

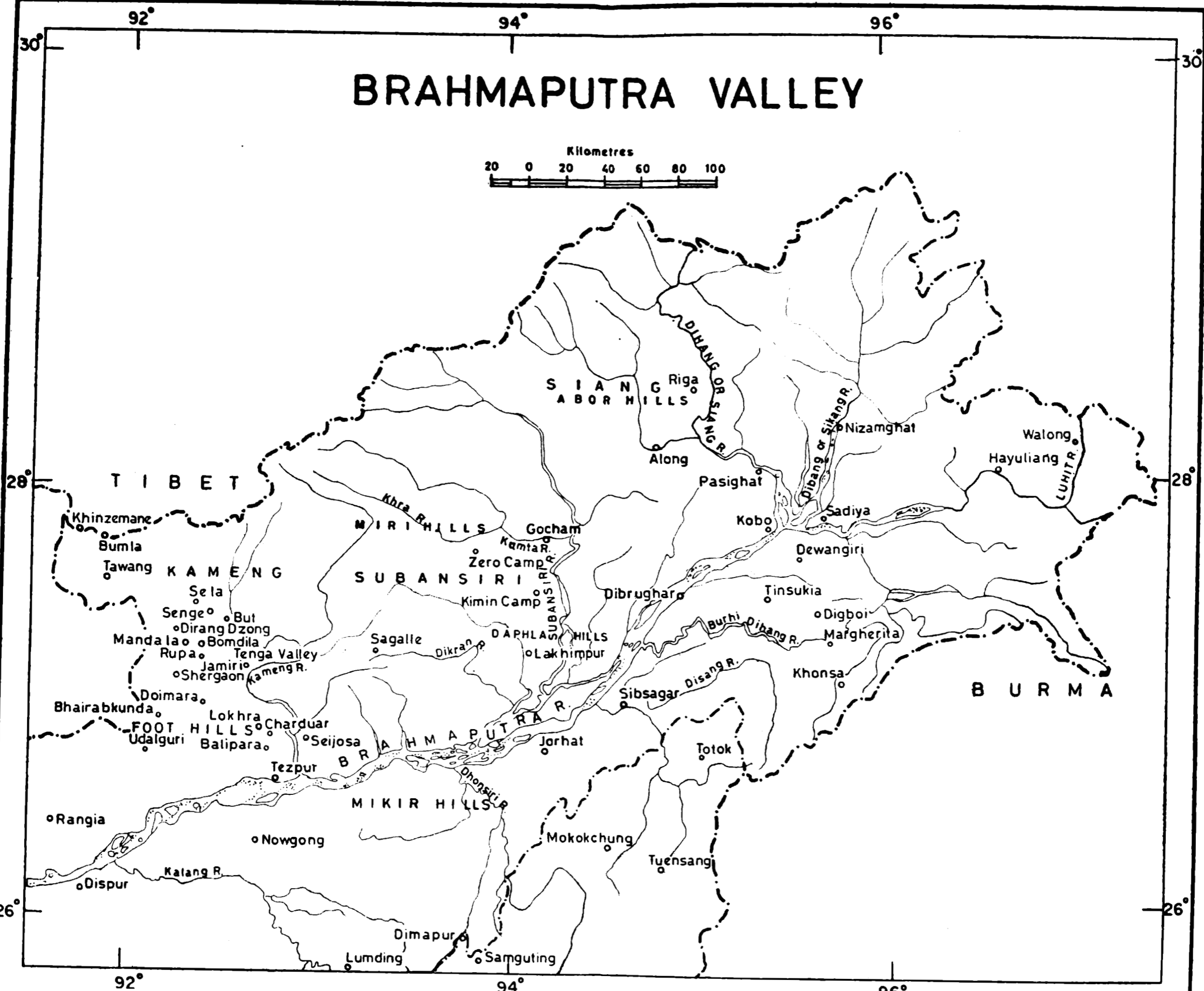
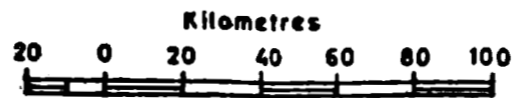
SENTINELS OF THE NORTH-EAST

The Assam Rifles



Major General D.K. Palit

BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY



Frontispiece

Assam Rifles Contingental Republic Day Parade 1982



Sentinels of the North-East
The Assam Rifles

Major General D.K. PALIT, Vr.C., F.R.G.S.

PALIT & PALIT

New Delhi

First published in 1984

© Major General D.K. Palit, Vr.C., F.R.G.S.

Note: Maps in the text are approximate and have been included only to illustrate the narrative.

**Published by Major General D.K. Palit for
Palit & Palit 1/9, Shanti Niketan, and printed by Shakti Malik
at Hans Raj Gupta & Sons, Anand Parbat, New Delhi**

FOREWORD

North-eastern India has always suffered from the disadvantage of being geographically remote from the centre of political power. The result has been a marked lack of knowledge in the rest of India of the peoples and the problems of that large, potentially rich, naturally beautiful area and of its most attractive people. Large parts of its territory are peopled by tribes who have never been part of the Indian mainstream and who were, under British rule, deliberately kept apart from the rest of the country for reasons both legitimate and illegitimate. That part of the area which formed the North-East Frontier Agency was not even administered during British rule. The consequence has been a totally insufficient integration of the tribes with the rest of the Indian community, giving rise to dissatisfactions of various kinds which have, in some parts, culminated in insurgencies and insurrections.

One of the instruments used for handling this situation and for spreading the administration into hitherto unadministered areas has been that fine body of men known as the Assam Rifles. I had the honour of being associated with this Force for 5½ years, as the Governor of Assam is still technically its Head, although none of its battalions are now used within the present borders of that State. I was greatly impressed by the *esprit de corps* of the officers and men of this Regiment, their excellent discipline, their high sense of devotion to duty, and in particular the manner in which they identified themselves with the area and people whom it was their duty to control and sometimes to chastise. The primary function of the Assam Rifles has always been internal but they have, in all post-Independence wars, been used alongside the Army in defence of our external borders and have distinguished themselves in that role.

Perhaps the most accurate and elegant tribute to this Force is to be found in the words of Verrier Elwin: "The custodians of law and order, the pioneers of every advance into the interior, the guardians of our borders and, above all, the friends of the hill people. Modestly, and without fuss, they have faced every possible hardship and difficulty, and thousands of villagers in the wildest areas think of them with affection and gratitude."

We as a people are correctly charged with not valuing our history and not maintaining and developing our institutions. The only history of the Assam Rifles hitherto written is one by an Englishman, Colonel Shakespear, over fifty years ago. We owe a debt of gratitude to Major General Palit that he should now have produced a most comprehensive and detailed history of this Regiment, bringing the story up-to-date. With great sympathy, clarity and elegance of language and obviously as a result of very hard labour, he has traced the development in detail of the Assam Rifles from their humble inception in 1835 as a body of 750 "ill-equipped, ill-paid, ill-trained and ill-armed" known as the Cachar Levy to its present strength of no less than 21 battalions of a highly disciplined and highly motivated force under the command of a Lieutenant General of the Indian Army. In the words of Verrier Elwin again: "May they long continue to provide the foundations of security and order in our border areas."

B.K. Nehru

Raj Bhavan

Jammu

15 December, 1983

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

When General Sushil Kumar first asked me to undertake the writing of this History I was reluctant to accept the task, principally because I had never served with the Force. I once had 5th Assam Rifles as part of my Brigade in Kameng Frontier Division; but that was twenty-five years ago. As Director of Military Operations in the early 1960s I had had much to do with the process of drawing the Assam Rifles into the Army's operational fold during the confrontations with the Chinese; but that experience had offered no first-hand contact with them. Furthermore, Assam Rifles headquarters in far away Shillong, from where most of the basic material would have to come, was geographically too remote from Delhi to permit a smoothly running schedule for research.

