

ween the two countries.¹ Only a year later, in July 1951, the friction between India and Pakistan on the western frontier became as fierce as it had been on the eastern frontier in March 1950. At that time, Pakistanis were surprised to learn that India, contrary to its assurance under the Delhi Agreement, had not removed its forces from the borders.²

In 1958 the East Pakistan-Assam border, where intermittent skirmishes had continued, again became the scene of more serious clashes. The conflict arose over the ownership of some fertile charlands on the Pakistani side of the Surma river. Pakistan had earlier claimed the entire channel of the river, but had later accepted the mid-stream as a compromise boundary. India's objection to Pakistani fishermen fishing on their side of the river was resented by Pakistan. It maintained that half of the river channel was Pakistani territory, and that its nationals had every right to use that part of the river.³ The Deputy Commissioner of Cachar (Assam) refused to accept the Pakistani claim over any part of the Surma river. On the contrary, he gave a 'river ultimatum' to his counterpart in Sylhet (East Pakistan) to abandon Pakistan's claim over any portion of the Surma.⁴ Pakistan regarded this as a serious and highly provocative attitude.⁵

Even then the matter might have been settled at the district level. But Indian leaders' utterances on the issue turned it into a more serious international problem. The Indian Defence Minister, Krishna Menon stated: "The Indian army could go to the aid of police guarding India's frontier in case there should be an attempt by anybody to walk on our soil."⁶ He further observed that India had no fears regarding its borders with Burma, China and the Soviet Union. Obviously, Menon thus singled out Pakistan as the only country whose frontiers with

¹According to the Indian Home Ministry's annual report, in 1969, 519 communal incidents took place in India, as against 346 in 1958. See *Dawn*, May 15, 1970. See also *Dawn*, May 18, 1970: "The Carnage and its Causes"; *Ibid.*, May 14, 1970: Pakistan Protest—"It is a matter of great regret that the Government of India seem to have taken no concrete steps under the Liaquat-Nehru Agreement of 1950". *Ibid.*, "Bhivandi and the Aftermath", May 16, 1970; *Ibid.*, "140 Senas or 'Armed' operate in India... September 1, 1970.

²*Ibid.*, July 16, 1951 (Liaquat's Statement).

³*The Times* (London), April 15, 1958.

⁴*Manchester Guardian*, April 18, 1958.

⁵*Dawn*, May 14, 1958.

⁶*The Hindu* (Madras), June 6, 1958.

India could cause trouble. Then the Indian Home Minister, Govind B. Pant, came out with his bellicose utterance: "If the wanton shooting across the border did not stop at Assam, then *India's might would have to be shown to Pakistan in a befitting manner and to teach Pakistan a lesson.*"¹

Pakistan's Foreign Office summoned the Indian High Commissioner and handed over an *aide-memoire* asking India to withdraw its Forces from Pakistan's territory immediately. He was told that Pakistan took a serious view of India's repeated acts of aggression and the Indian Home Minister's threat of military action. The *aide-memoire* listed Pakistan's protests at the continued border incidents, both in East and West-Pakistan; the massings of Indian troops at various points of the East Pakistan-Assam border; the forcible occupation of Lakshampur village in the Teppera district of East Pakistan; and the firing on Pakistan's border patrol.² However, Pakistan adopted a sober attitude in spite of severe public reaction. The acting Prime Minister stated that Pakistan would like nothing more than the complete elimination of Indo-Pakistan border disputes, though he had to pacify public feeling by saying that "however peaceful our policies may be, we will not be bullied by India or by anyone else."³ The tempo of public feeling on the issue was mirrored by *Dawn* in its comment on August 9, captioned, *Expell the Aggressor*: "If a Government cannot fulfil the primary responsibility of defending the country's frontiers, it has no right to be there."⁴

Armed clashes had already begun on the 15-mile Surma sector. They had spread to Kumarsahal and Pathkhal (tea estates) of the Sylhet district. In addition to their firing in the Lakshampur, Patharia and Surma sectors, Indian Forces were reported to have opened fire on outposts at Tamabil, Sonatia, Sonargam, and Punji in the Plynain sector, which had remained calm throughout the earlier border clashes.⁵

India alleged that the border clashes had started in consequence of the 'Operation Closed Door' policy of the Chundrigar Government of Pakistan.⁶ This was a military drive to stop

¹*Ibid.*, June 7, 1958. (Italics added.)

²*Dawn*, August 3, 1958.

³*Ibid.*, August 8, 1958.

⁴*Ibid.*, August 9, 1958.

⁵*Ibid.*, August 16 and 17, 1958.

⁶*The Hindu* (Madras), August 28, 1958.