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Homage to Heroism - Remembering 27 October 1947

Another 11 days, on 27 October, we will be commemorating the martyrdom of Brig Rajinder Singh Jamwal, MVC, who gave us Kashmir. 1/2

Brig Rajinder Singh Jamwal, MVC, a Dogra Rajput, was a descendant of General Baj Singh who died serving Maharaja Gulab Singh, the modern day founder of Jammu & Kashmir Princely State. Grandfather and father of Brig Rajinder Singh were also Army Veterans. 2/3

Pakistan made preparations in September 1947 to invade Kashmir. A mix of regular Pakistani Army soldiers and tribals numbering about 5000, in about 250 lorries reached Muzaffarabad on 22 Oct 1947. There was a Battalion of J&K State Forces in the garrison of Muzaffarabad. 3/4

Muslim soldiers of this Battalion who were more than half of the strength, mutinied and killed their Commanding Officer, Lt Colonel Narain Singh and his adjutant, and joined the Pakistani invaders with their arms and ammunition, along with some locals. 4/5

They started moving towards Srinagar and fall of Srinagar and the take over of the entire state by Pakistan under the guise of local uprising, within the next 24 to 48 hours, was imminent. Maharaja Hari Singh panicked. 5/6

Only intervention by Indian Armed Forces could save him and his state. However, there was no such plan by the Government of India unless the state acceded to join the Indian union. The Maharaja had not yet made up his mind about accession. 6/7

There was hardly any time even for the Maharaja to escape from Srinagar.
Maharaja Hari Singh, just a month ago, had replaced his British Chief of State Forces and appointed Brigadier Rajinder Singh in his place. Brig Rajinder Singh was yet to familiarize himself with his tasks.6

When the information of falling of Muzaffarabad to the raiders and their advance towards Srinagar reached the Maharaja, Brig Rajender Singh was summoned by Maharaja Hari Singh in the presence of Crown Prince Karan Singh on 22 October 1947 and was ordered to "Defend Srinagar 8/9

till the Indian forces arrived, to the LAST BULLET AND LAST MAN". The valiant soldier just said " Right Sir", and left with no questions or doubts whatsoever.
Badami Bagh garrison had around 1700 men and officers, mostly Poonchie Muslims. 9/10

With the knowledge of mutiny by Muslim soldiers in Muzaffarabad, the loyalty of Badami Bagh soldiers could not be put to test. The Brigadier gathered about 180 men, poorly armed, yet ready to lay down their lives, arranged some private vehicles and proceeded to meet the enemy 10

that very day, past midnight. His men were outnumbered and outgunned. To delay the advancing of the enemy troops, he got the bridges demolished, went on encountering and attacking them, withdrawing tactically, redeploying his miniscule forces at several places. 11/12

A second column of a small number of men under Capt Jwala Singh joined him the next day. At one stage, Brig Rajender Singh's driver was killed, he drove his own vehicle. On 27 October, he was mortally wounded and was unable to move. 12/13

He didn't retain even one of his men to attend on himself and ordered his men, whose strength was greatly depleted by then, to move back to the next defensive position and delay the enemy's advance. He stayed back, alone. 13/14

All his men were killed and it is said that he was killed by the raiders, his body was mutilated and cut into pieces. He and his men fought a LAST STAND BATTLE.
180 kms of unguarded defenseless road from Muzaffarabad to Srinagar, to be covered by 6000 heavily armed men, 14/15

led by Pakistani regular officers and guided by local muslims, moving on 250 lorries was a cake walk, would not have taken more than a day or two. But they were kept away from reaching Srinagar till 27 October, for full 5 days by Brigadier Rajinder Singh and his men. 15/16

These precious delaying encounters and skirmishes bought sufficient time to the ever wavering Maharaja to make up his mind, start negotiations, sign the Instrument of Accession and for the Indian Army to get airlifted and land at the Srinagar airport on 27 October 1947. 16/17

The gravity of the impending tragedy could be understood by this anecdote. Sri Meharchand Mahajan (who became third Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India) was the Prime Minister of Maharaja Hari Singh at that time. 17/18

On the night of 25 October the Maharaja moved from Srinagar to Jammu and was asleep on 26 October when Sri VP Menon reached him with the Instrument of Accession. Sri Mahajan revealed to Sri Menon that the Maharaja ordered his ADC 18/19

(Aid de Camp - normally an Army Officer who assists a high dignitary such as the President, Governor or a high ranking Army Commander in their daily routine) not to be awakened and that the ADC should shoot him (the Maharaja), in his sleep, in the head, if Sri VP Menon 19/20

were not to appear that day with the Instrument of Accession, with the assurance of deployment of Indian Army to defend Srinagar. The instrument of accession was signed on 26 October and the Indian Army was airlifted to Srinagar, on 27 October. 20/21

The saga of the Indian Army and the subsequent stories of valour are well known. This was possible because Srinagar Airport was kept free from enemy occupation. However, by any chance, if the Srinagar Airport was to be with the enemy as on 27 October, 21/22

Indian Army would not have been airlifted even after signing of the Instrument of Accession and such a decision was taken even before formalising the accession. Only Brigadier Rajender Singh and his men could stop the raiders from reaching to Srinagar 22/23

and thus he saved the life of his Maharaja, saved Srinagar and saved Kashmir. But, he lost his life. He was awarded the first Maha Veer Chakra of India, after institution of independent India's gallantry awards. Sri VP Menon compared him and his men with Leonidas and his 300 men.

But for him, we would have lost Kashmir FOREVER.
Very few would understand this. The strength of the men involved in these skirmishes from J&K State Forces was less than 250. This number of men are normally commanded by an officer of the rank of a Major / Captain or below. 24/25

Brigadier Rajinder Singh was the Head of the State Forces. He was the Chief. He knew that this was going to decide the future of Kashmir, this or that way, once for all, and sensed death and did not have the heart to send a subordinate to fight a battle that was decisive 25/26

and assuredly suicidal. This is a rare incident of the Head of State Forces fighting along with soldiers of the lowest formation, leading them from the front, in a suicidal mission.
Brigadier Rajinder Singh Jamwal, MVC, Amar Rahe. Jai Hind. ■■
Capt M. Srinivsulu IPS (Retd) 26/F