

UNIT-IV INDIAN ARMY UNDER THE CROWN

Topic:1 Lord Kitchener's Reforms

In November 1902 Lord Kitchener arrived in India and became Commander-in-Chief. Lord Kitchener carried through a series of reforms that would stamp his name indelibly on the military history of India. Herbert Kitchener enjoyed the splendid fame of standing godfather to modern Egypt.

Kitchener was a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1871, and himself found the performance of those duties so tedious that in 1874 he went surveying in Palestine. Then Kitchener went to Egypt, and began to organize a force of native cavalry. By April, 1892, he succeeded Sir Francis Grenfell as Sirdar [commander] of the Egyptian Army. It was in that capacity that he crushed the Mahdi Uprising in the battle of Omdurman, in which the Mahdi's army was annihilated at only slight losses to the British. For these services Sir Herbert Kitchener was created Baron Kitchener of Khartoum, and a sum of £30,000 was awarded to him.

An agreement between Great Britain and Egypt of 19 January 1899 established the joint sovereignty of the two states throughout Sudan. The reorganization of the country began, with supreme power being centered in one official termed the "governor-general of the Sudan." To this post was appointed Lord Kitchener, under whom the Sudan had been reconquered. Kitchener was summoned to act as Chief of the Staff with Lord Roberts, in December 1899, to South Africa to take up the command against the Boers. Lord Roberts, in December, 1900, returned to England, and Lord Kitchener assumed the command. For his services Lord Kitchener was promoted to be Lieutenant-General and General, was given a viscounty, and received the thanks of Parliament and a grant of £50,000. For great strategy the campaigns had offered no opportunities, and the occasions for generalship in command were few, but Kitchener had again proved himself a wonderful organizer and administrator in the military sphere.

There were people in England who would have gladly handed over to Kitchener's will the entire machinery of the British Empire. There were others who thought that his mind was so exclusively the mind of an autocratic organizer that he would be the ruin of any empire in which the civil power was not absolutely paramount.

The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, had repeatedly pressed for the appointment of Lord Kitchener. It was part of his policy to seek the best men who could be found; he knew that the system of Indian defence required reconstruction, and he believed Lord Kitchener to be the soldier best qualified for the task. Lord Kitchener, on his part, was equally eager to go to India. He regarded the Indian command with a feeling akin to the enthusiasm with which Lord Curzon had entered upon the Viceroyalty, and he passed with alacrity from the dusty camp at Vereeniging to the most coveted post a British general can hold.

When Lord Kitchener reached India, the administration of the army was in a stage of transition. The distinguished officers of an earlier day had effected many improvements. It was the work of Lord Roberts and Sir George Chesney, among others, which rendered possible the further reforms of Lord Kitchener; but much remained to be done. The old system of separate Commanders-in-Chief for Bombay and Madras had been abolished, and the whole of the military forces had been unified under one head; but the organisation and distribution were still based upon obsolete conceptions. The views which dominated military policy immediately after the Mutiny were only just being abandoned. The advantages conferred by the development of a great network of railways had not been properly utilised. It was not clear whether the Army of India was controlled and distributed with the object of preserving internal peace or of repelling attack from without. Stray units were scattered about the land in isolated cantonments, and sometimes British regiments were found divided up into three or four detachments, so that in such cases a whole battalion rarely drilled together.

The "Kitchener test," by which every battalion in India was subjected to severe examination under service conditions, was much scoffed at, and produced a considerable amount of grumbling, particularly in the native ranks; but after it was all over officers admitted that it had been an excellent expedient, and had revealed such weaknesses as existed. Lord Kitchener was never beloved by the Army in India, and probably he did not want to be; but he had the faculty of producing extraordinary devotion among the officers with whom he was most closely in contact, and he was respected and feared by all.

When he first took up his command, he did not form a very high opinion of the efficiency of the Indian regiments, and he is not accustomed to conceal his convictions. Again, he was inclined to look askance at some of the methods of the Native Army, which he failed to understand, and thought were pampering. He judged what he saw too much by the standard of his old Soudanese troops.

Indians are quicker than Europeans at discerning what is in a man's mind, and the "Kitchener test," which wore out the sepoy's clothes and boots and accoutrements, for which he then had to pay, did the rest. In later years Lord Kitchener saw fit to revise his views about the Native Army, and in the end he became its benefactor. He doubled the kit money of the Indian soldiers, so that they got their outfit free.

In 1903 a fresh departure took place in the unification of the army, and a further reorganization¹ was initiated under the auspices of the Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Kitchener. The first step in the abandonment of the principles which had held the field for so long was made in 1903 when the regiments of cavalry and battalions of infantry were re-numbered and re-named, so as to get rid of all territorial connection. The object aimed at was to have one army in India, and not four bodies in one army—a complete reversal of the older policy. The next step was to abolish the Southern or Madras Command, and practically the Madras army, substituting regiments recruited from northern races for the Madras.

Lord Kitchener, in the course of his prolonged tenure of the post of commander-in-chief in India, set to himself the task of reconstituting the army in India as regards organization and administration, improving its military efficiency, distributing it territorially to the best advantage, and giving it the mobility and power of rapid concentration which modern warfare requires. Though able men before him had done much to make the Indian army an efficient instrument of war, Lord Kitchener brought to bear upon the problem new ideas and methods. He had this advantage over his predecessors that he enjoyed a prestige and authority that enabled him to override opposition and obtain the concurrence of the home and Indian authorities to a large, and, in many respects, a contentious, scheme of reconstruction.

The abolition of the military department and the military member of council, and the subsequent suppression of a separate department of supply, made him eventually the sole military adviser of the viceroy, and concentrated in the person of the commander-in-chief all executive and administrative authority in military affairs. With the disappearance of the military department and military member of council, the administration of military affairs in the Government of India and the executive command of the army were united in the person of the commander-in-chief. As an exception to this unification, certain branches of army supply were at first made a separate department and placed under a supply member of council.

