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*The 'John A.' of Swat*

# Founder Kept Busy Swatting Down Foes

By PETER DESBARATS

Miangul Gulshahzada Abdul Wadud Khan, Badshah Sahib for short, is the John A. Macdonald and George Washington of Swat. Almost 50 years ago — Swat is exactly half as old as Canada — he founded the State of Swat. And a tough job it was. Washington only had to cut down a cherry tree. Badshah Sahib had to cut down most of his relatives.

On fine spring evenings, a custom-made minibus leaves the "Safaid Mahal" or White Palace in the valley of Murghzar and drives about 10 miles northeast to Mingora, the commercial metropolis (population 15,000) of Swat, and back again. Inside the bus is a small, bespectacled, white-bearded gentleman, 83 years of age. He smiles benevolently at the merchants, the cobblers making sandals out of old automobile tires, the butchers hacking at carcasses hung before their shops, the confident "doctors" dispensing their cure-alls and the sweetmeat vendors squatting behind their heaping trays of flies. Then he is driven back to his palace, fed and put to bed.

Badshah Sahib isn't what he used to be. A prostate operation several years ago finally made the "iron man" of Swat give up hunting, mountain-climbing and the other activities of his lively 70s. Now he lives quietly, praying, studying the Koran and daydreaming about the bloody but beautiful years of his manhood.

## A Microscopic State

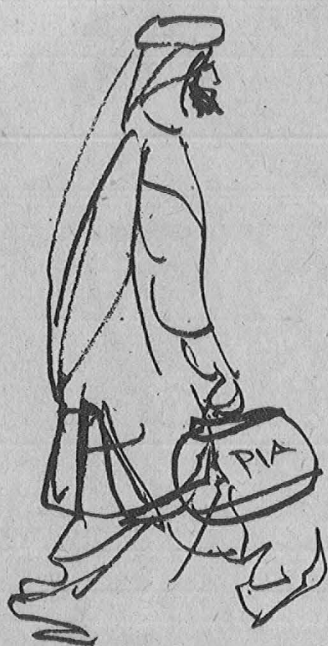
By Canadian standards, Swat is a microscopic State. Its total area of 4,000 square miles, much of it vertical mountainside, is not quite double the area of Prince Edward Island. Swat is almost exactly a thousand times smaller than Canada. Its population of 600,000 is less than one-third the population of metropolitan Montreal or Toronto. Its annual budget amounts to Rupees totalling one crore 20 lakhs—about 2,500,000 Canadian dollars, equivalent to one-fifth of the total Canadian budget at the time of Confederation.

But what there is of Swat is the work of one man — Badshah Sahib. No one helped him. He had to fight his cousins. He had to fight the Nawab of Dir. He had to fight the khans of Upper Swat. He had to fight the British. Few heads of state today can survey their nations, and say, "I did it." Badshah Sahib can and does.

"A sweet triumphant smile plays on his radiant and dignified face — a smile which comes to the face of a great artist when he surveys his masterpiece. This grey-headed personage who still has a youthful heart and spirit is the Founder of Swat. A mere glance on his countenance transmits joy."

Thus begins the official History of Swat, written by none other than the grey-headed personage himself. After handing over the government in 1949 to his son, the present Wali of Swat, Badshah Sahib called in a scribe and dictated his story. In 1962 he authorized a translation of this remarkable document from Pushto, the language of Swat, into English.

Although Swat is a young



state, its land has been occupied by various peoples for centuries. Ed McNally and I drove one day to Udegram, about six miles from the capital city of Saidu Sharif, and climbed 1,000 feet above the Valley of Swat to a hill-top settlement dating back to pre-historic times. Alexander the Great called it "Ora" and captured it about 326 BC on his way to India. The fortifications that we clambered over were built at the end of the third century after Christ when Swat was becoming a centre of Buddhist culture. Chinese writers of the eighth century reported that there were 1,400 Buddhist monasteries in the land beyond Tibet which they called "Sootoo."

The Saffron-robed monks disappeared in the eleventh century when the Mogul kings brought Mohammedanism to Swat. Quite sensibly, the Swatis decided that they would rather switch than fight, and since then Islam has been the official religion.

