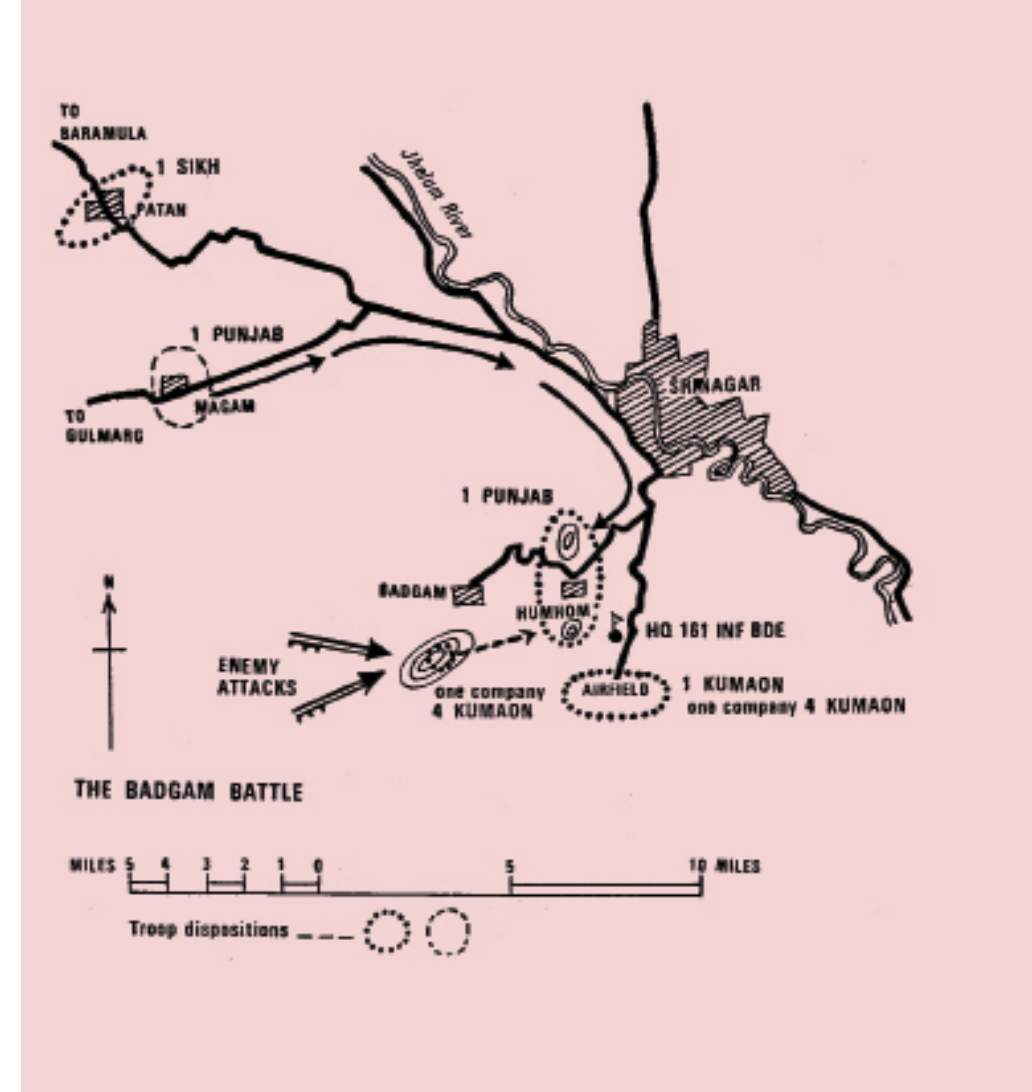


## Major General Rajendra Prakash recalls those fateful days in



Troops of 4 Kumaon on arrival at Srinagar Airport, November 1947, being bussed in civilian transport to the 'front'



26 October, we saw a wide circle of fires blazing on the *Karewa* towards Tangmarg-Baramulla : these were learnt to be the Sikh villages attacked and being burnt by the tribal invaders.

Around midnight the next day, we were woken up by a mounted cavalry patrol of J&K Bodyguards, who were out on reconnaissance, but they were as much

in dark as we were on what was happening. Unaware of the situation in the larger context, we blissfully carried on, hoping for the best, although very apprehensive. All this while, the Pakistani-led tribal Lashkars were making their way from Uri-Baramulla towards Srinagar, and then to Badgam.

Next night (28/29 October) some rifle shots were fired at our cottage, hitting

# Badgam, the Kashmir Valley, October 1947

In October 1947, when the raiders from Pakistan invaded Kashmir, my parents, two younger brothers and I lived in Badgam, a small village south-west of Srinagar fairly close to the only airfield in the Kashmir Valley. My father Sardar Om Prakash was the officer in-charge of what is now Badgam district. We lived in a solitary cottage, poised on the very edge of *Karewa*, a vast upraised geological formation, typical of the Valley, stretching away towards Gulmarg-Baramulla in the north-east. My father's office and the Government treasury

were housed in a 'U' shaped building, on the lower ground in vicinity, while the small village of Badgam lay a few hundred yards further down.

I used to cycle down to Sri Amar Singh Degree College on outskirts of Srinagar, where I had obtained a provisional pass because examination results for my FSc (Intermediate) examination could not be declared by Punjab University, owing to the disruption caused by partition of the country on 15 August 1947. (Subsequently I was awarded a FSc diploma in 1948,

having rendered three months 'service' in a refugee camp in Pathankot, as per then prevailing rules).

It was on 25 or 26 October, while returning from my college, that I saw a couple of tall hefty men in *salwars* lurking in a village half-way to Badgam. These men did not look like Kashmiris and on getting home, mentioned this to my father. We were still blissfully unaware of what was happening in Kashmir, except for rumours since there was no TV or other information means those days. Even to listen to All India

Radio one needed bulky and expensive wet or dry batteries to run the radio, while newspapers (*Tribune* and *Civil & Military Gazette* in English and *Milap* and *Pratap* in Urdu) had to come all the way from Lahore, which was now in Pakistan.

However, there was a general sense of unease, heightened by rumours on this invasion by tribals from the north west who had massacred Hindus and Sikhs in Muzaffrabad and our home-town of Mirpur, though nothing specific was known at that time. On the night of



Douglas DC-3 Dakota in Kashmir, 1947