Even though the Crown had taken direct charge of India from the East India Company in 1857, the three Presidency armies still existed and as late as 1904 there was no "Indian Army". In that year Lord Kitchener, appointed commander-in-chief of Indian forces in 1902, embarked on a reorganization to create an integrated all-India army. This 9 division, 9 cavalry brigade plan entailed divisions were 1 through 9, and associated cavalry brigades, also numbered 1 through 9. The Kitchener reorganization established 39 cavalry regiments in sequence from 1 - 39, with each regiment bearing its traditional name.

In reorganizing the army he made the defence of the north-west frontier against the possible advance of Russia through Afghanistan his primary concern. The organization of the troops which he found existing dated from the Mutiny. It failed, he considered, to distinguish sufficiently between the requirements of internal security and those of offensive warfare. It did not earmark troops for these two distinct purposes and train and equip them accordingly, but left the selection and mobilization of an active army in the event of war to the last moment. He aimed, therefore, at creating out of the forces at his disposal a (some 230,000 men in all) a field army, capable of being immediately mobilized, of the strength which be required to defend India against a Russian advance through Afghanistan, until help could be obtained from England.

He proposed, to mark off this army from the troops allotted for internal defence, to distribute it conveniently by division (each division comprising some 13,500 combatants of all arms) in homogeneous military areas, and to train it in war formations under the general officers who would command in the field. He broke up the four army commands which he found existing and replaced

them by nine "divisional" commands. In each divisional command he proposed to place a self-contained division of the field army together with the necessary complement of garrison troops that would be left behind for internal defence in the event of mobilization. Fully mobilized his field army would absorb some 120,000 combatant troops, or more than half the total strength of the army in India. Adequate transport and supplies were to be provided and every arrangement made to enable each division of the field army, thoroughly trained and fully equipped, to pass rapidly into a state of war, when required, without confusion and dislocation.

The re-distribution of the army, which was largely due to Lord Kitchener, although it had been often discussed before, and put on one side owing to its great cost, was an attempt to organize the army in units of command similar to those in which it would take the field. The idea was that each divisional area shall furnish one fighting division, subdivided into three brigades, to concentrate the main portion of the army in large cantonments, and abandon a number of the smaller stations. There were also to be some separate troops on the North- West Frontier, at Aden, and a divisional command in Burma.

For instance, the Eighth (or Lucknow) Division had its headquarters at Lucknow, with a brigade at Fyzabad ; a second brigade distributed between Cawnpore, Allahabad, and Benares, hundreds of miles apart; a third at Calcutta, the capital of India, and seven hundred miles from Lucknow, embracing garrisons and outposts from Dinapore to Darjeeling, and from Buxa Duar, on the Bhutan frontier, to Cuttack in Orissa, on the Bay of Bengal; and a fourth brigade in still more distant Assam, and distributed in various stations and outposts for the protection of a frontier liable to the incursions of savage tribes. To call the troops stationed all over this immense area a 'division' is, of course, merely calling old things by new titles.

Lord Kitchener's scheme was to provide a field army of sufficient strength to meet the maximum danger to which India was likely to be exposed, to distribute the troops composing the field army and those assigned for internal defence into self-contained divisional commands, and to give to the divisional commanders powers and responsibilities that hitherto had been exercised by army headquarters. As subsidiary measures the defences of the N.W. frontier were strengthened, and military equipment and the pay and conditions of service of the Indian army improved.

The problem of Indian defence was materially affected by three successive events, all of which occurred during and after 1905. The first was the final defeat of Russia by Japan; the second was the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance upon a closer basis; and the third was the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention. None of these events made the essential requirements of Indian defence any less real or urgent; but they all had this cumulative effect, that they made it far less necessary to have troops ready to fling on the instant into Afghanistan, and to that extent they modified the calculations of Lord Kitchener.

These measures were in process of being carried out, when Lord Kitchener left India in 1909 after seven years' tenure of the office of commander-in-chief. From India he returned to Egypt, and from Egypt he went to the War Office — one of the most obstinately and obtusely conservative of men becoming the colleague of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill.

It was a large scheme, involving many subsidiary reforms, such as enlarged staffs, extensive regrouping of troops and building of barracks, better training and equipment, increased pay and allowances for the native ranks of the Indian army. Though planned with the greatest economy, and though it was curtailed and altered in order to reduce expense, the scheme necessarily increased the army charges, which rose from £16,000,000 in 1901 to £20,500,000 in 1910. Financial difficulties then beset the Indian Government. Fears of Russian aggression had subsided and a halt in military expenditure was thought advisable. When the World War broke out, the reorganization so far completed fell considerably short of Lord Kitchener's original scheme, though representing a great advance on what it had superseded.

Topi-2 Role of Indian Army in World War I

World War I literally hit the world like never before. It was one of the greatest watersheds of the 20th century geopolitical history. While the war was contained to the period from 1914 to 1918, it continued to define the status of world politics until the second world war.

From 1914 to 1918, it entangled almost all of Europe, the middle East, and Russia, and from 1917, also the United States of America. The 'central powers' entailing Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire) were defeated against the 'allies' France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan and United States.

The army played a vital role in the victory of 'allies' while India was under the British colonial rule. It provided in large numbers and distinctly to the European, Mediterranean and the Middle East halls of war, obviously from the British side.

During this time, India was struggling for self-rule and dominion status under British if not for complete freedom.

The Indian Army was taken into the war without consulting the Indian leaders. The army fought the war hoping the British would award the country independence in return.

Indian Army served in France, Belgium, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli, Sinai among other locations

The Indian Army fought the German Empire on the Western Front and German East Africa (a German colony in the African Great Lakes region)

The Western Front became the main theatre of WWI when it was opened by Germany by invading Luxembourg and Belgium which bordered France

The Treaty of Versailles signed on June 28, 1919, officially put an end to World War I.

An estimated 12 lakh horses and mules were used by Britain during World War I. It is believed, the animals India provided were the finest and this proved to be a game changer during the war.

However, India was denied its promise after the war ended. Instead, the country was 'awarded' Rowlatt Act (The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919) that effectively authorized the British government to imprison any suspected person for up to two years without a trial.

How the Indian Army came into existence

1774-1895: During this time, there was no Indian Army but presidency armies-- composed of Bengal Army, Madras Army and Bombay Army. They served three presidencies of the East India Company's rule in India.

