from the standpoint of their utility to us as traders in China? Is it not the truth that we considered China primarily from the standpoint of what use we could make of her as a market?

You may say that is not exploitation. Well, in so far as we did not omit the Chinese point of view, in so far as what we were striving to do for ourselves we were also striving to do for China, in so far as in helping ourselves we helped her—as undoubtedly we did in a variety of ways—then the term exploitation is a wrong one to use.

But I think that, as Mr. Heyworth employed the term, he meant that we looked at things primarily from our own point of view.

If I am wrong in attributing to Mr. Heyworth that interpretation of the word exploitation I have no doubt he will correct me.

Mr. HEYWORTH: That was my intention. I can give you one example. We paid no taxes in China other than taxes to the Shanghai Municipal Council. Our business interests in China were primarily to do things for our own good, as you have so well pointed out. In the future I feel that we must take a proper interest in what is in China's interests. That will be automatically provided for by the abolition of extra-territoriality.

The CHAIRMAN: We have had an extremely animated discussion, and owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Gull for the very great care with which he has prepared the talk which formed the basis of this discussion and the figures he gave.

On this question of extra-territoriality, which is one of the cruxes of the whole matter, we have to remember that when we first had it, a hundred years ago, it was agreed to by the Chinese Government because it suited them best. It is only natural that in the course of a hundred years any institution of that sort must give rise to difficulties if not revised again. We must remember that after the last war one of the clauses in the Treaty of Versailles deprived the Germans of their extra-territorial rights in China. When Mr. Gull tells us that Germany, with no extra-territorial rights, had by 1935 actually acquired 15 per cent. of the export trade, it shows that there are still possibilities for this country now that we have given them up.

The expression "exploitation" which has been discussed is closely connected with extra-territoriality, which a hundred years ago was, as I have said, not unacceptable to China but to-day is out of date.

There is one other hopeful sign. China is benefiting to-day by Lease-Lend arrangements from the U.S.A. and from this country. It puts China to a certain extent under an obligation both to the U.S.A. and to ourselves. So when this war has been happily ended, as we all hope by our victory, we ought, as Mr. Gull has said, to get away with a flying start in our trade, because we shall be then allies of the Chinese, and we must hope that for a number of years there will be restrictions both on the Germans and the Japanese.

All that there remains for me to do is to ask you to join with me in a very warm vote of thanks to Mr. Gull for his lecture.

The vote of thanks was carried by acclamation, after which the meeting terminated.

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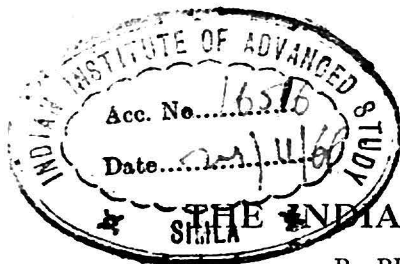

THE INDIAN ARMY IN THE PRESENT WAR

By BRIGADIER J. G. SMYTH, V.C., M.C.

Lecture given to the Royal Central Asian Society on June 9, 1943, General Sir John Shea, G.C.B., in the Chair.

I THINK that most of us here present who have experienced the war of 1914-1918 and the present war would agree that the two things that make the present war more disagreeable than its predecessor are the bombing and the blackout; and by the blackout I do not mean only the blackout of light, but the blackout of news—not that the newspapers and the B.B.C. do not give us splendid service with a wealth of every sort of detail, but those of us who have been at the hub of affairs somehow miss the closer contacts with service personnel to which we have been accustomed. In India the craving for hearing personal experiences has been realized and met by a series of lectures given at all the large stations by officers recently returned from the various war fronts. These lectures have been so popular that in many cases they have had to be given two or three times over in the same station. People are not so much interested in hearing of the actual conduct of the campaign, the number of casualties, prisoners taken, etc., all of which they can read for themselves in the newspapers or hear in the war commentaries, as in the smaller, more intimate details of those they are interested in. The air war is always with us, the war at sea is at our doorstep, but the land war, particularly some of those theatres where Indian troops have been engaged, has been very far away—and there are no continuous streams of officers coming back on leave to tell us all about it.

I shall make no apology, therefore, in, as I have been particularly asked to do, giving you some personal experiences of my contacts with Indian troops in operations of the present war, in addition to giving you in broader terms a very brief survey of the growth of the Indian Army and its contribution to the war effort of the United Nations.