Fortunately, Sushil was not the man to take no for an answer easily. I am glad that his constant arm-twisting eventually resulted in breaking down my resistance—because working at this task for the past three years has been a rewarding experience, affording me considerable insight into a particularly interesting aspect of India's military history concerning a region and a people who, even if they have been remote from the mainstream of past history, today play a prominent and ever-increasing part on the Indian scene.

The difficulties I had anticipated in tackling the assignment would indeed have been formidable but for the generous and friendly support I received at all times from Colonel "Joe" Commissariat, than whom there lives no greater enthusiast, and perhaps authority, on Assam Rifles customs and lore. Associated with the Force for long periods during and after his Army career, himself personally involved with the tribal people and possessing a research-oriented intellect, he has been an invaluable help to me in my task. No matter was ever too burdensome, no detail too trivial for him to

devote his energies towards the acquisition of sources and data. I owe him a debt that I can acknowledge only in part.

The first four chapters covering the period 1825-1920 are a condensation of the Force's history written by Colonel L.W. Shakespear and published nearly sixty years ago. I hope I have not presented this section in such detail that future officers will abandon their study of the Colonel's history and make do with the paraphrased version included in mine. That certainly was not the intention.

I must acknowledge the use I have made of a draft history of the Force prepared by Major K. Brahma Singh some years ago but never formally approved. It was "Joe" Commissariat who drew my attention to this work. He advised me of its shortcomings but quite rightly recommended it as a sequential framework on which to develop the narrative. I have done so and am indebted to the Major.

Some aspects of the part played by the Assam Rifles in "V" Force during the Second World War are nowhere on record in India—perhaps because elements of the Force operated under Force 136, which was directed by the War Office in London. For instance, previous attempts to chronicle the Assam Rifles story, such as Major Brahma Singh's, make no mention of the Assam Rifles' operations across the Chindwin—or on the marches of the Salween, when they were parachuted into Karen territory. For details of these exploits I am indebted mainly to two stalwarts of those days—both wartime soldiers—Lieut-Colonel N. Stanley, D.S.O., O.B.E., and Major J. Bowen, O.B.E., M.C. (erstwhile J. Gebhart), both of whom I was able to contact in England through "Joe" Commissariat's good offices.

Fortunately the project suffered no setback when Sushil was posted back to an army assignment, for the next incumbent, Lieut-General J.K. Puri, turned out to be an old colleague who had been a B.M. in my Division in the mid-'sixties. His support never flagged, even when it transpired that the cost of the project would exceed the budget initially agreed upon. As the then D.G. he has contributed a Director's Preface to this volume.

Lastly, to Governor B.K. Nehru for his all too kind Foreword, I tender my grateful thanks.

D.K. Palit
Major General

“Palisade”
1/9 Shanti Niketan
New Delhi

DIRECTOR GENERAL'S PREFACE

The first and only history of the Assam Rifles was written by Colonel L.W. Shakespear, C.B., C.I.E., in 1929 and it covered the period from 1835 to 1924. Shakespear's book chronicled the growth, activities and achievements of this Force, which had been born as "Cachar Levy" in 1835 and, by the turn of the century, had come to be recognised as the "right arm of the civil and left arm of the military", in the rugged and turbulent north-eastern tribal regions of erstwhile Assam. The title of "Assam Rifles" that was conferred on the Force in 1917, in recognition of the contribution made by it during the First World War, was a hallmark of its reputation.

In the last sixty years or so since 1924, the Assam Rifles have had an even more chequered history and apart from many significant achievements, the Force has undergone many changes in its role, composition and employment. The story of all these events, of the rapid growth of Assam Rifles from five battalions in 1947 to twentyone battalions in 1968, and of its contribution to the development of North East India had remained untold. A need was, therefore, felt to bring the history of the Force up-to-date and it was decided that a new history of Assam Rifles be written from its very origin, to make it all available to the reader under one cover. This idea had germinated in the mind of my predecessor, Lt Gen Sushil Kumar, P.V.S.M., and credit goes to him for putting it into effect.

Maj Gen D.K. Palit, Vr.C., F.R.G.S., a distinguished writer on military affairs, was requested to undertake this mission of writing the history of Assam Rifles from the beginning to the 1980s. We are grateful to him for having accepted this challenging assignment and for the marvellous job he has done. The task of collecting and collating the available material was assigned to Colonel M.D. Commissariat (Retd),

popularly known as "Joe", who has had a long and intimate association with the Force. Joe had the difficult job of carrying out extensive research not only in the archives of North Eastern States and Union Territories, but also in the National Archives in New Delhi and the National Library in Calcutta, apart from gathering and compiling a horde of information and reports of historical value from the Ranges and units. Maj Gen Palit had the unenviable task of gleaning from all these documents what he needed for writing the history. He also carried out research of his own, particularly in the United Kingdom, where he met some old British officers who had served with the Force, and gathered from their fading memories of old age bits and pieces of information that could embellish and authenticate accounts of Assam Rifles' activities in the Second World War.

Our men are cut off from civilization and spend particularly the whole of their service in inhospitable and inaccessible areas, deep in the jungles or high on the snow-capped mountains, far and often forgotten. This history attempts to recount the saga of their sacrifices and service to the nation as 'Sentinels of the North East'. I hope all officers of the Force will read this book and will be inspired by the deeds of valour, self-sacrifice and chivalry recorded herein. It is worth remembering that for every one deed so recorded, there are perhaps ten more which have gone unnoticed and hence have not been mentioned in this book.

I can end this preface in no better way than by quoting Col Shakespear, whose words, written over fifty years ago, are as true today as they were then. May they ever remain so:

The Assam Rifles will be ever ready when wanted, and will ever maintain their traditions of faithful service, progress and efficiency.

J.K. Puri
Lieutenant General
Director General Assam Rifles

Shillong
1 November 1983

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Foreword by Shri B.K. Nehru</i> | 5 |
| <i>Author's Preface</i> | 7 |
| <i>Preface by Director General Assam Rifles</i> | 11 |
| 1. The Origins of the Assam Rifles 1824-1860 | 17 |
| Extension of British Rule—The Cachar Levy—The Central and Northern Tracts | |
| 2. The Regional Battalions 1860-1913 | 33 |
| 1st Assam Rifles (Lushai Hills Battalion)—2nd Assam Rifles (Lakhimpur Battalion)—3rd Assam Rifles (Naga Hills Battalion) | |
| 3. First World War 1914-1918 | 51 |
| Raising of Fourth Battalion—Reorganisations | |
| 4. Counter-Insurgency Operations on the Manipur-Burma Frontier 1917-1919 | 61 |
| Preliminary Measures—Joint Operations with Burma—The Column from the Lushai Hills—Second Phase of Operations | |
| 5. Inter-War Years 1919-1939 | 84 |
| Raising of 5th Battalion—Reductions and Reorganisations—Consolidation of Tribal Areas—"Rani" Gaidinliu—Amalgamation and Other Measures—The McMahon Line at Towang | |
| 6. Assam Rifles in World War II: Border Operations and the Raising of "V" Force | 99 |
| Re-raising of 5th Battalion—Reception of Burma Refugees—"V" Force—Area and Operational Commands | |
| 7. Assam Rifles in World War II: "V" Force Operations with Lushai Brigade | 115 |
| Lushai Hills Op Command (1st Battalion Area)—Lushai Brigade—The Counter-Offensive Role—Capture of Gangaw | |

