



In Memoriam: India & Its Canadian 'Otters'

Canadian-Built Aircraft Was Invaluable Lifeline During The India-China War Of 1962

By Ghanshyam Singh Katoch@

It is rightly said that "Victory has a hundred fathers, but defeat is an orphan". 20 Oct 2019 was celebrated as the 57th anniversary of the start of the Sino-India war of 1962. It ended in ignominy for India on 21 Nov 1962.

Few will remember this anniversary, and fewer will want to commemorate it. In homage to the 3,250 Indian soldiers who died in the war this article reminisces a facet of Indo-Canadian affiliation which is remembered fondly for its contribution to the war in a very benign but important manner.

That facet is the service of the De Havilland Canada DHC-3 Otter transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The Otter with its take-off distance of 1,155 feet and landing distance of 850 feet had been a worthy successor of another legendary Canadian bush aircraft the DHC-2 "Beaver". Whether with wheels or floats both types of aircraft endeared themselves to their users. So did the Otter to its Indian users.

The Canadian Otter was the only single engine transport aircraft flown by the IAF. It was inducted into the IAF in 1956 and the last one flew with the IAF till 1991.

Its finest hour was in the 31-day war of 1962. A thoroughbred "bush" aircraft the otter was flown by the No 41 'Otters' Squadron and No. 59 'Hornbills' squadrons of the IAF. Capable of operating from short unmetalled Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) with a high wing con-



An IAF Otter comes into land an ALG in the Eastern sector in Oct 1962. Another one with engine running has unloaded and is waiting to take off.

figuration, it could carry 10 to 11 soldiers with their equipment and fly up to heights of 18,800 feet.

The nascent IAF helicopter capability with limited endurance, range and payloads and the notoriously fickle Himalayan weather, made the Otters an invaluable lifeline for induction and supply of troops and evacuation of casualties.

The ALGs that the Otter flew

from are etched in the memory of the pilots who flew the otters and the soldiers who remember them as saviours. Tezu, Menchuka, Walong are some of those legendary ALGs which in much improved manner are still in use today.

A memorable effort of the Otters was to induct a complete Indian army brigade (11 Infantry Brigade) for the defence of

Walong in the Lohit valley during a short lull in the operations.

History is replete with instances of once implacable opponents transitioning to being good friends. Examples are the French and the Germans, the Americans and the Japanese, the Vietnamese and the Americans.

In spite of the Sino-Indian border dispute remaining unsolved and memories of that humiliating

defeat of 1962 persisting, Sino-Indian relations have progressed. China is among India's largest trading partners and one can hope that growing business and people to people ties will wipe out the last vestiges of acrimony which will help in resolving the boundary issue.

Canada's largest new immigrants are of Indian and Chinese origin. They will play a positive influence as Indian and Chinese people to people bonhomie grows. Finding a small niche in that relationship will be the Canadian Otter aircraft.

In 2011 while serving at Walong, one of our lady doctors with an observant eye noticed that a restraining metal panel which was being used to keep the hill side mud sliding into the small clearing of the Medical Aid room, appeared different; it appeared to have rivets.

She got it removed and was surprised to see that it was a small aircraft wing. The inner side protected from the vagaries of weather still had the aircraft number painted on it.

A request to the IAF confirmed that it was from one of their wartime lost Otters.

We removed the wing and kept it at the Walong ALG memorial. Earlier there was a full aircraft there which was later removed by the IAF and taken to its museum. That was another legendary Canadian aircraft—a DHC Caribou. But that is another story.

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Is 'Azadi March' Part Of Maulana's Hate-Filled Agenda?

By Shazia Malik

Is history repeating itself in Pakistan when all political parties joined hands to replace Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government in 1977? Or is Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan getting the taste of his own medicine when he started his sit-in against the elected government of Nawaz Sharif in 2014?

Well the answer of both the questions lead to one person - Maulana Fazlur Rahman of JUI-F, commonly known as 'Maulana Diesel' (after he got diesel permits in late Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto's time) who has brought utter chaos under the garb of his so called 'Azadi March' asking prime minister Imran Khan to resign from his post.

Before entering the seventies era, it is important to understand the history of the Jamiat-e-Ulema-Hind – a party that called Jinnah – the creator of Pakistan – a kafir (infidel) and was against the very idea of creation of Pakistan. In fact, the party's main member, Maulana Mufti Mahmood, Fazlur Rehman's father was quoted saying in 1971: "Thank God we were not part of the sin of making Pakistan."

After the creation of Pakistan, this group became part of Shabbir Ahmad Usmani's



Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam which pressurized prime minister Bhutto to pass 2nd Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan 1974 against Ahmadis.

Still not happy with Bhutto's move, Maulana Mufti Mahmood joined hands with nine other parties called Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in 1977 and asked Bhutto to fully enforce Nizam-e-Mustafa – that started a long era of radicalization under General Zia. The protest, of course, finally dislodged Bhutto's government.

Though it is said there are no permanent allies or enemies in politics, it is surprising to see Bilawal Zardari – who also uses his maternal grandfather Bhutto's name is seen supporting a man whose father was instrumental in removing Bhutto's government. It is equally surprising to see Shahbaz Sharif, brother of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif supporting him though he was not in favour of being part of this mess. But he had to heed his brother Nawaz's instructions to give all assistance to Maulana and his hardline party.

Rehman is widely known to be an opportunist. Harping on the tune of Imran being part of the Jewish lobby who sold Kashmir to India, is being asked by the media now about his own achievements when he was heading the Kashmir Committee. For 10 years, Maulana just toured the world and enjoyed a luxurious life but could not garner enough support for the issue in the Muslim world. It is also note worthy that the same Maulana in 2007, asked the then US Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne Patterson, to help him become Pakistan's Prime Minister and in lieu of that favour was ready to give all out support to the American administration in war against terror.

One of the closest allies of Bhutto, Mau-

lana Kauser Niazi quoted an incident in his book – Aur Line Kut Gaye – when he was visiting Rehman's father Mufti Mehmud at his residence.

Niazi wrote that the Mufti would always stop talking whenever a young man entered the room and resumed discussions when he left. Seeing Niazi's curiosity, Mufti told him that the boy was his son, Fazlur Rahman, was allegedly working for some agencies and spying on him.

So, what do we gather about Fazlur Rahman's character? When the country is passing through such a critical phase and the government is trying to stabilize situation, has Maulana being paid by a 'foreign hand' to derail the whole system? The question also is where will his hate-filled bigoted agenda lead Pakistan?

Will a ministry or a post in government resolve this deadlock as Maulana has a heartburn for not winning any seat in last elections and sitting in the Parliament? Meanwhile, PTI government's spokesperson, Defense Minister Pervez Khattak has already made it clear: "There is no possibility of the prime minister's resignation. That is not even an option to discuss with the Rahbar committee. We can negotiate on other demands but no talks will be done on PM resignation."

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