For the latter information I have to thank the Military Secretary at the India Office. The personal experiences are, naturally, entirely my own, but in the interests of security I shall mention no details that have not already appeared in the British or Indian Press or in my own article on the Burma campaign, published by the United Service Institution of India in July of last year.

This lecture is, of course, entirely non-political, but if I might make one political remark it is this: I was in Delhi in September last when Mr. Winston Churchill's speech on the Indian situation was received. It was, as you know, much criticized in all the Indian papers. I noticed, however, that some of the poorer shopkeepers, who had been afraid for weeks to open their shops, threw open their shutters with confidence and started to trade again.

Although it is true to say that the Indian soldier has not been affected

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by politics, it is only to be expected that, with the enormous expansion of the Indian Army, the Indian soldier has become more interested in the political situation. This fact is, I think, one that we should bear in mind.

To turn to the expansion and modernization of the Indian Army which had to be faced at the outbreak of war and how that problem has been solved.

Everyone now realizes that the reduction of our armed forces to a mere skeleton during the period following the war of 1914-1918 was a most ghastly mistake from which resulted the outbreak of the present war and all our early disasters in it.

What a great many people, however, do not realize is how quickly and easily one can cut down and how hard and long is the time taken to build up. Battalions of the Indian Corps went to France in the last war armed with the rifle and bayonet and two machine guns. They could shoot and they could dig and, except that they were short of Vickers guns as compared with a German battalion, they were really quite up-to-date and ready to take on all-comers. To compete in the present war, however, the Indian Army has had to undergo a complete modernization.

In the face of the general cry of disarmament after the last war, it is perhaps remarkable that India still possessed an Army of 200,000 men in 1939. This Army was primarily intended for the defence of India's own frontiers and for internal security.

Up to 1938 the Army in India was unmechanized and unmodernized. It was only in 1938, under the stimulus of post-Munich developments, that provision was made for the mechanization of a few British units in India. The Chatfield Committee then visited India with the task of producing a scheme for the modernization of the Army in India. The Committee's proposals, which involved the modernization of the Army in India over a period of five years, were not accepted until the autumn of 1939.

Before the scheme had really got under way or deliveries of the necessary vehicles, machine tools and equipment begun to arrive, the war had started and Indian units and formations had gone overseas. They received their new vehicles and equipment in the theatres of operations.

Deliveries of vehicles and equipment then began to trickle through, but the collapse of the Low Countries and of France and the loss of the whole of our B.E.F. vehicles and equipment at Dunkirk completely dashed India's expectations, and everything available had to be used for the re-equipment of the B.E.F.

The security of the Middle East was recognized as being of vital concern to India, and the Government of India spared no pains in providing everything that could be sent in war material, engineering stores

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clothing, equipment and munitions to meet the gravity

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ed that the modernization of an army does not merely mean the provision of that army with modern weapons and equipment—

ıed in their use and maintenance. It has been

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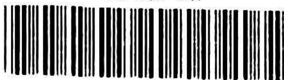

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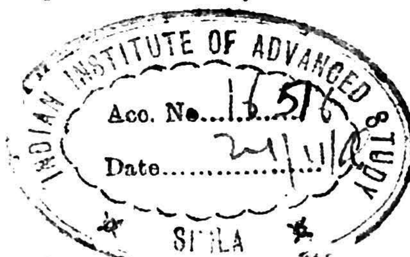

modern first-line army is equivalent in equipment and training to [illegible] million men in the last war. When it is appreciated that almost every Indian soldier requires not only normal military training but also education, the full implications of raising new armies in that country may be understood.

Despite these difficulties, India embarked on new expansion in May, 1940. The first objective of an extra 100,000 was rapidly reached, and by March, 1941, there were nearly 500,000 men in the armed forces. By that time new vehicles from Canada and the United States were starting to arrive, as well as a certain amount from the United Kingdom. Expansion was therefore pushed ahead at a still greater speed, the intake of recruits per month amounting from thirty to forty and then to fifty thousand.

The equipment situation suffered another severe setback towards the end of 1941, when everything available had to be diverted to Russia.

India herself became a centre of activity for the provision of war equipment for the Empire in the East. Every available factory and machine tool in India was concentrated on the mass production of items of equipment and munitions, which were sent to Malaya, the Middle East, Australia and South Africa.