- 8. Assam Rifles in World War II: Operations on the Chindwin Front** 131
 “V” Op Command No 1; “V” Op Command No 2; “V” Op Command No 3; Battle of Imphal Plain; Battle of Kohima
- 9. Assam Rifles in World War II: With “V” Force in Burma** 151
 Across the Chindwin—Operations in Central Burma—Operations with Force 136
- 10. Post-War Adjustments and Independence** 165
 Officering the Force—Post-Independence Set-backs—Border Operations, 1947—Mr Nehru’s Tribal Policy—Administrative Measures—The Earthquake and the Floods—Law and Order Problems—Raising of 6th Battalion
- 11. The Northern Border** 189
 The Himmatsinhji Committee—The Towang Salient—Pioneers in Tribal Territory—Operation “Mop”—Mr Nehru’s Tribal Policy
- 12. Naga Insurgency** 207
 Early Operations—Naga Politics—The Insurgency Intensifies—New Raisings—The Cease Fire
- 13. The Chinese Aggression 1962 and the Indo-Pak War of 1965** 231
 Posts along the Himalayan Watershed—The Chaukan Pass Expedition—Invasion from the North—The Kameng Sector—The Central Sector—The Walong Sector—Operational Commitments, 1963-65—The Indo-Pakistan War, 1965
- 14. Insurrection in Mizoram** 253
 Post-war Lushai Aspirations—The Famine of 1959-60—“Operation Jericho”—Siege of 1st Battalion, Aizawl—The Army Takes Over—Security Operations, 1967
- 15. Reforms and Reorganisations** 273
 Study Group on Assam Rifles—The New Officer Cadre—The Directorate General—Service Prospects and Welfare Measures—Assam Rifles Training Centre—Welfare of Ex-servicemen

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Contents</i> | 15 |
| 16. The Decade of the Seventies | 292 |
| The New States of the North-East—Nagaland in Transition—Developments in Mizoram—The Assam Rifles in a Changing Environment | |
| <i>Appendix A</i> — Inspectors and Directors General and their Deputies 1947-1982 | 320 |
| <i>Appendix B</i> — Honours and Awards 1890-1982 | 323 |
| <i>Appendix C</i> — Recruitment Policy 1835-1982 | 331 |
| <i>Appendix D</i> — Assam Rifles Crest and Marching Song | 334 |
| <i>Index</i> | 336 |

MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| <i>Brahmaputra Valley</i> | Endpapers |
| <i>Assam Province c 1900</i> | 31 |
| <i>Kaladan Valley</i> | 114 |
| <i>Chin Hills</i> | 121 |
| <i>Chindwin Valley</i> | 132 |
| <i>Karen Hills</i> | 158 |
| <i>Lushai Hills</i> | after Index |
| <i>Nagaland-Manipur Area of Operations</i> | after <i>Lushai Hills</i> |

PHOTOGRAPHS

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Frontispiece</i> | between pages 4 and 5 |
| <i>Others</i> | between pages 160 and 161 |

THE ORIGINS OF THE ASSAM RIFLES (1824-1860)

ALTHOUGH the valley of the Brahmaputra later known as Assam formed an integral part of the political and cultural tradition of ancient Bharat, it seems to have drifted into a hazy limbo in middle-history; and came back into prominence only during the past two centuries. There was little cultural or other contact between the rest of India and the north-eastern corner of the sub-continent during the Moghul era. It was not until the early nineteenth century that Assam was drawn into the mainstream of India through the British colonial process; but even thereafter the specialised administration that was imposed on Assam and its hill tracts served to keep it socially and culturally isolated till very recent times.

Today the old area of "Assam" has been regrouped in seven different States and Union Territories, which together comprise one of the most economically important regions of the country. The sheer diversity of its political and social structure makes it a fascinating study for archaeologist, anthropologist and historian alike: and the political adjustments that are still in the process of being negotiated are a matter of the utmost importance to the security and integrity of India. It would be appropriate therefore to start this chronicle of the Assam Rifles with a brief history of the former province of Assam in whose service this Force was raised.

From references made to the north-eastern region in the Hindu epics, it is apparent that the area we now call Assam was not as culturally remote from the rest of the country as it later became. It figures prominently in Hindu mythology and early history. For instance, it was here that Kamdev, the god of love, is believed to have regained his original form after being burnt to ashes by Shiva's fiery glance for his presump-

tuousness; and hence the name Kamarupa for western Assam. In the Mahabharata Assam is referred to as Pragjyotisha; and modern Gauhati as Pragjyotishpur, a city against which Arjuna, charioted by Lord Krishna, led several forays—because its king, Bhagadatta, had thrown in his lot with the Kauravas.

Records of early history in the period following the great epics are almost non-existent. Tradition refers to a King Mahiranga (or Mairang) whose capital was located just south of modern Gauhati (Mairang Parbat); but no records of his rule exist. When the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang visited this region in about A.D. 640 he found a ruler with a Hindu name on the throne of Kamarupa. Shadowy kinglets succeeded one another thereafter, but the few contemporary records that exist are of doubtful accuracy. Other sources of history are: casual references in Burmese chronicles; coins from the later periods; and Moghul accounts of the wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. From these it is possible to discern or reconstruct the major landmarks of the history of the Brahmaputra valley.

The material prosperity of the fertile valley of the Brahmaputra attracted a number of invasions by hardier races from outside, mostly from the east or the north-east, who established their successive rules over the original inhabitants of Dravidian stock. The present tribal peoples of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, for instance, display social and cultural characteristics—and linguistic affinities—that link them to the Mong Khmers of Cambodia; they are almost certainly the remnants of an early invasion by these Indo-Chinese peoples. The Nagas, Kukis and Lushais, on the other hand, belong to a Tibeto-Burman race, as do the Abors and Miris, remnants of an invasion from the north-east, possibly originating in southwest China—though there is another school of thought that gives the Nagas and Kukis a south-east Asian origin, classing them as kinsmen of the Borneo Dyak and Malay peoples because of their common head-hunting propensities.

The last of the invaders of Assam were the Burmese Shans, known as Ahoms, who were to give their name to the country and rule it for centuries. They crossed the lower ranges at the head of the Brahmaputra valley, the Patkoi hills, and consolidated their power in Upper Assam. The tradi-

tional date of the first Ahom invasion according to their own chronicles is 1228, but students of Burmese history consider a date in the late 15th or early 16th century more probable. Certain it is that they at once came into conflict with the Cacharis, whom they absorbed, and the Nagas, whom they defeated into submission.

For many years the Ahoms maintained close contact with their Burmese kinsmen, but gradually Hindu influence began to replace cultural affinities with Burma. The Ahom King Suhungmung, whose traditional dates are 1497-1539, took an additional Hindu name, as did his successors. Suklengmung (1539-52) was the first Ahom king to mint coins; and these provide a useful gloss to the records of his and subsequent reigns. Late in the 17th century King Rudra Singh became an orthodox Hindu and in the reign of his successor Sib Singh (1714-44) Hinduism became the predominant religion.

In 1527 a Moghul force from Gaur invaded Assam for the first time but was defeated by the eastern Assamese peoples, probably the Kochs of present day Cooch Behar. Soon thereafter the Ahoms began expanding westwards from Upper Assam, pushing the Cacharis before them, first to Maibang and then even further westwards till most of the Brahmaputra valley came under their tutelage.

Between 1615 and 1669 the Moghuls despatched several expeditions to invade Assam but none was able to make much headway against the Ahom King Chakradhvaj's forces. The last of the expeditions, reportedly comprising 30,000 infantry, 18,000 cavalry and 15,000 archers was sent by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1669, under the command of his most able General, Raja Ram Singh. This force met with some success at first but the guerilla tactics adopted by the defenders and the difficult, unfamiliar terrain combined to frustrate any worthwhile ambitions of the Moghul commander. Eventually it was Chakradhvaj's successor, Udayaditya, who forced General Ram Singh to retire. The Moghuls made no further attempt to conquer Assam.

Extension of British Rule

Ahom rule had always been distracted by frequent rebel-

lions. By 1792, during a particularly troublesome period, King Gaurinath appealed to the British in Calcutta for support. A small force of 360 sepoys was sent up from Fort William under the command of a Captain Welsh, who had no difficulty in restoring a semblance of order. However, the force was recalled in 1792 in conformity with Governor General Sir John Shore's non-intervention policy; and chaos returned to Assam. In 1816 a claimant to the throne sought support from the Burmese, who were only too glad to send a force whose main preoccupation however was to plunder the country and take the loot back to Burma.