After the rebellion of 1857, the British Crown took control of them.

Presidency armies were engaged in wars to extend British control in India and beyond. These forces were indulged in Mysore, Maratha and Sikh wars and also took part in Burma, Afghan and Opium wars.

1895-1902: The Indian Army came into existence as the British Indian Army after presidency armies were merged. It included British and Indian sepoy units.

The army took part in both world wars. It had four commands -- northern, southern, eastern and western.

1903-1947: It was the time when British followed the Kitchener Reforms and formed the 'Army of India' after it added 'British Army in India' to the 'British Indian Army.'

' Battle of Gallipoli

HISTORY.COM EDITORS

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The Gallipoli Campaign of 1915-16, also known as the Battle of Gallipoli or the Dardanelles Campaign, was an unsuccessful attempt by the Allied Powers to control the sea route from Europe to Russia during World War I. The campaign began with a failed naval attack by British and French ships on the Dardanelles Straits in February-March 1915 and continued with a major land invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula on April 25, involving British and French troops as well as divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). Lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the terrain, along with a fierce Turkish resistance, hampered the success of the invasion. By mid-October, Allied forces had suffered heavy casualties and had made little headway from their initial landing sites. Evacuation began in December 1915, and was completed early the following January.

Launch of the Gallipoli Campaign

With World War I stalled on the Western Front by 1915, the Allied Powers were debating going on the offensive in another region of the conflict, rather than continuing with attacks in Belgium and France. Early that year, Russia's Grand Duke Nicholas appealed to Britain for aid in confronting a Turkish invasion in the Caucasus. (The Ottoman Empire had entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, by November 1914.) In response,

the Allies decided to launch a naval expedition to seize the Dardanelles Straits, a narrow passage connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara in northwestern Turkey. If successful, capture of the straits would allow the Allies to link up with the Russians in the Black Sea, where they could work together to knock Turkey out of the war.

Did you know? In May 1915, Britain's First Sea Lord Admiral John Fisher resigned dramatically over the mishandling of the Gallipoli invasion by First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill. His political capital damaged by the debacle, the future prime minister later resigned his own position and accepted a commission to command an infantry battalion in France.

Spearheaded by the first lord of the British Admiralty, Winston Churchill (over the strong opposition of the First Sea Lord Admiral John Fisher, head of the British Navy), the naval attack on the Dardanelles began with a long-range bombardment by British and French battleships on February 19, 1915. Turkish forces abandoned their outer forts but met the approaching Allied minesweepers with heavy fire, stalling the advance. Under tremendous pressure to renew the attack, Admiral Sackville Carden, the British naval commander in the region, suffered a nervous collapse and was replaced by Vice-Admiral Sir John de Robeck. On March 18, 18 Allied battleships entered the straits; Turkish fire, including undetected mines, sank three of the ships and severely damaged three others.

Gallipoli Land Invasion Begins

In the wake of the failed naval attack, preparations began for largescale troop landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula. British War Secretary Lord Kitchener appointed General Ian Hamilton as commander of British forces for the operation; under his command, troops from Australia, New Zealand and the French colonies assembled with British forces on the Greek island of Lemnos. Meanwhile, the Turks boosted their defenses under the command of the German general Liman von Sanders, who began positioning Ottoman troops along the shore where he expected the landings would take place. On April 25, 1915, the Allies launched their invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Despite suffering heavy casualties, they managed to establish two beachheads: at Helles on the peninsula's southern tip, and at Gaba Tepe on the Aegean coast. (The latter site was later dubbed Anzac Cove, in honor of the Australian and New Zealand troops who fought so valiantly against determined Turkish defenders to establish the beachhead there.)

After the initial landing, the Allies were able to make little progress from their initial landing sites, even as the Turks gathered more and more troops on the peninsula from both the Palestine and Caucasus fronts. In an attempt to break the stalemate, the Allies made another major troop landing on August 6 at Suvla Bay, combined with a northwards advance from Anzac Cove towards the heights at Sari Bair and a diversionary action at Helles. The surprise landings at Suvla Bay proceeded against little opposition, but Allied indecision and delay stalled their progress in all three locations, allowing Ottoman reinforcements to arrive and shore up their defenses.

Decision to Evacuate Gallipoli

With Allied casualties in the Gallipoli Campaign mounting, Hamilton (with Churchill's support) petitioned Kitchener for 95,000 reinforcements; the war secretary offered barely a quarter of that number. In mid-October, Hamilton argued that a proposed evacuation of the peninsula would cost up to 50 percent casualties; British authorities subsequently recalled him and installed Sir Charles Monro in his place. By early November, Kitchener had visited the region himself and agreed with Monro's recommendation that the remaining 105,000 Allied troops should be evacuated.

The British government authorized the evacuation to begin from Suvla Bay on December 7; the last troops left Helles on January 9, 1916. In all, some 480,000 Allied forces took part in the Gallipoli Campaign, at a cost of more than 250,000 casualties, including some 46,000 dead. On the Turkish side, the campaign also cost an estimated 250,000 casualties, with 65,000 killed.

Battle of Gallipoli

After two years of trench warfare, the Allies attempt to break through German lines on the Western Front. The ensuing battle will last for months and result in more than one million casualties.

Battle of the Somme

Learn more about the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Allies' first major offensive - and a decisive victory - in the Pacific theater during World War II.

Play

Battle of Guadalcanal

A report delivered in late 1944 offers cautious hope that, with Gen. Patton's Third Army making their way to Bastogne and rescuing American troops in Belgium, the Battle of the Bulge may turn in favor of the Allies.

Allied Progress in the Battle of the Bulge

World War I

World War I, also known as the Great War, began in 1914 after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. His murder catapulted into a war across Europe that lasted until 1918. During the conflict, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (the ...read more

Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme, which took place from July to November 1916, began as an Allied offensive against German forces on the Western Front and turned into one of the most bitter and costly battles of World War I. British forces suffered more than 57,000 casualties.