## Experienced Many Wars

Swat was occupied during most of its history by warring tribes. In the nineteenth century a soldier-saint, Saidu Baba, was proclaimed Akhund of Swat and united the tribes in the face of British invasion. The fierce Yusufzai tribesmen fought so desperately against the British, commanded by Sir Neville Chamberlain, that The Imperial forces decided to leave them alone after a token march into Swat. When the British withdrew and the Akhund died in 1877, the Yusufzais returned to their usual custom of fighting among themselves.

Warfare, for the Yusufzais, was a way of life. In Moslem society, the April festival of Eid is celebrated by slaughtering cattle and feasting. The Yusufzais used to celebrate Eid, as recently as 50 years ago, by slaughtering other Yusufzais. Villagers would attack each other with sticks and stones, and only those who ended the day smeared with blood were considered to have had a Merry Eid.

Justice was administered by local sheikhs. If a man was found guilty of theft, his hand was cut off. Murder required either the death of the murderer or the payment of blood money to relatives of the deceased. Peasants were flogged if they dared to pick up fruit

lying on the ground in a sheikh's orchard.

This was the land that Badshah Sahib, grandson of the original Akhund, inherited. But not until after a long struggle. First he had to contend with cousins. In his official History of Swat, he describes briefly how one cousin, Amir Badshah, dropped out of the race.

## Badshah Gets Control

"Matters finally came to a head," related Badshah Sahib, "when during a hunt on the same hill, chance brought me face to face with him. Both of us moving our hands with lightning speed, pressed the triggers almost at the same instant, and two shots were fired simultaneously.

"As a result, Amir Badshah dropped dead on the spot."

Badshah Sahib's only brother, Shahzada Sherin Jan, gave him no end of trouble until he was killed fighting the Nawab of Dir.

Confessed Badshah Sahib: "That the Shahzada for whom I was ever prepared to lay down my life was no more amongst us, I could not possibly get over. Yet, for the love of truth, I should confess that henceforth being unencumbered with the necessity of listening to someone else's suggestions and proposals..."

By 1917, Badshah Sahib felt himself strong enough to found the state of Swat. With disarming modesty, he stated in his history: "The circumstances demanded cool-headedness and fortitude and, God be praised, I did possess both in plenty."

And again "These enormous responsibilities were enough to break the back of anyone but me."

It took the British nine years to recognize the government of the grandson of their old enemy, the Akhund. Even in 1921, according to the history, Badshah Sahib was coping not only with "the mutinous khans of Manja, the invading Kohistani lashkar at Madyan, the aggressive Nawab of Amb and the concentrated forces of my old and powerful adversary, the Nawab of Dir," but also with "the seditious activities and clandestine dealings of the British Political Agent."

"I have not yet been able to erase those troublesome days from my memory," admitted Badshah Sahib in his history. "The whole campaign occupied five and a half months and it would not be wrong to call it the Great War of Swat."

Finally, in 1926, the British officially recognized Badshah Sahib as the first Wali of Swat. In 1947, the State of Swat became part of the new nation of Pakistan but the Wali, Badshah Sahib's son, retained full control over the state except in the field of foreign affairs.

## Taxes Nil; Education Free

There is a temptation, which I have succumbed to in this article, to regard the old man in the white palace at Marguhzar as a curiosity. He seems as out of place in the twentieth century, with his memories of tribal feuds and British rule in India, as the cannon which his ordnance factory in Saidu Sharif used to manufacture. But there was another side to Badshah Sahib which was remarkably modern and which created, in Swat, probably the only society in the world today where there is no income tax, no business tax, free education at all levels including university, free hospital care and free medical and dental treatment.

**Tomorrow: How to run a Government on Emeralds and Honey.**

Staff Reporter Peter Desbarats and Editorial Cartoonist Ed McNally recently visited Swat. What's Swat? It is a small mountainous fragment of the Garden of Eden at the top of West Pakistan. It has no revolution. No Communists. Absolutely no international significance. This article is the second of five, designed for people seeking a change from Viet Nam, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, China, etc., etc., etc.



Mountains and mosque towers overlook Saidu Sharif, the capital city of Swat.