In 1819 further court intrigues led to King Chandrakant being deposed and the throne occupied by Purinder Singh. Again an appeal was made to the Burmese, this time by Chandrakant. Again the Burmese intervened; they reinstalled Chandrakant as king but thereafter refused to vacate Assam. Instead, they imposed a rule of terror in the country. Chandrakant then turned to the British who, despite their reluctance to intervene, decided to take a hand in Assam's affairs.

The British assembled a force at Goalpara and entered the Assam plains. At the same time a direct invasion of Burma was undertaken by a larger force formed from the Bengal and Madras armies which, under the command of Brigadier-General Sir Archibald Campbell, invaded Burma at two points—at Rangoon and on the Arakan Coast. The war lasted two years, at the end of which the Burmese sued for peace and Assam was handed over to the British. (Manipur, however, was not annexed at this stage. It was not until 1851 that the British extended their administration to this state.)

After a few years of direct rule the British handed back a part of the country—the north-eastern end of the Brahmaputra valley—to Purinder Singh, retaining the areas now known as Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara districts. However, in 1839 the British decided to expand their domain and set in motion a series of annexations. Purinder was finally deposed for alleged misrule and Assam became a part of Bengal, an arrangement that continued till 1919 (except for the period of the partition of Bengal, 1905-13, during which Assam and East Bengal were united under a separate Lieutenant-

Governor). Under the Government of India Act of 1919, Assam became a separate province in 1919.

British rule brought sound administration to the region and with it economic growth and prosperity. The tea industry, started by a Mr Bruce, with the first tea garden planted at the mouth of the Kundil river near Sadiya in 1832, soon spread all over Assam and in time became one of the principal sources of wealth not only for the province but for the country as a whole because of its large-scale export to Britain. In fact it was mainly for the protection of the tea gardens bordering tribal territory that units of armed police, forbears of the Assam Rifles, were initially raised.

The Brahmaputra and Surma valleys, the alluvial flat lands of Assam, are bordered by forest-clad mountain ranges—the Great Himalayas to the north, the Naga, Patkoi and Manipur hills to the east, the Lushai hills to the south and Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills in the middle. Most of the tribes inhabiting these hill tracts were wild and unruly and often led forays into the plains for loot, spreading arson and pillage in their wake. These raids were a serious threat to the tea industry.

Following the end of the war with Burma the number of troops in Assam was gradually reduced till only four regular battalions remained (forbears of the 6th and 8th Gorkhas). In order to meet the threat from the hill tribes it was decided to raise a "Levy" (or militia body) as a separate force under the civil government and distinct from both the regular army and the armed police. The proposed Levy was to be placed on a better military footing than the police in order to enable them to replace regular troops in certain parts of the tribal border. It was to be officered by police officials and would thus serve as a cheap semi-military body. The men were to be drawn from the armed Bengal Civil Police, at first comprising all classes, chiefly from Bengal.

The Cachar Levy

The first unit of the new organisation, the Cachar Levy, was raised during 1834-35 by Mr Grange, the civilian officer-in-charge at Nowgong. It consisted of 750 all ranks—Inspectors

Head Constables and Constables. This was the earliest embodied unit of what eventually developed into the fine force now called the Assam Rifles. In 1838 a similar body known as the Jorhat Militia was raised at Jorhat for the security of the Sibsagar border.

The main duty of the Cachar Levy was to guard the eastern frontier of Assam from the Brahmaputra river at Nowgong southwards to Silchar. An administrative headquarters was established at Asaloo (25 kilometres east of Haflong). The troops were located as follows: strong detachments at the two extremities—Nowgong and Silchar; smaller posts located along this 400 kilometre line at places where jungle routes from the Naga hills led down into the plains. Post commanders were responsible for patrolling these routes and the surrounding jungles to prevent tribal raiding parties from reaching the tea gardens and other settlements in the plains. The Cachar Levy was not deployed for the security of the border with Burma, that task being allotted to regular Army battalions assisted by the civil armed police of Bengal.

A typical post consisted of a moat-cum-earthwork perimeter, with a loop-holed palisading along the top of the parapet. Since the Commandant of the Cachar Levy, Mr Grange, was also the principal civil affairs official at Nowgong, it was not possible for him or other British officials to make frequent visits to the posts. The junior commanders had therefore to operate mostly at their own initiative, a responsibility which they met adequately and thus created a tradition of junior leadership which continued into the Assam Rifle battalions of later years.

Soon after the raising of the Levy the British undertook the first of a series of excursions into Naga territory. It was not only that the Nagas needed to be restrained from their raiding propensities; a more important reason was that the British had learned that the Raja of Manipur was planning to incorporate the Naga hills into his kingdom and the Naga tribes under his rule; and of this the British did not approve. The Government in Calcutta decided to bring the Naga tribes under British influence instead.

To this end Mr Grange was directed to conduct the first expedition into the strongest and most turbulent area of the

Angami Nagas in 1839. He set out with 50 men from his Levy, bolstered by a small detachment of regular troops from 1st Assam Light Infantry, and entered the Naga hills in the region west of Kohima. He encountered hostility *en route*, but there was not much actual fighting. The force was too small to achieve anything more than a determined flag march.

In 1840 Mr Grange took out another expedition, this time with a stronger force. He marched to a point south of Kohima to keep a rendezvous with a detachment of Manipuris with whom he was to enter into talks about the delineation of the boundary: but the two forces missed each other. On his way back to Dimapur Grange's force was much harassed by armed Nagas. Both sides suffered heavily and Grange was forced to withdraw to Dimapur for the care of his wounded. He later returned to the hills and carried out effective punitive measures, burning two rebellious Naga villages.

The Nagas had been suitably punished; but the British realised that though armed with only primitive weapons they were a formidable foe and subjugating them would be a costly process. The concept of routine annual expeditions deep into the hills was therefore dropped, though trans-border visits were maintained in order to establish rapport with, and acquire influence over, the clans—and thus to frustrate Manipuri interference.

The southern end of the protective line began to liven up in the early 1840s, the Kuki and Lushai tribes starting to raid into South Cachar from across the Tripura border. Punitive measures undertaken during 1841-49 brought a semblance of order into the area; and in 1850 a small body of local Kukis 250 strong was formed into the Kuki Levy. The Kukis are a sturdy, self-reliant tribe originally from the Lushai Hills, who were gradually pushed north into the South Cachar area. They are a united people, unlike the Nagas who, being essentially egalitarian by nature, do not easily take to a tribal structure. Also, Kukis are good fighters, expert with bows and arrows, and were somewhat feared by the Nagas.

A period of road-building in North Cachar and the Surma Valley resulted in increased trade with the tribal peoples, though occasional trans-border raids continued. Further to facilitate trade a small Levy post was opened at Samguting,

an old village on the track from Dimapur to Kohima.

The fortunes of the Cachar Levy during these years were linked to those of Captain Butler, who had taken over as Principal Assistant at Nowgong in 1845. This officer was ultimately to have the distinction of not only himself serving with the Cachar Levy for a continuous period of twenty years but also of being succeeded by his son in the same appointment after a gap of just three years following his retirement.

Captain Butler introduced a number of schemes for the betterment of the Levy. He obtained for the men a uniform different from the armed police—black serge trousers and jackets with white metal buttons for winter wear. The weapons and accoutrement were of the Waterloo pattern, that is, the old muzzle-loading Brown Bess musket with a long bayonet, two broad black leather cross-belts supporting the bayonet on one side and a large expense pouch on the other, both kept from swinging loose by a black leather waist belt. A short sword attached to the belt was also carried (until about 1865 when the more useful *khukri* was substituted). The headdress was the black Kilmarnock cap; and for footwear, if worn at all, local style shoes. Spare kit and rations were carried on the back in a bundle wrapped in a sheet, hillman fashion. Butler also made a change in the recruitment policy of the Levy by enlisting Nepalis, Cacharis and Kukis as they were better suited for hill and jungle operations.