How 5 of History's Worst Pandemics Finally Ended

As human civilizations flourished, so did infectious disease. Large numbers of people living in close proximity to each other and to animals, often with poor sanitation and nutrition, provided fertile breeding grounds for disease. And new overseas trading routes spread the novel.

Battle of Verdun

This World War I siege stemmed from German General Erich von Falkenhayn's edict to elicit major bloodshed from the French defense of the fortress complex around Verdun. German forces advanced quickly in February 1916, claiming Fort Douaumont and Fort Vaux after brutal.

Hitler's Teeth Reveal Nazi Dictator's Cause of Death

In a new study, French scientists analyzed fragments of Adolf Hitler's teeth to prove that he died in 1945, after taking cyanide and shooting himself in the head. The research, published in the European Journal of Internal Medicine in May 2018, seeks to end conspiracy theories.

Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire was one of the mightiest and longest-lasting dynasties in world history. This Islamic-run superpower ruled large areas of the Middle East, Eastern Europe and North Africa for more than 600 years. The chief leader, known as the Sultan, was given absolute ...read more

Why Muslims See the Crusades So Differently from Christians?

It's often said that winners dictate history. Not so for the medieval holy wars called the Crusades. Muslim forces ultimately expelled the European Christians who invaded the eastern Mediterranean repeatedly in the 12th and 13th centuries—and thwarted their effort to regain.

Black Death

The Black Death was a devastating global epidemic of bubonic plague that struck Europe and Asia in the mid-1300s. The plague arrived in Europe in October 1347, when 12 ships from the Black Sea docked at the Sicilian port of Messina.

The Reformation

The Protestant Reformation was the 16th-century religious, political, intellectual and cultural upheaval that splintered Catholic Europe, setting in place the structures and beliefs that would define the continent in the modern era. In northern and central Europe, reformers like.

TOPIC:3 The Role Of Indian Army In World War -I

Campaign in South East Asia 1941-42 and The Arakan Operations 1942-45.

The military aims and appreciation of the Japanese and the Allies, the priorities given by them to the theatre and their battle readiness makes interesting reading. While the Japanese were very well trained, equipped and determined to capture the region, the Allied Forces were not so well prepared, their attention being focused more on the War in Europe, where they were losing to Germany. Thus, the region was on low priority. In these circumstances, the bulk of the responsibility fell on Indian units of the British Indian Army.

The Allied troops of III Indian Corps (under Lt. Gen. Percival) fought bravely, they were overwhelmed by Japanese of 25th Army under Marshal Yamashita. The volumes record the story of their operations in Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore and Borneo, a tale of Defeat and Disaster, leading to withdrawal and finally, surrender of the region. The operations commenced on 8 December 1941 and ended on 15 February 1942, 30 days earlier than the Japanese had planned.

The Operations

Having planned the operations in detail and mustered adequate forces, the Japanese offensive commenced on 8 December 1941, by a simultaneous air and naval bombardment of Hong Kong (from mainland China) and Malaya peninsula (from Thailand), along with the attack on Pearl Harbor. A credible deception plan was implemented, which lured the Allied Forces to expect the major attack from the South East, while the actual offensive was land based, from the north.

The Hong Kong brigade which included two Indian units (5 Rajput and 2/14 Punjab), fought bravely, but the war was over in less than a fortnight, the garrison surrendering on 23 December.

In Malaya, the Allied troops fought to stem the offensive by occupying successive delaying positions based on rivers, road communications, towns and villages, but were by-passed by the Japanese Forces, who adopted the tactics of infiltration, encirclement, establishing road blocks for cutting routes of withdrawal and launched multi-directional attacks, often through thick jungles, swamps and rubber plantations. Fighting was severe from both sides, casualties heavy, but Japanese troops pressed their attacks fiercely, especially at night. The attackers also used Fifth Columnists, moved on cycles and vehicles, employed tanks and aircraft and did speed marches, to outpace the opponents. Initially, they did not land troops on beaches, but in later stages carried out small scale seaborne operations, mainly to trap Allied troops.

The withdrawal from Malaya was completed on 4 February 1942, and the troops fell back

Contribution of the Indian Armed Forces to the Second World War.

to Singapore, where a do-or die battle to the last man last round was planned to be fought. Though there were a few very brave actions fought by the Commonwealth Forces, the fighting ended on 15 February, when all Allied troops surrendered.

Having achieved victory a month ahead of their forecast, the Japanese turned to the Dutch colonies of Borneo and Sarawak, where British Indian Army including 2/15 Punjab were deployed. Here also, though the defenders put up brave resistance, the war was over by 13 March 1942.

Records show that the Allies dithered in decision making, and did not launch a pre-emptive strike on Japanese troops concentrating across the Thailand-Malaya border. They developed defence lines based on bunkers and pill boxes, fought brave defensive actions, launched counter attacks, carried out readjustments and regroupings and inducted fresh troops (who were in a few cases not fully oriented). Their heavy guns facing the sea threat from the east could not support the troops in the north, while the limited air force was mainly tasked to defend airfields, and thus provided limited support to land battle.

Conclusion

As seen below, though the Commonwealth Forces had numerical superiority, they were outmatched.¹ This defeat greatly shattered the British and Commonwealth confidence and prestige in the region, which gave impetus to better planning in future operations.

Order of Battle

Malaya

- 3 Indian Corps
- 5/14 Punjab
- 9 Inf Div - 6 Inf Bde, 2/10 Baluch, 2/12 FF, 3/17 Dogra, 1/15 FF
- 22 Inf Bde - 5/11 Sikh, 2/18 Garhwal Rifles
- 11 Inf Div - 3 Cavalry
- 6 Inf Bde - 1/18 Punjab, 2/16 Punjab
- 15 Inf Bde - 2/9 Jat, 1/14 Punjab, 3/16 Punjab
- 28 Inf Bde - 2/1, 2/2 & 2/9 Gurkha Rifles

1 Besides these formations, 11 Infantry Div and 8 British Div also participated in the operations in Malaya. Initially, each Infantry Brigade had two Indian and one British unit, but this grouping was often changed.