India has sent over 300,000 men overseas. Approximately a whole brigade group from India was lost in Hong Kong and virtually three divisions in Malaya. To-day Indian divisions are fighting in North Africa, the Middle East and the Assam-Burma frontier. India has sent overseas a greater army than she possessed in 1939. Including the troops which have left Indian shores, the armed forces of the country have now reached the 1¾ million mark in man-power.

So much for a very brief survey of the difficulties that had to be faced and what has been achieved up to date.

You will realize that to meet all this expansion and modernization there have had to be vast upheavals in the organization and interior economy of the Indian Army. I have only time in this lecture to touch on one or two of them.

As you know from the last war, the supply of officers for the Indian Army in a war of this magnitude is a terrible problem, and it becomes worse the longer the war lasts. Fortunately in this war, casualties in officers and men have not been anything like as severe as in the big engagements in France, Mesopotamia and Gallipoli in the last war. We did, however, lose a big batch of prisoners in Malaya.

The supply of British officers is maintained by the following methods:

Attachments of British Service officers.

Appointment of E.C. officers to the I.A. from O.C.T.U.'s in this country.

Appointment of E.C. officers to the I.A. from Officer Training Schools in India. British other ranks are sent to India for their training. (This source provides by far the largest number of E.C. officers.)

Schoolboys between the ages of 18 and 19 are sent out to India to undergo training at Officer Training Schools in India. These schools are located at Bangalore, Belgaum, Dehra Dun and Mhow.

Indians are trained at the Training Schools (Bangalore, Belgaum, Dehra Dun and Mhow) and get commissions in the Indian Land Forces. They are appointed to Indian units on entirely the same footing as their British brother-officers. The proportion of British to Indian is at present about four to one. The proportion of Indians is steadily increasing.

The Indian Cavalry have, of course, been turned into the Indian Armoured Corps, just as British Cavalry became the Royal Armoured Corps. There are now Indian Armoured Divisions, Armoured Brigades, Armoured Car Regiments, Tank Regiments and Reconnaissance Regiments. The regiments still bear their famous names and traditions.

The Indian Army Medical Corps, a new corps, has just come into being and will be organized on lines similar to the R.A.M.C. It will embody members of the I.M.S., the Indian Medical Department and the Indian Hospital Corps.

Where then have Indian troops seen active service in this war?

Libya: During the Libyan campaign the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions had a very large share in the total defeat of the Italian Army.

These two divisions were, of course, composed of old regular battalions of the Indian Army with a British battalion in each brigade. They started well and they have continued well. The 4th Division has distinguished itself more than any other in the Indian Army during the present war.

As every fighting soldier knows, it is one thing to fight and conquer Italians, but a very different thing to take on Germans and Japanese. You can take chances with the former and they will often come off—with the latter very hard knocks have to be exchanged before any real success can be won.

The 4th Division went on from the Libyan campaign to tackle Germans in the Western Desert, and has, as we have seen recently in the newspapers, again been very prominent in the advance of the 8th Army in Tunisia. Having captured the Duke of Aosta in the campaign that freed Eritrea, they have recently captured General Von Arnim. The 5th Indian Division distinguished itself early on, in the Eritrean campaign, particularly in the assault and capture of the Italian stronghold of Keren. The bearing, discipline and fighting qualities of these two divisions have been remarked on by all who have come in contact with them.

Malaya: The 9th and 11th Indian Divisions took part in the Malayan campaign. They included battalions from most of the well-known regiments of the Indian Army.

Indian troops were defending the aerodrome at Kota Bahru when the Japanese first landed on December 8, 1941, and put up a most determined opposition.

Burma: The 17th Indian Division bore the brunt of the fighting in Lower Burma up to the fall of Rangoon in March, 1942, and then with the 1st Burma Division, which was largely composed of Indian troops, conducted a fighting withdrawal back to India. The 17th Division was the proud recipient of a personal wire of congratulations from the Prime Minister.

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On other fronts, in Iraq, Persia, Palestine and Syria, Indian troops have distinguished themselves and continue to play their part in increasing numbers in the winning of the war. Indian troops also served in France and there are some in England now.

To turn to my own experiences with Indian troops in the present war. By a bit of great good fortune I found myself, the only Indian Army Commander, commanding a brigade in France in the spring of 1940. Curiously enough, one of my battalions, the Highland Light Infantry, had been brigaded with my battalion, the 15th Sikhs, in France in 1915.