Naga intransigence in the winter of 1849-50 led to the biggest expedition to date—about 200 men from both the regular Army and the Levy being sent into Naga territory under Captain Vincent. It carried out punitive measures as far south as Kohima. Later Major Fouquet took command of the column, which was reinforced by 500 regulars and 200 Militia and Levy and supported by two mountain guns and two mortars. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the Nagas in a pitched battle in front of Khonoma village, after which the village was put to the torch.

While the bulk of Major Fouquet's force returned to the plains, a detachment was left behind under Captains Vincent, Blake and Reid to make a more protracted tour in Angami territory in order to punish certain other villages which had sent men to fight against the British. A major battle was fought at

Kekrima, in the course of which a massed body of Naga spear-men charged the British force. About 250-300 of them were killed, Vincent's force losing only 3 killed and 20 wounded.

For a year or two this visitation had its effect, but soon the raiding started again. Thereafter, under Butler's advice it was decided to leave the tribes alone, as the great expense of the military expeditions could not be justified. The post at Samguting was abandoned and Dimapur evacuated. This passive policy lasted for twelve years during which the tribesmen were able to raid the plains at will. It was not until 1865 that the line of control was pushed forward once more to Dimapur and Samguting. The new salient was placed under command of a British Officer who was given power of decision for immediate punitive action. In 1868, it was young Captain Butler, son of the former Commandant, who took command of this salient.

In about 1852 it was decided that operational command and control of the 400-kilometre line then held by the Cachar Levy was not feasible from a single headquarters at Nowgong. The old Cachar Levy was split in two: the portion in the North Cachar hills was increased in strength and placed under operational command of a British Civil Officer based at Asaloo. Its name was changed to "The Frontier Police of North Cachar Hills". The Northern part of the force was amalgamated with the Jorhat Militia and placed under Nowgong, and became the forbear of 3rd Assam Rifles.

In 1863 the Kuki Levy was merged with the North Cachar Frontier Police. The combined unit was named "The Cachar Frontier Police" and made responsible for the maintenance of law and order in all the border areas of Cachar. It was later again renamed, this time as "The Surma Valley Frontier Police". The Surma Valley F.P., combining with the Chittagong Hill Tracts Police Force (later known as "The Lushai Hills Military Police Battalion"), became the forbears of 1st Assam Rifles.

The Central and Northern Tracts

It is time now to turn to the central range of hills that stretch from the Mymensing district in the west to North

Cachar—the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills. We have already made mention of the tribes that inhabit the latter areas, known as the Syntengs, who are of Mong Khmer stock. The Garo tribe, on the other hand, belong to the Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, with a language distinct from that of the others. Their country is entirely mountainous, rising to 1,300 metres, and more densely wooded than the Khasi-Jaintia region.

The Garos are not a warlike people: between 1837 and 1861 only a few minor raids were carried out by them and these were easily dealt with. In 1866 the Garo tract was taken over as a separate district under a British officer at Tura. In 1879 a force of Frontier Police 300 strong (Nepalis and Cacharis) was raised and located at Tura. In 1882, when the Frontier Police was reorganised into Military Police Battalions, the Tura unit became "The Garo Hills Military Police Battalion". In 1908 its strength was reduced, 200 men being sent to the Dacca M.P. Battalion. In 1913, the detachment remaining in Tura was absorbed into the Darrang M.P. Battalion, the forbear of 4th Assam Rifles.

The Synteng tribes of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills had remained peaceful since their subjugation in 1829, but in 1860 they suddenly rose in open rebellion, in protest against the new taxation system and in defence of tribal funeral rites which they felt were being interfered with by the police. A large force under Colonel Rutherford, consisting of three regular battalions, a military police battalion and 200 men of the Nowgong and North-Cachar F.P., supported by a battery of artillery, was sent to relieve Jowai, which had been besieged by the rebels. It took three weeks of hard fighting, with many casualties on both sides, before Jowai was relieved. It was not until 1863, by when every valley and jungle had been searched for rebel leaders, that the trouble in these hills was finally stamped out. The Khasis, essentially a peaceable people, gave no further trouble for years to come.

The civil administration headquarters for this area, originally organised from Dacca, had for years been located at Cherrapunji, which (as all students of geography know) is the place with the heaviest rainfall in the world. Clearly this was unsuitable for a government centre and in 1864 the administrative seat was moved to Shillong, which though only 50

kilometres distant, received much less rainfall and was a far more pleasant place to live in. In fact, after another two years the seat of the Assam Government itself was shifted from Gauhati to Shillong.

We turn next to that part of the Assam frontier which in our times has been of such great interest and seen so much military activity, that is, the northern frontier—stretching from Bengal in the west to Burma in the east. (This region later came to be known as the North-East Frontier Agency and today forms a separate State of the Union, Arunachal.)

After the annexation of Assam the British had extended their administration up to the foothills, but left the mountains, right up to the Himalayan watershed, to the tribal people. Some of the latter had taken advantage of the confusion that reigned during the process of annexation to encroach into the plains (south of what came later to be known as the Inner Line). The gradual ejection of those tribal settlements and the general security of the plains was the responsibility of the regular army aided by the civil police of Bengal, there being no special body of Militia during those early years.

The peoples that inhabited the northern tracts were: the Bhutanese in the far west; the Akas, north of Darrang district; the Daphlas and Miris, north of Tezpur; the Abors, in the hills between the Subansiri and Dibang rivers; and the Mishmis, in the hills bordering North Burma. (This list leaves out the Monpas of the Towang area, who had no access to the plains except as occasional traders, through Eastern Bhutan.) Although none of these tribes, except the Abors, was so persistently hostile and truculent as the Angami Nagas or the Lushais, the history of this part of the frontier records troubles of varying degrees of intensity right up to the 1920s.

There was some resistance from the Bhutanese during the early years of the British administration. Steps were taken to push tribal settlers in the plains back into Bhutanese territory and a series of minor annoyances kept the border sensitive. In 1837 and again in 1863 missions under British military officers had to be despatched to Punaka, the Bhutanese capital. The high-handed behaviour of the Bhutanese government towards the second mission resulted in the Government sending a strong

force of British and Indian troops (eight battalions in all), supported by cavalry, artillery and Sappers and Miners, into Bhutan. Severe fighting occurred at Daling, east of Darjeeling, and later at Dewangiri in Eastern Bhutan north of Rangiya. It was not until 1866 that the Bhutanese finally agreed to comply with the British terms regarding the delineation of the border.

In the Darrang area the Akas were generally peaceful though on one occasion, in 1830, they attacked a detachment of the 1st Assam Light Infantry. A blockade of the hills was deemed sufficient punishment and this kept them quiet for a number of years. Similarly, the Daphlas and Miris gave only minor trouble. Only on one occasion, in 1817, was a strong force of regular Assam Light Infantry men, supported by a detachment from the Nowgong F.P., sent up into the hills to punish the tribes concerned. Like the Akas, the Daphlas and Miris were also a peaceable people and made very little trouble. (Terms such as "punish the tribes" are taken from the records of the British period and are expressions of colonial attitudes. More often than not the expeditions that carried out these tasks were the vanguards of a policy of expansion of territory. This was clearly the case in the Lushai Hills, as will become obvious as our story unfolds.)