17IDSA Special Feature

Singapore

- 2/17 Dogra
- 8 Inf Bde
- 2/10 Baluch
- 2/12 & 1/13 FF
- 3/17 Dogra
- State Forces - Mysore & Hyderabad
- Artillery - MTN & FD, A TK, ENGRS, SIGS, SERVICES-MED, MT, LAB

Casualties in Malaya

British - 38,496

Indian - 67,340

Australian - 18,490

Local Volunteers - 14,388

Total - 138,708 (including 130,000 POWs)

The Volume does not record the gallant actions or the honours and awards won by the Commonwealth troops. The following two quotes show the tenacity and bravery shown by Indian troops at the Battle of Bukit Timah, a suburb of Singapore, on the night of 10/11 February 1942:

Gen. Percival, the Commander of Commonwealth Forces states: "12 and 15 Brigades fought

gallantly, 3/16 Punjab and Jats (a combined unit formed by amalgamating remnants of 2/9 Jat and 4/9 Jat who had earlier suffered very heavy casualties) were nearly decimated.”

The Japanese Record of the same action: “Fierce battle raged at Bukit Timah Heights, a do-or-die, hand-to-hand battle, between the two sides. Noise of guns, rumbling of tanks, bombing by own air force and explosions of shells-created a veritable hell of blood death. Pill boxes were attacked repeatedly, again and again, but would not yield. A glorious hand-to-hand battle developed in the midst of abandoned enemy dead bodies and the dead bodies of our own comrades-in-arms.”

Comments

The Volume is very well researched and the narrative is supported by maps and photos. However, it does not cover the performance of units, details of casualties suffered or their achievements, which would have made it an even more interesting and relevant reading.

No lessons have been listed, nor the performance of troops, arms, services and the role played by them, has been surmised. This could have been culled by analyzing their records.

Contribution of the Indian Armed Forces to the Second World War:

Part Two: The Arakan Operations 1942-45

General

The account of these operations is a story of decisive victory, achieved by sound planning, bold action and gallant fighting, undertaken by well trained and led Commonwealth Forces.

At this stage the War in Europe was going well for the Allies. In the Far East, besides Malaya, the Japanese had captured Burma. Their further advance had been stemmed and the reconquest of Burma, in conjunction with other offensive operations, under the overall command of South East Asia Command (SEAC) was being planned. In conjunction with the main thrust of XIV Army across the Chindwin for capture of Rangoon, a subsidiary thrust by XV Corps in the Arakan was also planned.

The operation was planned and conducted in four phases, troops given adequate training, fire and logistic support. Besides land, sea borne landings and maximum use of Air Force was also envisaged. Operations were conducted keeping the weather, especially the rains, in view. Logistics were given special attention, and all support elements trained to fight to the last man-last round, by forming Administrative Boxes, against the Japanese.

The aim of the offensive was to encircle and annihilate the Japanese forces in the region and not allow them to move up to fight against XIV Army’s thrusts. With this in view, capture of Akyab, Ramree Islands and Magway was planned, with amphibious landings that were supported by naval, land and air bombardment.

Operations

The operations commenced on 17 October 1942 and continued till 15 May 1945, when the last Japanese troops were neutralized in the region. The initial force levels were 14 and 26 Indian Infantry Divs, though later 7, 25, 36 and 5 Infantry Divs also fought in this theatre. Besides these, troops of Africa Div and 3 British Commando Brigade also took active part in these operations. The USA provided air support as well as elements of Special Forces.

Order of Battle

14 Indian Inf Div

- 47 Bde – 1 Rajput, 5/8 Punjab
- 53 Bde - 2/1 Punjab, 8 Raj Rif, 8/19 Hyderabad, later also 1 Dogra
- 123 Bde - 8 Baluch, 1/15 Punjab

26 Indian Inf Div

- 4 Bde - 8/8 Punjab, 6 Sikh, 3/9 GR
- 36 Bde – 8 FF Rgt, 5/16 Punjab
- 71 Bde - 7/15 & 9/15 Punjab

Plus, ARTY, A TK REGT, ENGRS, SIGS, MT, AT, MED, LAB FORCE, STATE FORCES

Operations were launched along the peninsula from North to South, as well from sea by amphibious forces, from west to east. These were timed with the monsoon and developed from sea by well trained and oriented troops, against heavy odds.

Important Achievements

The special aspects of these operations were as under-

1. During the lull in land operations during monsoons, all troops were deployed in box formation, which were logistically and security wise fully secured against Japanese offensive actions. Special mention needs to be made of the Adm Box of 7 Infantry Div, which was attacked frequently, despite bad weather. Here, the Commonwealth troops achieved fame by capturing the first Jap offr POW (by 10 Baluch), while a patrol of Mule Coy gained fame by capturing a Jap sword.
2. For beating back attacks, besides artillery fire, even aircraft were employed for maintenance by and to engage targets at close ranges.
3. Amphibious operations were undertaken for landings at Akyab and Ramree Islands, supported by naval bombardment. Capture of Akyab saw severe hand-to-hand fighting.
4. Tanks of 3 CAV supported attacks and were often employed for neutralizing enemy pill boxes by direct fire.
5. As vehicle transport was stranded due to monsoon, the tempo of operations was maintained by marching troops carrying loads of up to 58 lbs.
6. Airlift of 5 Infantry Div to Imphal was a strategic move, carried out with great speed and precision.

Contribution of the Indian Armed Forces to the Second World War

7. The atrocities committed by the Japanese on Indian POWs were reported by Capt Bose, RMO of a Field Ambulance.
8. Presence of INA was reported for the first time.

Special Aspects

The following merit mention-

1. 53 Indian Infantry Brigade had the unique distinction of having three Indian Infantry Battalions, all being commanded by Indian officers (Lt. Col. Thorat Punjab, Lt. Col. LP Singh FF and Lt. Col. Thimayya Hyderabad).
2. Brig Thimayya became the first Indian to command an Infantry Brigade in the operations, taking over 53 Brigade.
3. The attack on Myeban saw heavy bombing by naval ships, air force and artillery, to support the landings.
4. The theatre saw very heavy naval and artillery smoke screens for supporting Infantry landings on the beaches.
5. The final assault on Ruywa saw extensive hand-to-hand fighting.
6. In the attack on Japanese positions at Kangav, 2/2 Punjab of 51 Infantry Brigade suffered very heavy casualties (225), while the enemy suffered 261 dead.
7. The casualties suffered by the Japanese were heaviest in this sector.