In April, 1940, I was motoring with my brigade up towards the Belgium frontier, past all those places that were household names to the Indian Corps in France in the last war—Bethune, La Bassee, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Richeburgh and Givenchy. What memories of the Lahore Division they conjured up! It seemed somehow strange to see no Indian soldiers about the roads.

Suddenly, passing through a small village, I did see two Indian soldiers leaning over a bridge. They were Punjabi Mussalmans, most immaculately turned out and delighted to meet someone they could talk to. They belonged to one of the two Indian Mule Corps then in France —the only troops representing India this time in the Western theatre of operations.

Later, the Indian officers came and visited my Brigade H.Q., just before the German invasion of Belgium. I never came across them during the operations and the withdrawal to Dunkirk, but heard from several sources how splendidly they had behaved in most difficult circumstances.

In the spring of 1941 I was recalled to India and got command of a new war brigade on the Indian frontier. The three battalions were Frontier Force Rifles, Mahratta Light Infantry and Punjabis. These were all new battalions formed from existing battalions of their regiments by a process known as " milking "—*i.e.*, taking from them a small nucleus of trained men and officers to form the basis of the new battalion.

This was my first experience of the new wartime Indian battalions, and I was much impressed by the way they had got down to all their teething problems and by the great progress they made in a very short time. They had taken on much of the tradition and spirit of their parent battalions.

One very great advantage we had over the British Brigade I had trained in England in the early days of the war: there was any amount of wonderful training-ground at one's door and clean, airy barracks instead of crowded billets in a town.

I also had a well-known Indian cavalry regiment in my area. I had last seen them with their horses and was most interested to see them now as a light armoured regiment. They had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into their new rôle and were keen as mustard in spite of heartbreaking delays in the supply of their carriers and light tanks. Most of the men I talked to actually preferred the new order. The officers still

kept a few polo ponies and did a certain amount of race riding in their spare time.

The passing of the horse is, I think, an even sadder affair in the everyday life of India than it is of England. In Delhi the sight of a riding-horse is now of such rare occurrence that one turns round and stares if one meets one.

The men of this cavalry regiment had taken enthusiastically to a game called volley ball, which I had never seen before. The great advantage of this game is that it can be played on any open bit of ground and does not require a specially prepared pitch. Played by experts it is exciting to watch and extremely strenuous to play.

My next experience was of troops of a very different calibre—a war division in the south of India composed of regular battalions which had been on the frontier since the beginning of the war. At this stage of the war such a division was quite unique. All battalions had, of course, been " milked " several times, but they had their pre-war organization and establishments, and, what is more, they had been trained and hardened in that best of all schooling-grounds—the North-West Frontier. They were mobile, fit, and their individual and battalion training was of a very high standard. Every battalion had a regular pre-war C.O and Second-in-Command. Most of the other officers, both British and Indian, were somewhat young and inexperienced, but keen and eager to learn. There was one complete Gurkha Brigade—3rd, 4th and 5th Gurkhas; another Brigade of Dogras, Rajputana Rifles and Punjabis; and a third Brigade of Rajputs, Sikhs and Punjabi Mussalmans. The Divisional Cavalry were the Jodhpur Rissala, now armoured with tanks and armoured cars.

Everything in the garden seemed rosy; we were given a short time by which to be trained and ready, and the difficulties then started to appear. Our rôle was to be a completely mechanized one. All battalions arrived having left their mules behind and, as they had been fully occupied, many of them on field service, on a pack-scale basis, some battalions had no trained drivers at all. They now required at least 100 per battalion.

There was hardly sufficient transport in the station to get their kits from the railway station to their barracks, let alone to provide transport for training drivers, for essential station duties and for tactical training. Some battalions were, however, better off than others, and by pooling all our resources in instructors, by begging, borrowing and requisitioning every vehicle within a large radius of the station, things got started. What a lot of trouble we might have saved ourselves could we have foreseen that within three months one of the brigades would be fighting in the jungles of Burma—and how tenaciously we should have stuck to our mules!

The training of the infantry, however, was the least of our problems; every day staff officers, clerks, office equipment, sappers, gunners, turned up from various parts of India—all in a different state of training and some of them not trained at all. Workshops and Hospital Corps had to

be raised locally. The raising and training of the Signals was one of the greatest difficulties.

Such are the problems that the modern Indian Army has to tackle to prepare itself for war.