It is the Abors who have been the most troublesome of all the northern tribes. The first major foray into the plains was made by them in 1848 when, to assert their claim to a share in the gold and fish taken from rivers flowing through their land, they carried off several plain dwellers. A punitive expedition led by Capt Vetch resulted only in retaliatory raids and other outrages by the Abors. Even a blockade of the hills failed to curb Abor hostile actions. In the end a major expedition was mounted in 1868-69 which, though it failed in its first effort, succeeded in its second. A force under Colonel Hannay and five other British officers consisting of 300 men of 2nd A.L.I., a detachment from the Naval Brigade (Indian Marines) and Nowgong F.P. carried out a determined assault against a series of well-prepared Abor stockades. The Abors fought back stoutly, taking heavy punishment in the process but inflicting significant losses on the British. It was only when the stockades were captured after heavy fighting that they made submission. In subsequent years a scheme of road

construction was put into effect and this led to friendly agreements with the hill people which were honoured for a number of years.

It had become obvious that the Abors were a more warlike people than the other tribes along the northern border and that a stronger force would have to be based at Dibrugarh than just a detachment of Nowgong F.P. In 1864 a special F.P. force was raised for service along the borders of Sadiya and Lakhimpur districts. This force was given the title of "The Lakhimpur Armed Police Battalion"—composed of Cacharis, Shans and Nepalis—and was the forbear of the 2nd Assam Rifles.

The Mishmis to the east of the Abors are a tribe that originate from the same stock as the others in the northern region but now have their own language and customs. On the whole their relations with the plainsmen have been well regulated. The only occasion when a punitive expedition had to be sent against them was in 1854 when one of their chiefs murdered two French missionaries. A small force from the A.L.I. and Shan volunteers made a forced march into the hills and, after a brisk engagement, captured the chief and brought him down to Dibrugarh to be hanged. Thereafter peace reigned in the Mishmi hills for nearly forty years.

Before we leave our geographical round of the Assam tribes, mention must be made of some of the Nagas that inhabit the area south of the Mishmis—in the mountains of the Singpho country south of Sibsagar and Jorhat. Although they are of the same ethnic stock as the Angamis, they are much less warlike and aggressive. Only in 1844 was it necessary to lead two minor expeditions (Jorhat Militia) into the hills to enforce quietude. In neither case do the records show any fighting having taken place and for many years it was found that a blockade of their hills was sufficient to bring the different tribes to reason when trouble seemed to be brewing.

There were some major changes in the organisation and administration of the Police and Militia forces during the 'sixties. A new body of Frontier Police was raised for the protection of the southern borders of Sylhet and Cachar by amalgamating the North Cachar F.P. and the Kuki Levy. The total strength was further increased by recruitment and the Cachar

Frontier Police was formed, later renamed the Surma Valley F.P.

In 1865 a recruiting and training depot for all the Frontier Police was opened at Sylhet for the enlistment and training of Nepalis, Cacharis and Jaruas. In 1868 the F.P. uniform appears to have been changed to one of dark blue cloth with white piping. Some units adopted black puttees—others, brown canvas gaiters. Buttons were of white metal; a silver bugle adorned the Kilmarnock cap or the pugree. Black greatcoats were issued free to the men after 1879.

In the 1870s further changes were instituted, the most far-reaching being the reorganisation of the Frontier Police into separate para-military battalions, arranged territorially. Furthermore, in order to bring some sort of cohesion into the haphazard system of manning frontier posts, it was felt that all border posts should be taken over by the Frontier Police. Military units could thereby be further reduced in number. It was agreed that in order to carry out their duties effectively the Frontier Police would have to be strengthened, better trained and armed, and commanded by regular Army officers.

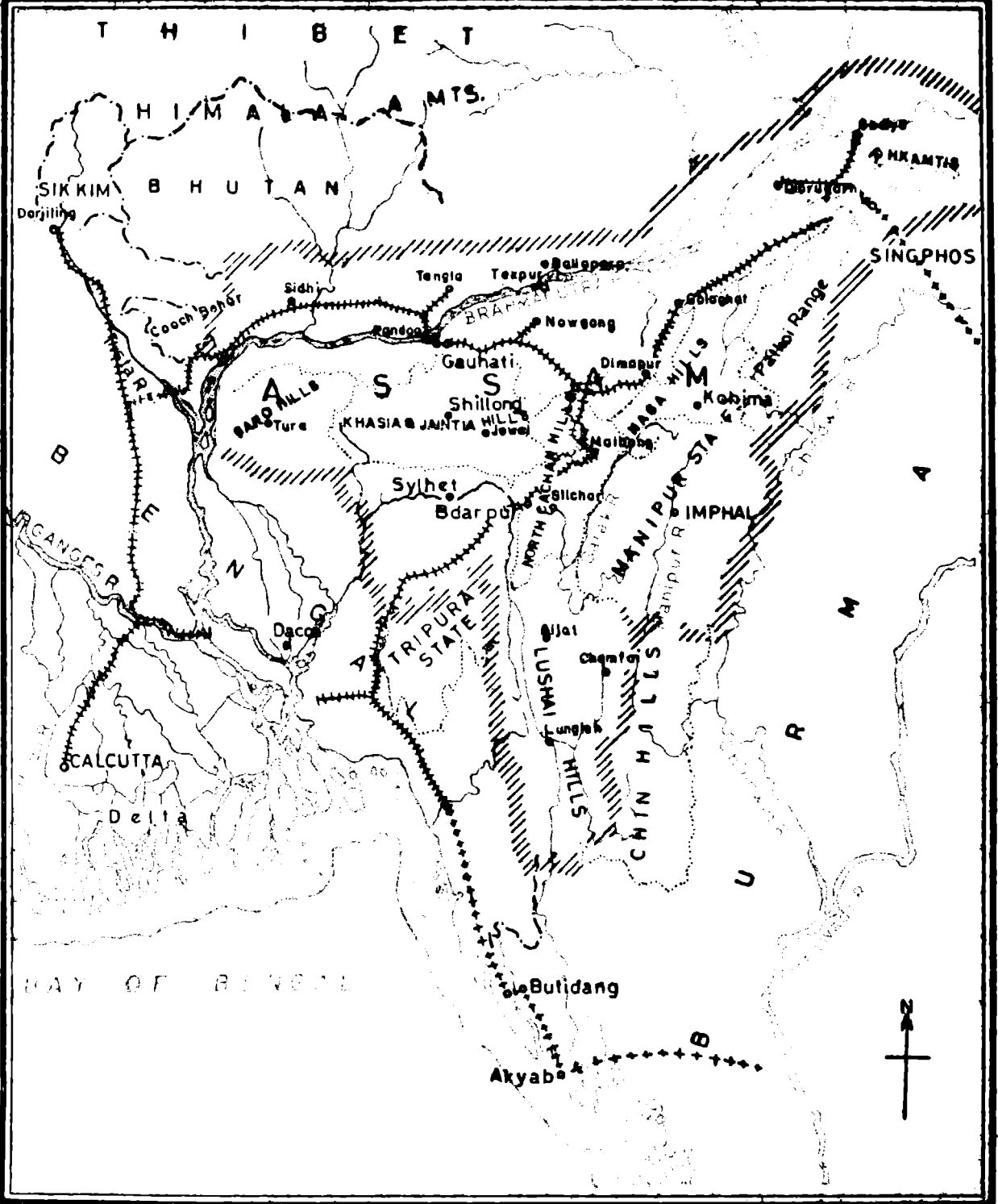
Existing units were thereupon reorganised into three battalions of "Assam Military Police"—one for the Naga Hills, one for the Sadiya tracts and one for the Surma Valley (Cachar)—each 750 strong. In addition a small battalion of 300 was raised for the Garo Hills. The first two were to be officered by regulars from the Army and the latter two by Police officers. It was decided, at the same time, that titles of ranks would thenceforth be as for the Army—Subedars, Jemadars, Havildars and Sepoys—with pay of rupees 150, 60, 16, and 8 per month respectively.

These changes were finally put into effect in 1882. Battalions wore their old uniforms till khaki was introduced in 1885. Thereafter each unit adopted its own distinctive silver buttons and cap badges, displaying the battalion's name. Indian Officers (Subedars and Jemadars) wore the *khukri* and the crossed-*khukris* badges of rank in place of stars. A winter uniform of khaki serge was introduced for some years but later given up for reasons of economy.

