

British Intelligence on the North-West Frontier, 1901-1949

India Office Political and Secret Reports on Tribes and Terrorism

EVENING STANDARD

Fakir of Ipi (FRONTIER REBEL) falls ill and faces revolt

WIFE'S BROTHERS SEND ULTIMATUM

PESHAWAR, Friday.—The Fakir of Ipi, Pathan tribesmen's leader, whose defiance of British rule became the legend of the North-West Frontier, is seriously ill, with tribesmen in revolt against him, say reports reaching here.

He has recently been losing control over his Waziristan followers, it is said. Tribesmen alleged that his father-in-law and brothers-in-law were corrupt and should lose their influential positions.

He dismissed the two brothers but on the intercession of his wife kept the services of his father, the report adds.

But the brothers, angry, set up a rival organisation with the backing of rebellious elements and gave the Fakir an ultimatum: dismiss his father-in-law or abdicate.

Legend on the frontier maintains that the Fakir is a wild, unkempt, emaciated figure, with fiery deep-sunk eyes, a mass of chestnut-coloured hair, and a flaming red beard, which he dyes with henna.

Rarely seen

It is said he always perfumes his beard with incense before going into battle; that he is a crack shot and a redoubtable horseman. Few outside his followers have ever seen him.

At one time 35,000 men were fighting him. He fled to the hills only after an air blockade nearly three years later.

His followers, trained to raid the British "infidel," lost their livelihood when Pakistan and India became self-governing Dominions.—Reuter.



The Fakir of I



INDIA
Showing the area covered by this map.

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In 1901, the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, created the British Indian 'North-West Frontier Province'. Previously the British in India had adopted a policy of non-interference in the tribal territories on their north-western borderlands. However, the emergence of Russia as a regional power and the diplomatic and military rivalry of the Great Game led to a more pro-active frontier policy. After the First World War this policy became more ambitious, aiming to reform tribal society with economic and social development projects. Reform, however, proved to be too expensive and too difficult to implement widely. And insurgency continued, with random terrorist attacks, occasional assassinations and sometimes major revolts lasting for several years.

The materials in this collection document British attempts to impose 'order' on the tribal territories. With details of policy initiatives familiar to contemporary observers of the region, the files describe imperial struggles with jihadist movements, and show how local leaders were able to stay out of British hands. The material

covers the period 1901 to 1949, by which time the Province had become an administrative region of Pakistan. It highlights the unsuccessful hunt for the charismatic leader of the troubles in the 1930s and 1940s, the Faqir of Ipi, who convinced his many followers that Islam was under threat from infidel western-style government.

The collection, drawn from the files of the India Office Political and Secret Department archives in the British Library, consists of detailed confidential reports from Frontier Agents in all the border areas, usually submitted on a weekly basis. In addition there are intelligence reviews and summaries produced by the Intelligence Bureau in Peshawar. The reports are geographically wide-ranging. By the 1920s, for example, the British Government was receiving weekly diaries of events in Waziristan, Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Hazara and the Khyber valley. In addition many of the North-West Frontier intelligence reports include information on regions extending much further into Afghanistan and Central Asia.


ORGANIZATION OF THE MATERIAL

- BIN-1 Memoranda of Information' on North-West Frontier Affairs, 1901-1911
- BIN-2 Intelligence Diaries, 1911-1930
- BIN-3 Annual Reports and Arrangements for Intelligence Gathering, 1922-1942
- BIN-4 Weekly Intelligence Diaries and Summaries, 1931-1947
- BIN-5 Waziristan Disturbances, 1937-1949

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COLLECTION

- North-West Frontier Intelligence Bureau Diaries, 1921-1929
- Weekly Summaries of Intelligence from the Office of the Deputy Director, Intelligence, Peshawar, 1933-1947
- Papers on the tribal disturbances in Waziristan, 1937
- Weekly diaries from local agents in Waziristan, Khyber, Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara, Kohat, Peshawar

PRODUCT INFORMATION

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Anthony J. Farrington †

Brill/IDC Publishers was saddened by the death of Anthony Farrington, East India Company Historian and former Director of the India Office Collections of the British Library, in September 2008. Tony Farrington advised on many of our publications in the *British Intelligence Files Series*. We will remember him as a knowledgeable man with a unique personality, who was always a pleasure to work with.

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