pir. They propagated that the Pir was extremely ambitious, vindictive, greedy, cruel, a debauch and a thoroughly bad hat who had met a great success in misleading the innocent Hurs. The authenticity of these reports was not beyond doubt and I suppose these allegations were probed into by the civil intelligence and finally accepted.

The Pir had a strong hold over a very large number of people in Sind and the Rajputana States therefore I could not understand as to how such a bad person achieved an exalted position. Therefore, for the sake of curiosity I made enquiries in the civil circle. As a result of these investigations I learnt that the Pir was a nice person with strong religious tendencies and wielded great influence in Sindh and the Rajputana States. However, he was allergic to foreign rule and was, therefore, all out to put an end to foreign domination. This information fitted in the overall picture and therefore, it appealed to me far more than the vicious propaganda. Later with the emergence of Pakistan in August 1947 the Hur rebellion almost died down, This clearly proves that the Hur aim was to put an end to foreign domination rather than creation of trouble in the area.

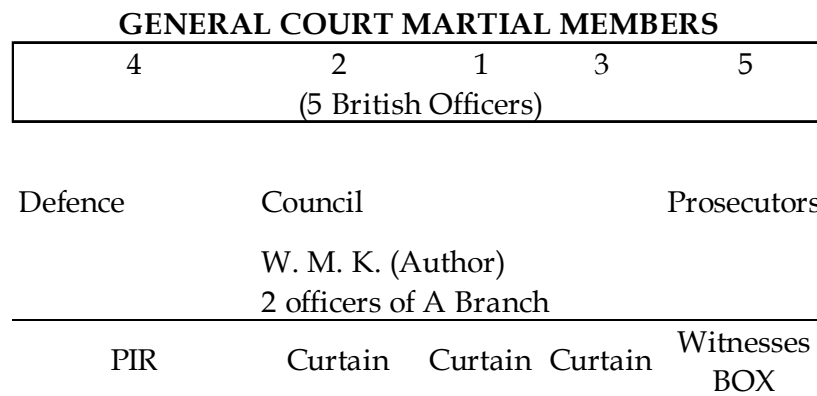
The aim of the Government of the day was the maintenance of law and order. The said aim could be achieved by breaking the back bone of the movement and thus rendering them incapable of indulgence in terrorist activities. In accordance with the law of the country the aim was to be achieved by the use of minimum force. Hence systematic efforts were made to humiliate the Pir so as to lower him in the esteem of his followers both by fair and foul means, but all in vain. Then various steps were taken to incite the Fakirs and Ghazi Hurs to avenge the disgrace inflicted on the Pir by launching large scale attacks on the troops but the trick failed to pay dividend as the Hurs refused to bite at the bait. Now it dawned on the authorities that they had miscalculated the intelligence of the Hurs and therefore, they started pondering over the problem, as to what step should be taken next. The authorities felt that there were only two courses open to the Government: –

- (a) To win over the Pir and release him after vouching good conduct,
- (b) To try the Pir by a Military court and execute him.

The first course was discarded on the plea that the Pir had created all the trouble in the area during world War II to take advantage of the Government's heavy commitments, in various theatres of war. As he was considered to be very ambitious, Vindictive and greedy, therefore, it was felt that he was likely to retaliate to avenge the injustices done to him and hence there was a great danger of the Pir becoming a terror and a danger at the most critical moment. The administration, thought that the first course was not worth a trial and thus strongly advocated the disposal of the nuisance as the safest course and was therefore, adopted. This clearly shows that the decision was taken prior to the trial and had to be implemented by a Military Court to hood-wink the nation.

During the preparatory phase of the trial the prosecution witnesses were lodged in a barrack and tutored by Samuel Ghani DSP, who was alleged to have had a personal grudge against the Pir. On receipt of the said information I took the law in my own hands and paid an unauthorized surprise visit to the prohibited area and caught the culprit red-handed in the performance of the shameful act. Being young and inexperienced I could, not imagine anyone stooping so low hence I reported the matter to Brig. Langlands, the Deputy Force Commander. I was horrified to realize that the said report fell on deaf ears.