The whole force was placed under the Inspector General of Police—though great latitude was left in the hands of the

ASSAM PROVINCE - CIRCA 1900

(After Shakespear)



Commandants. Posts were rebuilt with barrack accommodation—or what was regarded as such in those days.

For some time Sikhs, Punjabis and Dogras, together with a small percentage of Muslims, were tried out for recruitment in the Frontier Police. The former two classes and the Muslims were dropped as unsuitable for Assam, but Dogras continued to be enlisted in the Naga Hills Battalion till just before the First World War. Eventually the composition of each battalion became three-fourths Gorkhas and one-fourth Jaruas.

THE REGIONAL BATTALIONS (1860-1913)

1st Assam Rifles (Lushai Hills Battalion)

IT has been previously mentioned that the Police battalions of the Surma Valley and the Chittagong Hill Tracts were the forbears of the 1st Assam Rifles. The association of these two widely separated units, one based in Assam and the other in Bengal, had its origin in a joint operation against the Lushais mounted from both Assam and Bengal in 1871.

Between 1865 and 1868 Kukis and Lushais from the southern hills carried out a number of raids in the Cachar area. Although expeditions were mounted against them, because of lack of administrative resources it was not found possible to penetrate far afield. During the same period the Lushais had also begun to mount raids against the Chittagong Hill Tracts west of the Lushai Hills in protest against creeping British expansion eastwards from Chittagong.

In 1862 the Chittagong Hill Tracts had been taken over and placed under a British Officer known as the "Hill Superintendent", for whose use a body of armed police called the "Frontier Police of Bengal" (originally Bengalis, later replaced by Cacharis and Nepalis) was raised. During the winter of 1871-72 the first of a number of extensive military operations was undertaken by the Hill Superintendent to subjugate the Lushai tribes. Two strong columns were ordered to enter the Lushai hills (or Mizoram, as it is now called) at different points: one from Silchar southwards, to punish the tribes on the north-east corner, near the border of Manipur; and the other from Chittagong eastwards, to punish the tribes based at Aizawl and Lungleh.

The Cachar column consisted of two regular battalions, 300

F.P. personnel, a Eurasian battery, 1,200 Transport coolies and 157 Transport elephants. The Senior Staff Officer with this column was Colonel F. Roberts (later Field Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., C-in-C, India) who in fact on several occasions assumed operational command of parts of the column in jungle skirmishes. The Chittagong column consisted of three regular battalions including 2nd and 4th "Goorkhas", a Mountain Battery, a company of Sappers and Miners and a detachment from the Frontier Police.

It is interesting to note that the Kukis, who had been retained in the F.P. on disbandment of the Kuki Levy for special duties such as scouts, guides, trackers and sharpshooters as well as for general 'I' duties (gathering tribal and topographical information), proved a failure during these operations. This was mainly because of the courses of "regular" training they had been put through under unimaginative officers, a process that had deprived them of their natural tribal aptitude and habits. They became converted to parade-ground drill and "uniformity of action and finish", so that eventually, through no fault of their own, they were eliminated from the Force.

The joint operation lasted throughout the winter. Although the two columns were not able to meet, each achieved its objective. Large numbers of tribesmen made their submission, particularly the Howlong clan around Aizawl; and the Lushais gave no further trouble for some years. As a result of this operation a line of strongly manned posts, some held by the regular Army but mostly by the Frontier Police, was established along the Cachar, Sylhet and Chittagong borders. About a hundred personnel of the Frontier Police were awarded the Indian General Service Medal (1854-1895) with clasp "Looshai" for this operation—the first such award to be recorded.

In 1887 it was decided by the Government in Calcutta to send small reconnaissance parties deep into the Lushai Hills to survey the border with the Chin Hills (Upper Burma) with a view, clearly, to extend British territory up to the Burma border. This was considered necessary because in the wake of the Third Burma War of 1885-86 the British annexed Upper Burma, established Fort White and made contact with the tribes of the Chin Hills.

In January 1888 two reconnaissance parties set out from

Chittagong, each commanded by a British Officer and consisting of N.C.O.s from the British Army and a small escort from the Frontier Police. No hostility on the part of the Lushais was expected, hence security arrangements appear to have been relaxed. The result was that a concerted attack by the Poi clan on the party led by Lieutenant Stewart succeeded in wiping it out. Stewart himself was killed and his head taken away as a trophy. The other party was soon withdrawn and it was decided to send in a strong punitive expedition the next season—that is, in the winter of 1889-90.

Accordingly, a column 1,250 strong under Brigadier-General Tregear consisting of detachments from the 2/2nd Gorkhas, 9 Bengal Native Infantry (later to be renamed 9th Gorkhas), 2nd B.N.I., 200 Frontier Police and complements from the Artillery and Sappers and Miners, assembled at Rangamati (east of Chittagong) and entered Lushai territory in early January 1889. The aim given to this expedition was not only to carry out punitive operations but also to establish permanent occupancy in the Lushai area, right up to the Burma border. To facilitate his movements General Tregear was directed to build a road to Haka in the Chin hills before commencing his operations, and to establish a number of permanent posts at suitable places *en route*.

By mid-March a road had been cut through the jungles to Lungleh, where General Tregear decided to build the first of his permanent posts—a stockade accommodating 3 officers and 250 rifles. Thereafter, a flying column was sent out to punish the Poi clan for Stewart's murder. This operation concluded the activities of the column for the season.

In the winter of 1889, the strength of a new column under General Tregear was increased—to nearly 4,000 men, consisting of troops from fresh regiments (except for 2/2nd Gorkhas and the Frontier Police) for a deeper move into the south Lushai hills. An additional task given to General Tregear was to despatch a column northwards from Lungleh to punish the tribes in the Chengri valley for their raids in the previous season. To support him in this operation, a column from Silchar (400 men of the Surma Valley Military Police under Mr Daly) was ordered to move south into the hills to cooperate with the Lungleh column.

Once re-established at Lungleh, General Tregear sent a column 500 strong (including 100 men of the Chittagong F.P.) under Colonel Skinner (3rd B.N.I.) to make for the northern Lushai Hills. The route chosen lay along the Dalesari river in its upper reaches. The valley was so confined and the terrain so difficult that progress could only be made by means of rafts, a large number of which were constructed by the Frontier Police, to whom the river work was mostly allotted. Whenever a stretch of rapids was encountered, old rafts had to be abandoned and new ones built for the next stretch of open water. The men of the F.P. soon became expert in river-craft and performed their task so well that they received special mention in General Tregear's dispatches at the end of the operations.

Colonel Skinner's column joined hands with Mr Daly's from Silchar a few miles south of Aizawl in mid-February. This was the first meeting between men of the two units—the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion and the Chittagong Frontier Police—which were later to be amalgamated into one force, the forerunner of 1st Assam Rifles.

The punitive operations against the tribes were successfully carried out though not without some close-quarter jungle fighting. When the task was accomplished both forces withdrew, one back to Silchar and the other southwards, but not before establishing a permanent stockade at Aizawl where 200 men from Daly's force remained garrisoned.

Meanwhile, General Tregear's main force had steadily extended the road eastwards through primitive jungles, abounding with exotic fauna such as the two-horned rhinoceros, the Malayan sun bear, the peacock pheasant and the greater hornbill. The countryside was more open here on the Blue Mountain range, with commanding views over a sea of hills to the Tao Peak in the Chin country. It was decided to establish another permanent post here to accommodate 2 officers and 200 rifles, christened Fort Tregear.

A small flying column about 100 strong commanded by Capt Hall of 2nd Gorkhas was despatched eastwards from here. Crossing the Kaladan river which forms the border with the Chin Hills, the column met up with a small British force from General Symond's force operating in Upper Burma. The

combined column went after the tribe which, according to Intelligence received, had carried away Lieut Stewart's head. Their village was burned and Stewart's head and two others recovered, after which the tribesmen made their submission. The heads were given formal burial at Haka a few days later.