Winners of Awards

Besides other awards, the following Indian soldiers won the Victoria Cross for these operations-

1. Hav Prakash Singh - 1/7 Rajput.
2. Nk Nanak Singh - 7/2 Punjab.
3. Hav Umrao Singh - 30 Mtn Regt.
4. L Nk Sher Singh - 7/16 Punjab.
5. Rfn Bhan Bhagta Gurung - 3/2 Gurkha Rifles.

Lessons from Japanese Operations

The Volume lists the following-

1. While planning was centralized, execution was decentralized.
2. Tactics of attacks at night, encirclement movement, infiltration and multi-directional assault.

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3. Defences were sited with heavy reliance on machine gun fire, quick counter attacks were launched at local levels.
4. Great emphasis was laid on Surprise and Deception.
5. Mobility, on foot, cycles, boats and porters, was fully exploited.
6. Use of heavy artillery and aerial bombardment.
7. Less stress was paid on logistics, except on ammunition supply.
8. Troops showed great courage and boldness in executing plans.
9. They were ruthless in handling POWs, especially those who attempted to escape.

10. Advancing columns employed locals, Fifth Columns and agents to gather intelligence.

Comments

The narration is very well covered in which military aspects have been emphasized, adequately. This may be due to the editor being an Army officer.²

A few maps have faded as are a few printed words, which could be looked into.

Recommendations for Future Publications

The reprint is taking place after nearly 60 years. By now, a lot of new material has been published by all participants, including the Japanese. In order to make the history more meaningful and interesting, a few recommendations for future reprints are made.

It is recommended that before undertaking such projects in future, the following aspects may be considered-

1. Even if not covered in War Diaries, special research could have been carried out for Honours and Awards, Battle and Theatre Honours won, casualties suffered and heroic deeds and other incidents of importance of own troops. These are often available on the internet, regimental histories and articles written by the actual participants.

2. Details of enemy casualties, weapons and equipment captured and POWs taken should also be included, by researched publications of the adversaries.

3. Quality of maps and printing is given special attention. With the present day electronic devices, it should be possible to improve them, at low cost.

² However, this volume does not carry any details of the opposing forces, casualties suffered or POWs taken.

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Special chapters/supplements covering the role played by Supporting Arms and Services, the Navy, the Air Force, Logistics, Intelligence, Training, Performance of Weapons and Equipment and other war related topics be included. For instance, details of ammunition expenditure, type of casualties and their evacuation chain, performance of rations, ammunition, weapons and radio sets etc., could be included. The role played by these important elements has not been highlighted.

The successful conduct of the Arakan Campaign resulted mainly due to better higher direction and good training of troops. The methodology adopted, directives issued and programmes conducted would be of great value and interest to future operations. These could have been included.

Conclusion

While the Campaign in South East Asia during 1941-42 was a military disaster, the Arakan Operations from 1942-45 were a resounding success. They still remain relevant for those interested in the study of national security and military matters.

The Historical Division of the Ministry of Defence and Pentagon Publishers need to be congratulated for reprinting these volumes. The IDSA needs to be specially complimented for bringing the two partners together, for release of these accounts.

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Y.M. Bammi has over 37 years of military experience and has held several important positions in the Indian Army including as President of the Gorkha Brigade, Director General of Assam Rifles, GOC of 1 Strike Corps, Defence Advisor at the Indian High Commission in Malaysia and Singapore, and Instructor with the Royal Bhutan Army. He has a number of publications to his credit including *The Gorkhas of the Indian Army* and *The Impregnable Conquered: Kargil 1999*.

General

The Indian Armed Forces fielded a force of 2.6 million during the Second World War; this was from a population base of 350 million. Today, the strength of the Indian armed forces is approximately 1.2 million from a population base of 1.2 billion. This indicates adequate potential of the nation to muster numbers if required in times of national crises. Organising, equipping and preparing such a large force would, however, need to be considered separately.

An important point to note is that the sovereignty of the armed forces in the Second World War did not rest with the indigenous leadership in many cases down to the unit that is battalion level where it was officered by the British. We need to ensure that such a situation never arises in the future, for the military must always be employed under sovereign control of the political leadership of a country and under indigenous military commanders. We may draw a lesson here from the United States wherein even in a coalition forces are commanded by US military commanders. Apart from United Nations Peacekeeping operations, there should be no occasion for Indian troops to be employed otherwise.

Nuances of the Theatre and Operations

Western Asia as a theatre comprised of three countries – Iraq, Syria and Iran – of an area also referred to as the Levant. This was a vital region during the Second World War just as it remains so today. A land bridge between Asia and Europe as well as Europe and North Africa wherein lay colonies and dominions of many major European powers and particularly for Great Britain control of this area was important for sustenance of the colonies and continued links with Europe. Oil reserves formed an important factor as well. The importance of this region today has not diminished, thus the study of the Campaign assumes significance for many of the political conditions or vectors of conflict continue to remain the same to this day.

The theatre assumed operational importance during the Second World War after the victory of the Africa Corps led by Rommel. As Rommel's forces reached Alexandria and the gates of Cairo and the German offensive in the Caucasus and Russia progressed in 1941, Hitler envisaged the possibility of a pincer in the North to complement the Africa Corps. This was to sweep through the Levant using the base provided by the Vichy French. This was more of an improvisation presented by opportunities of war as Hitler's world view was mainly continental and restricted to Europe.

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The net outcome was that this remained a peripheral theatre for Hitler but for the British it could not be neglected, as it was part of the external defence of India. Deployment of forces in this theatre was diverted for employment from South East Asia and Indian 10 Infantry Division

earmarked for Malaya was diverted to Basra. This was followed by 6 and 8 Indian Infantry Divisions in Western Asia; in addition 5 Infantry and 31 Armoured were also deployed later. These were grouped in 4 and 21 Corps during the course of the Campaign.