The events narrated above created considerable confusion in my head and therefore, out of sheer curiosity of attended the proceedings of the Military Court on the first day for a couple of hours. However, I soon get bored with the mock trial and stayed away as the trial was beyond my jurisdiction. The little information I gained during my stay in the court is being reduced to writing as it may be of some interest to people closely connected with the late Pir. A diagram of the court is produced from my memory: –



CHARGES.

1. Conspiring and preparing to wage a war against the government.
2. Abetment of waging war.

As it was generally believed that the witnesses were likely to turn hostile if they either saw the Pir or heard his voice, therefore adequate measures were taken to ensure that nothing went wrong. During my stay in the court the Pir passed written instructions to the defence council and never spoke to him. The proceedings of the court started in the usual manner and the Pir raised the following objections, through his council:

- (a) Is there not a single Muslim Army Officer in India, to sit as a member of this Court? I expect no justice from an all British court. If the intention is to hang me then do so without a mock trial.
- (b) Why thrust a Hindu advocate on me. Isn't there a single Muslim Advocate in India, for my defence.

The President of the court overruled the objections on the plea that:-

- (a) The members of the court are impartial and would therefore render full justice in the case;
- (b) the best local advocate has been engaged for the defence so as to ensure the best available legal assistance for the accused.

The Pir was cut up with the ruling of the court and stated, through his council, that the obvious intention of the Government is to execute him therefore, the needful should be done without going through the tyranny of a mock trial. The objection was overruled. When questioned by the court whether he pleaded guilty to the charges framed against him or not. The Pir stated that as he was in a jail therefore he was not in a position either to conspire or make preparations for waging a war against the government hence the charges are malignant and fabricated. The President of the court then ordered the Prosecutor to proceed with the case.

At this stage I was somewhat perplexed as certain questions were intriguing my mind. It was due to this state of my mind that most of the time I concentrated on the observation of the Pir who appeared to me just like a lion in the cage. To state frankly I have come across quite a few Pirs but none of his caliber. He was extremely intelligent with dominating personality and had a good knowledge of the criminal procedure code. To the best of my knowledge throughout the trial he had been issuing written instructions to his defence council. However, as anticipated by him all his efforts to save himself failed to have any effect and the finding of the court was guilty and the sentence death by hanging.

On 20th March 1943, at the age of 34 years, he was executed and buried in an island of the Persian Gulf. Just before his execution the only statement he is alleged to have made

is that he was sorry for having committed the sin of indulgence in heavy smoking. The said statement clearly indicates that the Pir considered himself innocent.

The information about the Pir's burial was confined only to those personnel who were required to take point in the operation. The reason for such strict security precautions was due to the fact that the government was of the view that the dead pir could be more dangerous than alive. Knowing the intention of the government I did not dare to probe too much in the sensitive affair which was beyond my jurisdiction. However, I managed to get a copy of the memory sketch of the grave which is attached for the sake of information and interest.

APPENDIX

Letter written to Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Editor Sindh Quarterly by the author Maj-General Wisal Muhammad Khan.

MAJ GEN (retd.)
WISAL MUHAMMAD KHAN
S. Pk. M.C. Pse.
TEL- TORU -2, TORU
MARDAN
23rd JANUARY, 1980

My Dear Shah Sahib,

Many thanks for your letter dated 18th instant delivery to me yesterday evening. I am glad to hear that all is well with you.

I have send you a second installment of articles.

- a) Part II Martial Law period
- b) Part II (cont) [in one envelope]
- c) Part II - post. [in one envelope]

I have left out the information about the Pir's trial and burial due to security restrictions. As the said information would be of great public interest therefore I suggest that you should approach the Federal Government through the normal administrative channels for the publication of the said account. I feel that it would be a great tragedy if the said information is lost to the nation after I expire. The information under reference should have been downgraded at the time of creation of Pakistan but being a careful person I am not prepared to take any risk with security classification.

With all the best wishes,

Yours Sincerely
Sd/-
(WISAL MUHAMMAD KHAN)

PHOTOGRAPH