Our assets, however, were many—good barracks, splendid training-ground at our doorsteps, the warm co-operation of the Indian State in which we were located, and a spirit of endeavour and keenness in the division which I have never seen equalled in any formation, British or Indian. After six weeks' intensive sorting and training we were settling down to a mapped-out programme that we hoped would see us trained and ready on the date given us.

Suddenly a wire arrived one morning ordering me to go and command another division that was just going overseas. Leaving my wife to pack up, or sell, the contents of Flagstaff House, I left that afternoon and, after an all-night journey, was with my new command on manœuvres the next morning.

This division—the 17th—was very different from the one I had left. Here was the finished article, completely mechanized, and all ready to move to the Middle East. They were doing their final training before embarkation. The Divisional Commander had gone sick at the last minute and I had been brought in to take his place.

The battalions were all post-war and were largely composed of young soldiers. They had been trained intensively for open mechanized warfare in the Middle East. Owing to the sudden deterioration of the situation in Malaya they had to be thrown hurriedly into the jungle fighting, for which they were neither trained nor equipped. That they put up the show they did speaks, I think, highly for the adaptability and fighting qualities of the Indian soldier.

Many things are mystifying about the war in the Far East; certain basic features, however, are clear and should be generally understood. Jungle warfare is a specialized type of warfare demanding special training, special tactics, and to some extent special weapons. Any troops, however good, will be all at sea in the jungle until they become used to it. Young troops and untrained troops are apt to become demoralized. The Japanese troops which operated in Malaya and Burma had specialized in this form of warfare. Every division had trained intensively at it for at least a year. We have admitted quite frankly that we were unprepared for war with Japan in addition to our heavy commitments elsewhere. The 17th Division, therefore, had its first initiation into jungle warfare training in contact with the Japanese. It was no one's fault—not in this war, at any rate—but just one of the things that have to be done. In fairness to the Indian soldier, however, the situation should be appreciated.

At the end of the manœuvres the division was issued with thick battle-dress, which looked somehow odd on the Indian soldier. The first brigade motored down to the port of embarkation and went to Malaya. The second did likewise, and I did not see either of them again. The third brigade followed my Divisional H.Q. out to Burma and eventually came once more under my command.

I am not going to give a detailed account of the Burma campaign, but

only a very brief sketch of it, sufficient for you to realize some of the problems that the Indian formations there were up against.

Such troops as there were in Burma at the beginning of January, 1942, had been disposed with a view to holding the landing-grounds in Lower Burma so that the R.A.F. could use them for the main theatre of operations in Malaya, and to keeping infiltrating parties of Japanese as far away from Rangoon as possible. Unless these two points are clearly realized the original scattered dispositions of the troops and the delay in withdrawing from some of the forward positions taken up appears incomprehensible. Rangoon is, of course, the key to the defence of Burma. It was a horrible bottle-neck of a port, needing a great deal of development before it could become a satisfactory base for a force of any size. As soon as Singapore fell it became apparent that the Japanese troops in Burma were likely to be reinforced by land a good deal quicker than ours could by sea; side by side with the development of Rangoon, preparations for its demolition had to be carried on, in case, as actually happened, we were forced out of Lower Burma altogether.

As Captain Gammans explained so clearly in his most interesting lecture last month, once we had lost Malaya, Singapore and command of the sea in the Indian Ocean, the fall of Rangoon was inevitable.

My responsibility was the defence of Tennaserim—that long strip of Lower Burma, some 800 miles long, flanked by Thailand on the east and the sea on the west. The Japanese had already taken Victoria Point before my arrival. Mergui and its landing-ground was being held by some Burma Rifles under the command of a well-known Indian Army lawn tennis player, whom Sir John Shea and several others here have often seen on the tennis courts of Delhi in happier days.

Tavoy, another landing-ground, 300 miles to the north, was also held by a battalion of Burma Rifles, while Moulmein, a landing-ground further north still and the headquarters of the force, was 250 miles from Tavoy. This important place with a perimeter of 25 miles was held by only one battalion, the 8th Burma Rifles, consisting of Sikhs and Punjabi Mussalmans recruited in Burma.

Although the Moulmein garrison was considerably reinforced before the Japanese attacked it a few weeks later, these reinforcements did not arrive in time to construct any adequate defences—even had the material been available to do so.