These forces did not face substantial opposition except for a few battles such as Deir Ez Zor where the brilliance of planning and use of outflanking moves led to rapid success. Thus there were no major battles in this theatre, no Victoria Crosses to be won. But as Clausewitz states, in war waiting and action are of equal importance for waiting in many cases is necessary especially for control of a vital territory even when it may not have a major enemy threat.

Contribution of Indian Armed Forces in this Theatre

The presence of the Indian Armed Forces in this theatre was a vital contribution to the overall War effort due to the following reasons:-

- (a) This ensured retention of British political control of this vital region in the Allied fold.
- (b) Neutralisation of Vichy French in Western Asia, which had joined the Axis, effectively split the alliance creating a rift that could be exploited further as resistance collapsed in other theatres including Tunisia.
- (c) Ensured security of energy resources in this region and denying the same to the Axis.
- (d) Garrisoning of Iran enabled provisioning of support to the Soviet Union which was the sole Allied power fighting the Axis in 1941-42.

Operational Performance of the Indian Armed Forces

Some of the issues related to operational performance of the Indian Armed Forces which need to be flagged are as follows:-

- (a) Pre-emptive planning and preparation of forces for operations was undertaken with a number of contingencies envisaged. This necessitated preparation of a number of alternate plans and preparing troops for the same.
- (b) Flexibility in planning and deployment of forces was admirably demonstrated by the Indian formations in an entirely unknown area of operations in foreign land where commanders and troops had not operated before.
- (c) Rapid deployment and mobility as well as movement was demonstrated by Indian formations, particularly by landing at Basra and rapidly advancing through Iraq to Baghdad and Mosul, which led to the collapse of the indigenous political regime led by Rashid Ali in the country who abandoned the Vichy.
- (d) Fall of Iraq opened the door for operations in Syria and establishing a presence in Iran.
- (e) While fighting was not as intense as in other theatres troops on the ground faced a number of challenging situations with stiff resistance and repeated counter-attacks to evict lodgements involving some tough fighting. Vichy French air was active throughout the campaign and Indian troops adopted innovative tactics to evade attacks, some even bringing down an aircraft or two by machine gun fire.
- (f) Outflanking moves and flank attacks ensured speedy success; this was particularly so in the Battle of Deir ez Zor. 10 Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. (later Field Marshal) Bill Slim achieved

rapid success by outflanking march across difficult terrain leading to capitulation of enemy resistance. Slim later used these manoeuvres in the Burma Campaign with great success. In the same tradition the Indian armed forces carried out a series of outflanking movements in Bangladesh in 1971, winning rapid victory in a difficult terrain marked by a large number of rivers and water bodies.

Lessons for the Future

Indian Armed forces operations in Western Asia have a number of lessons for the future particularly given continued importance of the area for India's national security be it dependence on energy imports or the large number of migrant workers numbering 6 million spread across many countries. There are important lessons that emerge for conduct of out of area contingency operations as well. Some of these are summarized as follows:-

- (a) Indian formations and units demonstrated the capability for expeditionary operations; this has been further honed up through participation in UN operations. Thus in case of an eventuality in the future, drawing upon lessons of the past a successful out of area contingency operation can be launched. Study of the History of campaign in Western Asia will provide an important guide for this purpose.
- (b) Western Asia was a political cauldron and is likely to continue to remain so in the years ahead.
- (c) Operations would thus be a mix of political-intelligence and military components to ensure sustenance of national interest.
- (d) Preparation of large number of contingency plans is essential as the military contours will be determined by the political ones which will remain flexible.
- (e) Planning and preparations thus necessitate inbuilt flexibility.
- (f) Mobility is an important facet for rapid conduct of military operations in situations where surprise or sudden appearance of a small force can achieve exponential results.

Conclusion

history in the country when sovereignty of the armed forces did not rest with the indigenous leadership as in the Second World War will remain contentious and thus needs to be approached with some caution. Nevertheless, military lessons including saga of valour of campaigns as in Western Asia are an important part of modern Indian armed forces which have value for the contemporary times as well as the future.

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The East African Campaign 1940-41 and The North African Campaign 1940-43.

1 Major General J.F. C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War 1789-1961: A Study of Impact of French, Industrial, and Russian Revolutions on War and Its Conduct*, first published 1961, Dehradun, Natraj Publishers, First Indian Edition, 2003, pp.131-32.

region of Sahara and in 1881 occupied Tunisia, much to annoyance of the Italians.³ In 1883 France proclaimed a protectorate in Madagascar. In 1884 Belgium acquired Congo and, as a competitive

counter, in 1884 Germany occupied the coast of Angra Pequena in South West Africa, Togoland and Cameroon. By 1885 the hinterland of Zanzibar was added, to become German East Africa. This led to tension with Great Britain.⁴ Due to entente now between France and Britain, Britain was allowed a free hand in Morocco, yet France and Spain partitioned Morocco in 1904.

The East African campaign was one of the subsidiary campaigns during World War I. The British decided to capture German East Africa as it provided a naval base and could cut off the British line of communications from Cape to Cairo.⁵ Indian troops, initially being under-equipped, poorly led and trained, suffered heavily. However, with the passage of time, they were as good as anyone else. Famous battles are of Tanga, capture of Kilimanjaro Hill, and surrender of German Forces in Portuguese East Africa. However, no Official History of Indian Armed Forces in World War I exists and needs to be extracted from the British records.

Contribution of Indian Armed Forces

Italy declared war on the UK and France on 10 June 1940. With the entry of Italy and Germany's defeat of France, a major threat developed for Britain through the Mediterranean Sea and Suez canal. With Italians in control in Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somaliland, it became vital to defend Egypt, Persian Gulf area, Iraq, Aden and East Africa. The ratio of troops was in Italy's favour (10:1), yet the Italian forces without German assistance failed to make any deep impression on Egypt, and in the Ethiopian region beyond the occupation of Kassala and Gallabat on the frontier of Sudan or Somaliland. General Wavell, Commander in Chief of Middle East Command, mounted an invasion of Libya and in spite of superior Italian strength, two divisions (of which the most deadly being the 4th Indian Division) pushed the Italians back in north Africa to Benghazi of which the battle of Sidi Barani is well known. Then suddenly troops had to be sent to Greece to contain the Germans and it was also decided to undertake a campaign in East Africa for which the 4th Indian Division was pulled out of action in East Africa. The plan eventually culminated in a pincer from Nairobi in Kenya in the south and Khartoum in the north. The northern force included the 4th and 5th Indian divisions and the southern one had one South African and two African Divisions. The main task of the Indian divisions was to open the route Massawa and drive.

