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THE INDIAN ARMY IN THE EDINBURGH MILITARY TATTOO, 1962

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IF this article contains an element of light-heartedness as well as nostalgia it is because, in the thirteen years that I have had the privilege of directing and producing the Scottish Command Tattoo at Edinburgh Castle, I have learnt that this special form of "show business" calls for some degree of light-heartedness if sanity is to be maintained. As for nostalgia, it is an emotion that seems to inject itself afresh each year.

The Edinburgh Tattoo of 1962 proved no exception. During the Tattoo, for the first time, soldiers from India took part. Their presence meant that for me a long-established ambition had been fulfilled. Ever since the Tattoo came into being, and over the years during which it acquired the status of an international event, I had nursed the hope that it might one day be possible to have India's forming part of our Tattoo. In the past we have had—among others—Americans, Turks, Pakistanis, Spahis, Canadians (many times), West Africans, Malays and Gurkhas. In addition, of course, there has always been a sturdy element from the British Services with a substantial Scottish flavour. But I had always been particularly keen to have Indian troops in our Tattoo.

My own memories of India go back to Calcutta, when I first went out there as a young and very green subaltern in the 1st Battalion The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, and soldiering took me back to India many times during my service.

Obtaining troops from India for the Scottish Command Tattoo was, for reasons of expense and distance alone, a formidable task, but my aim was brought a little nearer by the presence of Indian troops as part of the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza. At least that would whittle a little from travelling costs! Although the "curtain up" on the first performance of the 1962 Tattoo was not until August 17th, I started negotiations for their presence more than a year before that—before, in fact, the 1961 Tattoo had opened.

Then followed a long sequence of telephone calls, cablegrams, and letters. I had the support of Mr. Nehru himself, who was tremendously keen on seeing his countrymen in Edinburgh, and—taking advantage of the fact that when you are in "show business" a retired brigadier can approach a serving Admiral of the Fleet—I also gained the warm support of Lord Louis Mountbatten. Lord Louis had seen many of our Tattoos at Edinburgh Castle, and men from his Service had often participated in the event. In 1962, for instance, we had some 80 young sailors to dance a naval hornpipe, which we thought provided an interesting contrast to the traditional country and highland dancing.

Cables, telephone calls, letters, memos, and the lists of visits to ministries and military headquarters grew to alarming proportions. Luckily, however, a lot of the loose ends were tied up when in May of 1962 I flew out to New Delhi. I was received at Army headquarters with a warmth that equalled the climate; it had been some years since I was in India, and my memories of the heat had receded somewhat! None the less I had energy enough to finalize the arrangements, and to visit Indian units in Meerut and Jaipur. Invariably I was impressed by the fact that the Indian Army still retained most of the techniques used by the old Indian Army.

In Meerut, amongst other delightful arrangements, I was privileged to attend a guest night at the Sikh Regimental Centre. I was deeply moved when the pipers played my Regimental March Past round the dining-room table during the course of the dinner, and even more touched when as we were seated on the lawn of the officers' mess after dinner, they played "The Rowan Tree." In Delhi I met, after nineteen years, Ambrose who had been my bearer when I first went to India in 1926. Ambrose had joined the Cameron Highlanders as a *chokra* in 1910, and is now getting on, but he came to see me, erect as ever, as fun loving as ever, and—a final touch which filled me with tremendous pride—he still wore in his *pagri* the tartan flash of the regiment in which we served, the Cameron Highlanders.

The outcome of the negotiations was the acquisition of horsemen from the 61st Cavalry Regiment, stationed at Jaipur, and the band and pipes and drums of the 2nd Battalion The Sikh Regiment, who were stationed partly in Meerut and partly in the Gaza Strip.