A hundred miles to the east of Moulmein, blocking the main approach from Thailand through the thickly wooded Dawna hills, was an Indian infantry brigade, just arrived from the N.W.F.P. of India. This consisted of a mountain battery, a battalion of the 9th Jats and the 7th Gurkhas and a Burma Rifle battalion. The third Indian battalion of the brigade, the 12th Frontier Force Rifles, had been posted to the Moulmein brigade.

As I landed on the Moulmein landing-ground after a brief visit to Mergui and Tavoy with the Army Commander, an old grey-bearded Sikh Subahdar ran forward to meet me. Invalided out of the 15th Sikhs from a bad chest wound in 1916, he had somehow managed to join up again, and now, twenty-six years later, was commanding the Sikh aerodrome guard. Although rather short of sight and hearing, he was active and alert still,

and his Sikhs put up a wonderful show when the Japanese attacked Moulmein. They continued fighting on the aerodrome long after it had been cut off and even after Moulmein itself had been evacuated.

On January 19 the Japanese captured Tavoy, and the garrison of Mergui, with their land communications cut, had to be withdrawn to Rangoon by sea. This was a somewhat anxious operation, as a good many civilians and their wives and families had to be got away. It was accomplished, however, without loss, and the Burma Rifle battalion was soon on its way from Rangoon to join me again.

On January 20 the main Japanese advance through the Dawnas started and, having blown the prepared demolitions, our brigade withdrew to Moulmein. Lorries were their only transport, and these could not be ferried across the river in face of enemy opposition. This resulted in the men having to do the last 60 miles through thick roadless jungle with practically no food at all.

By this time the Japanese had started to raid Moulmein from the air. The Burmese population disappeared into the countryside, and this in many ways lessened our problems, but entailed our taking over the banks, post office, telegraph office and, most important, the railways in the forward areas and the river steamers working across the gulf of Martaban on which our communications depended. As we were also responsible for our lines of communication the whole way back to the Sittang bridge inclusive, the troops were stretched to the limit. On these occasions the Indian sappers generally prove their worth. Had it not been for their skill and courage in operating the river steamers under fire, the brigade holding Moulmein could never have been withdrawn. As it was, the withdrawal over 7,000 yards of open water under fire of both guns and small arms was extremely difficult.

The brigade group holding Moulmein consisted of the 12th Frontier Force Rifles, the 8th Burma Rifles (Sikhs and P.M.'s), two other weak battalions of Burma Rifles, an Indian mountain battery and the aerodrome defence troops. Included in the last were our four precious Bofors antiaircraft guns.

There were a number of British and Anglo-Indian women in Moulmein who played an invaluable part in the work of the hospital and Civil Defence Service and who acted as typists and cypherettes in the headquarter offices. They behaved splendidly in the air raids, to which we had very little reply, and they had to be evacuated by order when Moulmein was obviously going to become the scene of heavy fighting. I felt so sorry for the Commissioner's wife having to leave all her possessions behind in the lovely bungalow where they had lived for years. The house took a direct hit from a shell a few days after they had left it and was completely destroyed.

After heavy fighting for a day and a night our troops withdrew from Moulmein on January 31. Most of the transport and impedimenta had been got away beforehand. The Indian mountain battery did very well indeed to get all their guns away complete.

A.H.Q. still hoped that considerable reinforcements might be arriving in Rangoon, and we were therefore ordered to hold positions as far for-

ward as possible to give the higher command elbow-room and to give the Chinese armies the best chance we could in their move south to our assistance. In some cases this involved holding widely separated river crossings, in the defence of one of which a young battalion of the 10th Baluchis much distinguished itself in a hand-to-hand encounter with twice their number of Japanese.

By the middle of January a further withdrawal was made to the line of the Bilin river, where the most severe engagement of the campaign took place. Gallagher in his very popular book, *Retreat in the East*, describes one incident in this move back which certainly had its amusing side. As we had so little transport and very long lines of communications, we depended very greatly on the railway for our supply. The railway in the forward area had to be taken over at short notice by Indian sappers. On the whole they ran it amazingly well under the control of my administrative staff, but it was only natural that occasional hitches should occur. On this occasion one did occur and might have ended very badly. We had evacuated Thaton, which was then in Japanese hands, and were on the move back to Bilin, which was our railhead. I was having a conference with my Brigadiers at that place, when, to our horror, we saw the mail train full of personnel and stores go gaily steaming through on its way to Thaton. Knowing the tricks and cunning of the enemy, my staff felt sure the train would return full of Japanese, who would then proceed to blow some vital part of our communications. It was suggested that, if the train did come back, it should be blown up and derailed. I decided, however, to chance it rather than risk blowing up our own people. A few hours later it came chugging happily back, having found Thaton platform deserted and having loaded up with stores that were seen lying in the station. The train personnel were quite unaware of their lucky escape. The Japs, I think, must have thought it was a ghost train.