5 S.D. Pradhan, "Indians in East African Campaign: A Case Study of India Experience in First World War" , in Dewitt C. Ellinwood and S.D. Pradhan (eds.), *India and World War I*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1978, pp. 69-74.

the Italians out of Eritrea. Important battles are the capture of Keren and move to Asmara and beyond. This remarkable achievement by the Indian divisions led to the final victory in East Africa and freeing of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean from any threat. 4th Indian Infantry Division then reverted back to North Africa, but by then the situation there had changed for the worst.

With British success in North Africa against the Italians, the German General Rommel landed at Tripoli in March 1941 and counter-attacked with the advanced party of his legendary Afrika Korps. With bold action, surprise and deception, by April 1941, Afrika Corps was on the border of Egypt. Initially, the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade slowed the advance of the Axis powers and allowed the occupation of Tobruk, which, as a stubborn thorn in the side of the Axis, continued to be an obstacle for a free approach to the Nile valley in Egypt. Rommel then defeated the British Commonwealth offensive called 'Battle Axe'. Accounts of the fluidity, ebb and flow, and chaos of the battles are detailed in the book. It was like a pendulum or game of seesaw of forces moving

east and west and then reversing direction. These operations lasted for over two years with the sterling performance of the 4th Indian Infantry Division (5, 7, 11 Indian Infantry Brigades), 3rd Indian Motor Brigade later joined by the 5th Indian Infantry Division (9, 10 and 29 Indian Infantry Brigades), and the 10th Indian Division which had earlier operated in Iraq. The British Eighth Army under Auchinleck in 'Operation Crusader' got nearly destroyed with bold counter attacks by Rommel including innovative use of 88 mm ack ack guns in an anti-tank role. It is here that Rommel famously remarked: "I get better information of my troops from the wireless intercepts of the enemy than from my own staff"; this is a truism that continues to be true to this day. Rommel was unstoppable. The battles at Sidi Razeg, final capture of Tobruk, and abandonment of Gazala by British (called the 'Gazala gallop') or withdrawal of British till El Alamein where at Alam Halfa Rommel got overstretched are well known milestones.

Finally, General Montgomery's breakthrough after massing material superiority and pursuit after the second battle of El Alamein of October 1942 is a well studied set piece battle of break-in and attrition in history. The 8th Army's capture of Tripoli in January 1943 and its subsequent advance to the frontiers of Tunisia completed the conquest of Italian North Africa. The final defeat of the Germans in North Africa came at Mareth Line⁶ and in Tunisia with US-led Anglo-American forces under General Eisenhower having landed on

⁶ For some reason General Montgomery did not seem to have a high opinion of Indian troops. This was soon to change when the 8th Army found itself held up by the Germans on the Mareth Line based on a range of hills. It was realized that the expertise of Indian troops in mountain warfare was needed. 4 Indian Division was called to break through the Mareth Line and the Division did so going through the middle of the mountains along a rough track thus surprising the defenders. See Major General (Retd.) Ian Cardozo (ed.), *The Indian Army: A Brief History*, Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India, 2005, p. 45.

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the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts and after the collapse of the brief and ineffective French resistance in Algeria and Morocco, had pushed into Tunisia.

The campaign is an object lesson in desert warfare which was described by a German General and inscribed by Liddell Hart in his *The North African Campaign 1940-43* as "a tactician's paradise and a quartermaster's hell."

Victories gained by Indian soldiers testified to their good training, fighting spirit and determination, good leadership and sound judgment. All of which is relevant to this day.

Campaigns in Memory and What Remains Unwritten

There are no departments in any university in India studying and/or preserving this knowledge. The Indian National Defence University (INDU) is yet to be born. Barring the personal recollections of an extinct species of military officers, part of this North Africa campaign is studied by coercion, that is, as part of syllabus for promotion and competitive examination for only the Indian Army officers. The East African Campaign remains un-prescribed and forgotten.

Ideas of the Indian experience are only lodged in the names of companies at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, such as Keren and Alamein or in Clement Town Cantonment in Dehradun

named after the Italian priest Father Clement where Italian prisoners were housed and barracks made so strong that to demolish them today is a nightmare. Memory lingers in the majestic Sudan block of the National Defence Academy or localities in Delhi cantonment such as Asmara Lines, citations of Victoria Cross (VC) winners like that of 2/Lt P.S. Bhagat and Subedar Richpal Ram of 4/6 Rajputana Rifles in East Africa and Sub Lal Bahadur Thapa of 1/2 Gorkha Rifles, Company Havildar Major (CHM) Chellu Ram of 4/6 Rajputana Rifles and Lance Havildar Parkash Singh of 5th Battalion, 8th Punjab Regiment in North Africa. In the military memory somewhere resides the fading fact that two future Chiefs of the Army Staff of independent India participated as young officers - Maharaj Rajendrasinhji, a squadron commander with 2nd Lancers and P.P. Kumaramangalam, Battery Commander 7 Field Battery. Memory also resides in a few battle honours, honour titles and odd paintings depicting Indian gunners engaging German tanks with open sight of the 25 pounder artillery gun in the anti-tank role or the Victoria Cross winner Chhelu Ram's painting with his wife and son which adorns the Officers' Mess of the Rajputana Rifles Centre in Delhi Cantonment.

As an institution in the army, when prescribed for an examination, the character study Field Marshall Slim is included. His classical autobiography Defeat into Victory mentions his experience as brigade commander at Gallabat in Sudan followed by his command of a division in Iraq and the command of 14th Army in the re-conquest of Burma. Examination oriented study of Rommel also continues which I dare say may be more of rote learning. It must be noted that, in general, only those who have written examination for the particular