The 61st Cavalry was raised in November, 1953, the major proportion of the unit formed by men coming from the Jodhpur Sardar Risala, Kachawa Horse (Jaipur), Mysore Lancers and Gwalior Lancers. Although new since its re-formation, the regiment had inherited the traditions of its predecessors. The Rajput element stems from the units who fought valiantly at heavy odds against the Moghuls in places such as Chittoor and Haldighat. The Mysore Lancers were formed from the remnants of Tip-poo Sultan's Cavalry after the battle of Seringapatam. The regiment now has Rajputs, Rajasthani Muslims (Kaim Khanis) from Rajasthan and Maharattas from Maharashtra.

Since it came into being in 1846 as the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs, the 2nd Battalion The Sikh Regiment has gained twenty battle honours in various theatres of war from China to Europe.

It was the first Indian battalion to volunteer for service overseas. The Sikhs have won up to date 301 honours and awards including two Victoria Crosses and two Ashoka Chakras Class I. Serving with the United Nations Emergency Force in the Gaza Strip, its task today is to prevent incidents and infiltration along a part of the armistice demarcation line separating Israel from the United Arab Republic territory. Whilst in Gaza the Sikh Regiment established new records in sports. They carried away all the events except football, and throughout the Gaza Strip are renowned for the number of outstanding athletes and sportsmen in their ranks.

I had asked the Sikhs to provide their own "spot" in the Tattoo and, in addition, asked them to fill a traditional position in the programme—

the sounding of the Last Post. This last decision, especially, proved to be one of the happiest I have taken in all the years I have been connected with the Tattoo. The Buglers were superb, and I have lost count of the number of people who told me that never before had they heard this haunting tune played so well.

I asked the cavalry to undertake a "musical ride" on the lines of the performances given by the Household Cavalry, and this assignment they accepted with zest. Their impact was tremendous. Many times during the nation-wide television broadcast—which I heard later was seen by some eleven million people—I yearned for colour television! There were problems, of course; our budget would not allow us to fly horses from India, so we obtained some locally. Most came from stables in Leicestershire, so we felt it wise to indoctrinate the horses and accordingly sent records of Pipe Band music down to be played "at" them. There is also a constant problem at the Edinburgh Tattoo: the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle, on which the Tattoo is held, has a slope of 14 feet from the drawbridge end to the other end of the arena. This restricts speed, but did not detract at all from the impressive splashes of colour the cavalry men provided.

Other difficulties were encountered and overcome. Saddlery came from British Army stores. Our ordnance people in England thought that only the best was good enough and provided new saddles. They looked very nice but needed days of patience and elbow grease by the cavalry men once they arrived in Scotland. This task, like any other task I gave the Indian contingent, was undertaken with tremendous cheerfulness. Cheerfulness was in fact one of the most impressive aspects of the contingent. Sometimes it rained during the performance, and I remember one of my Staff Officers coming up to me during one particularly wet performance with a look of bewilderment on his face and saying: "I just can't understand the Indians. They are so damned cheerful."

I was particularly fortunate in being served by Major Ran Singh and Subedar Major Gajjan Singh of the Sikh Regiment, Major Phiroze Kot-havala and Lt. "Billy" Sodhi of the cavalry, and Harold Joseph, Director of Music of the Indian Services; all proved themselves enthusiastic supporters of the visit from the beginning. We managed to show our visitors a great deal of our Scottish countryside, although we worked them hard. In return, many staff officers of Scottish Command have fond memories of the curry parties "laid on" by the visitors. During the Tattoo we received tremendous co-operation from all ranks of both units. Officers and men gave up a night off to put on a special benefit show for the British Army Benevolent Fund. They gave up more spare time for a special performance of the Tattoo at a children's hospital in Edinburgh. India's contribution proved to be an outstanding success and all ranks were very popular with everyone they met.

The growth of international friendship is a valuable by-product of the Edinburgh Tattoo, and 1962's event was no exception. I will always remember one young Sikh shaking my hand gravely and saying: "My heart is sad at leaving you." As I bade farewell to my new friends, the old Scottish expression went through my mind: "Haste ye back."