By January 15 we had received valuable reinforcements in the shape of the Gurkha Brigade from my old division, for which I had asked as soon as I arrived in Burma. The Gurkha, though naturally a hill rather than a jungle man, takes quicker to jungle warfare than any other soldier I have come across. He is small and nearer the ground than the Sikh, for instance, whose beard seems to get tangled up in the dense undergrowth. These battalions of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Gurkhas, though inferior to some of the other brigades in the force in mechanical knowledge, were far better trained individually, and it is individual training that counts most in the jungle. Moreover, they had been for years on the Indian frontier, a good training-ground for any kind of warfare. Their kukris and their skill in using them, not only at close quarters with the enemy, but for getting through the jungle, was another great asset. We had been able to give almost every man of the force a Burmese dah, a weapon that most Burmans carry, and this is also a fine jungle cutting weapon.

We had orders to hold the Bilin river until February 20, and for five days every available battalion was in action on this line. The newly arrived King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were the first into action with the 7th Gurkha Rifles, and both battalions particularly distinguished themselves. By the 19th the forward brigades still held their ground, and

every attack had been met by determined counter-attack. It was increasingly obvious, though, that large forces of the enemy had been going wide, round our left flank—actually a completely new Japanese division, with orders to cut us off at Sittang.

By the time we received orders on the 20th to withdraw to a new line behind the Sittang river the troops were desperately tired and it appeared imiprobable that we should arrive there before the Japanese. However, morale was high, and that kept our men going on their long trek back along a track feet deep in dust and flanked by dense jungle.

On the 21st the Japanese landed troops by sea behind our right flank, and at first light on the 22nd these troops attacked Divisional H.Q. and the railway station at Khaikto. We had little left in hand for such an eventuality, but the Divisional Guards stood firm, the 12th Frontier Force Rifles came up at the critical moment and the attack was beaten off.

Several days beforehand all the troops we could spare had been sent back to prepare a defended bridgehead at Sittang—the vital bridge over which passed our one route from Rangoon. Sappers had been working night and day to enable the big iron railway bridge to take wheeled and pack transport. By the 22nd it was ready, and all that day and night the second line transport moved over in a continuous stream. The Japanese division with which we had been in contact at Bilin followed us up somewhat tentatively, but that day we got a heavy slating from the air. A.H.Q. wired saying that the enemy might try parachute landings on the open ground west of the river.

By 3 a.m. next morning we were just starting to cross when a lorry overturned in the middle of the bridge, and several hours were taken to clear it. What vital hours those were! Part of Divisional H.Q., Gurkha Brigade H.Q. and the 4th Gurkhas had just crossed when in came the forward troops of the Japanese division and took the bridgehead by sheer weight of numbers. A counter-attack was launched immediately and the bridgehead re-established. The Japanese, however, succeeded in establishing a strong position between our bridgehead defences and the remaining two and a half brigades of the division on the east bank, and a regular dogfight ensued. About 4 p.m. we again lost the bridgehead and once again regained it. The Japanese neither shelled nor bombed the bridge itself; their object was the same as ours—to keep the bridge intact and get their forces over to the Rangoon side. The Sittang river is wide and deep, but in spite of this, during the night a number of our troops swam or rafted themselves over. In the early hours of the morning the Brigadier holding the bridgehead defences reported that he could not hold the bridge for more than another hour. It was a difficult decision to make—to blow a bridge with two-thirds of one's own force on the far side—but there was no alternative. The bridge was most gallantly blown by Indian sappers. Having failed in their object the Japanese drew off, and all that day our troops, including both Brigadiers, swam or rafted themselves across. It was a long swim for a man over fifty after several days of exhausting marching with little sleep. Many of the men arrived across the river completely naked, certainly without their boots, and the British

ranks, unused to going barefoot, cut and bruised their feet terribly on the hard ground. Fortunately the Japanese had had enough, and allowed us to run trains and lorries to within a few miles of the river bank in order to pick the men up.

The next ten days were spent in reorganizing and re-equipping as far as our resources permitted. Gradually numbers of men, both British and Indian, who had been just tired bodies wrapped in blankets, were clothed after a fashion and became soldiers once more. As there was no chance of getting any reinforcements, battalions had to be amalgamated and one brigade disbanded entirely to make up another. Just at this time we received the very welcome reinforcement of a tank brigade from the Middle East. They were absolutely invaluable and did splendidly even though most of the country was anything but suitable for tanks.

Then the Japanese effected a crossing over the Sittang river higher up and started moving west to cut off Rangoon. By the end of February we had, of course, lost the command of the sea in the Indian Ocean, and the capitulation of our troops in Singapore had set free large numbers of Japanese troops and air force for use against Burma. It had only been possible to send very few reinforcements from India, and it was quite obvious that the days of Rangoon were numbered. One more Indian brigade did arrive, but suffered a cruel setback right at the start, as the Brigadier with his staff and all the C.O.s were ambushed on their first reconnaissance. The Brigadier was severely wounded and the Brigade Major and C.O.'s were killed or severely wounded.

At the beginning of March the docks and all the installations of Rangoon were completely destroyed. The encircling Japanese net had tightened and the force had a hard fight to get out to Mandalay. By this time the southernmost Chinese army had arrived in the area, and they co-operated in our withdrawal. With the one key port gone, however, and no proper roads back to India, the maintenance of the Burma Army became impossible for any length of time. The only course open was a fighting withdrawal, inflicting losses on the Japanese at every opportunity and delaying their approach by land to the frontiers of India until the monsoon had broken. Many of the details of this withdrawal have been fully reported in the papers. The complete account of it would fill a book, and will doubtless fill several after the war.

The Burma campaign was forced upon us at a time when our resources were at a very low ebb. In this war individual gallantry cannot make up for lack of numbers, training, equipment and supporting arms. When the history of the war comes to be written I venture to prophesy that the way in which the troops in Burma competed with their many difficulties in that first Burma campaign will be considered by no means the least of the achievements of the Indian Army in this great war.

India is now a war area; as you know, the country is now divided into Northern, Southern and Eastern Armies, with a Central Command largely composed of training units. With this division and the Ceylon Command India is a war area, ready to defend her coastline against the Japanese or to advance to the attack when the time comes. In addition she finds a number of divisions and units of all sorts for the Middle East.

The Indian Army continues to grow both in numbers and efficiency. R.A.F. and American air support continue to grow with it.

The Indian Army had to take some hard knocks in the early days of the war both in Africa and the Far East. That was part of the price we had to pay for disarmament and unpreparedness. In Africa the tide has already turned, and in the Far East our turn will come; and when it does, we may be sure that the Indian Army will be once again in the forefront of the battle.

In reply to a question as to what extent Indianization had gone on since the war, Brigadier SMYTH said that it was increasing rapidly. The proportion of British officers to Indian was now four to one, and the proportion of Indian officers was gradually increasing. He had not actually come across a unit which had an Indian C.O., but he understood that there was one, at least.

The CHAIRMAN asked how that difficult problem of getting officers for the Indian Army was tackled.

Colonel SMYTH said there were four main sources. The first was by detachment or transfer from the British Army. Then officers from cadet training units in this country and from other ranks in British units were sent out to India and trained out there at the cadet colleges. The fourth source was a scheme by which schoolboys from English public schools were sent out to India and trained there. Indians were trained at the same cadet colleges and got commissions on exactly the same footing as British officers.

Lord HAILEY said they were accustomed to think of the Indian Army as being recruited from certain classes, predominantly the Northern Indian, but new recruitment appeared to have ranged all over India. He wondered if Brigadier Smyth had seen any of this new class of soldier.

The LECTURER, in reply, said that he had seen very little of this new class of soldier. General Auchinleck had been keen on extending recruitment to all classes and had put that in train. In both his divisions he had had a lot of Madrassis who had done extremely well, but they could hardly be counted as a new class.

The CHAIRMAN said they had had a most interesting talk from Brigadier Smyth, who had shown very clearly the great difficulties with which the Indian troops had had to contend in Burma. They felt with him that when they had had an opportunity of sufficient training and complete and proper equipment the troops in India, who would no doubt be operating east of that country, would give just as good an account of themselves as their more seasoned brothers of the 4th and 5th Divisions in the African theatre, whose name was a byword for bravery throughout the British Empire. On their behalf he wished to thank Brigadier Smyth for his interesting and instructive lecture.