At Haka consultations were held with General Symonds regarding control of the tribes in his area. The road to Haka was completed by mid-April, the terrain in the Chin Hills being much more open, forested with pine, oak and rhododendron and far less undergrowth. Thereafter General Tregear's force turned back homewards, reaching Chittagong in mid-May. For these operations men of the Chittagong F.P. and the Surma Valley M.P. were awarded the Indian General Service Medal (1859-1895), clasp "Chin Lushai Hills 1889-90".

A number of minor rebellions were put down during 1890-91, including one in Manipur in which a strong detachment from the Surma Valley battalion marched into Manipur State under Colonel Rennick and remained there for some months. During one of these operations, in the southern Lushai Hills, Subedar Sangram Sing and Havildar Chandra Sing Thapa of the Chittagong F.P. distinguished themselves by their gallantry (both being badly wounded) and were awarded the Indian Order of Merit, 2nd Class, the first such known awards to the Frontier Police.

1891 was a memorable year in those parts. On 1st April the south Lushai Hills area was constituted a district of the Chittagong Division and placed under the civilian charge of Capt J. Shakespear with the title of "Superintendent". At the same time the Chittagong Frontier unit was renamed the "South Lushai Hills Military Police Battalion" and its headquarters moved from Rangamati to Lungleh, which became the centre of administration for the new district. The unit changed its uniform from dark blue serge to khaki (with thick underclothing for winter wear) and, what is more notable, the old Enfield rifle gave place to the Snider.

In 1893 came the reorganisation of the Surma Valley unit. The strong detachment at Aizawl under Captain Loch of the 3rd Gorkhas was made into a separate unit styled the "North Lushai Military Police Battalion", whilst the remaining 350 or so men of the parent battalion stayed on at Silchar and were

later incorporated into the Dacca M.P. Battalion.

Captain Loch set about transforming the new home of the Battalion. An engineer by inclination, he trained his men in quarrying and cutting stone, road-building and carpentry. He then transformed Aizawl, developing the old timber stockade and "wattle-and-daub" houses and barracks into *pucca* structures with stone walls, corrugated iron roofs, well-constructed doors and windows—all well laid out, cantonment style. He built a parade ground by cutting a spur away at one end and building up the other end with 40 metres of filling. The whole work cost the Government nothing, "the men having received working pay out of the Battalion Canteen profits, rendered large through thirst engendered by toil". Besides building a good rifle range and a number of district roads, Captain Loch also introduced pipes and drums into the Battalion, the men being sent for instruction to his old Regiment, the 3rd Gorkhas.

There were a number of uprisings in South and North Lushai Hills during the next few years, in which the forces centred at Aizawl and Lungleh (the one under Assam and the other under Bengal) cooperated with each other during operations. However, the need for a closer system of coordinating all Lushai operations was felt when the Chins on the Burma border also began to stir up trouble. In 1892, for instance, two columns of Military Police, one each from Aizawl and Lungleh, joined hands with a column of regular troops from Fort White (60th Rifles of the British Army and the 39th Garhwalis) to subjugate rebellious elements over a wide area in the central, southern and northern regions of the Lushai Hills (for which the General Service Medal with Clasp "Lushai 1889-92" was awarded to the troops and the Military Police).

One by one the outlawed Chiefs in these regions were captured, some transported for life to the Andamans, others sent to prison for shorter terms. A fresh source of trouble, however, started in the south where a large tract of "unadministered" hill country lay between the settled ones of the Chin and Lushai hills of India and the Arakan Hills of Burma. Tribes began to raid northwards from this tract and though it was not till a few years later that new posts were established

on this border, the responsibilities of the troops at Aizawl and Lungleh were further increased. In view of all these developments it was decided in 1898 to make the whole of the Lushai Hills into one district under one civil head—under the Government of Assam. With this change Aizawl became the centre of administration. At the same time the South and North Lushai battalions were amalgamated, the new unit being designated the “Lushai Hills Military Police Battalion”.

The new battalion settled down comfortably in the spacious “cantonment” built by Captain Loch. The parade ground was ideal for games such as football and hockey, while polo was for long played on it by both officers and “any Goorkhas who could ride” (of which there were a large number) their mounts being chiefly mules.

For several years thereafter the Lushai Hills Battalion performed mainly routine duties. In 1911 and in 1913 detachments were sent north to join punitive-cum-survey expeditions, in support of the Lakhimpur Battalion.

2nd Assam Rifles (Lakhimpur Battalion)

We now turn to the story of the Lakhimpur Battalion, raised at Dibrugarh in 1864 for service along the borders of Sadiya and Lakhimpur districts. The Battalion saw active service against the Abors and Mishmis during the 'seventies. In addition, it furnished detachments in support of survey operations in the Lhota and Ao country in northern Nagaland. In one of these expeditions one British officer was treacherously killed and one wounded, and there were more than 130 casualties among the men of the escort and survey parties. In consequence a large punitive force drawn from regular troops and the Lakhimpur and Naga F.P. Battalions under Brigadier-General Nuthall was sent in to the area to exact reparations. Although the main culprits had dispersed to the Patkoi range, a number of villages were burned and much stored grain destroyed. In one incident, at a village called Ninu on the skirts of the Patkoi, 71 heads of those massacred during the survey expedition were recovered and, together with other remains, given proper cremation and the ashes buried.

By 1880 the Lakhimpur Battalion had established a series

of posts extending from the Darrang border, round the Sadiya marches, to the Naga Hills south of the Brahmaputra in the Sibsagar district. This dispersed disposition would have had serious repercussions on the unit's state of training and administration had it not been for the reorganisation scheme of 1882, mentioned before, when the Frontier Police units were grouped into territorial para-military battalions. Under this scheme the Lakhimpur unit became the Lakhimpur Military Police Battalion. Its headquarters continued to be at Dibrugarh, with a strong detachment permanently located at Sadiya. Many of the smaller posts were discontinued over the next few years, as the border became more settled; and the Battalion benefited because thereafter its companies were more concentrated for training and discipline. They were quiet years except for general escort duties for the Political Officer at Sadiya and for a long-range reconnaissance of the Hukawng Valley, then a little-known tract. In 1888 a strong detachment under the new Commandant Lieut Maxwell (Jat Regiment) was sent to support a punitive expedition in the Ao area of the Naga Hills (reported in more detail in the next section).

During the North Lushai Hills disturbances of 1890-91 mentioned in the previous section, Captain Maxwell took a detachment of 120 Lakhimpur men to the disturbed area to relieve posts of the Surma Valley F.P. so that the latter personnel could proceed for operations further afield. On their way back after this venture, the detachment was diverted to Manipur State for a few months to support Colonel Rennick's column (mentioned in the previous section).

In 1893 Captain Maxwell was given command of a force 600 strong, composed of regular troops (150 men of the 44th Gorkha Rifles, later 8 GR), 300 of his own men and 100 from the Naga Hills M.P., supported by two 7-pounder guns and 1,500 transport coolies, to support the Political Officer who was leading a punitive mission up the Dibong valley (and returning via the Dihang valley) to punish a number of Abor villagers who had been raiding the plains for slaves. The expedition only half accomplished its mission, beset as it was by mishaps—in one of which, owing to the misjudgment of the P.O., a base camp far up the Dihang valley was treacherously attacked and totally annihilated, the casualties numbering 49

killed and 45 wounded—including a British Officer; many others died of disease due to hardship and lack of food. By any standards this must be reckoned as a serious set-back, but a lenient policy was adopted and no further step was taken against the Abors. The only punitive measure was a blockade of their hills, which was not lifted for the next eight years.

The band of the Battalion dates from Captain Maxwell's time—about 1893—when it began in a very small way on a Government grant of Rs 50 a month. As the bandsmen improved, funds were built up by performances at social functions at the tea gardens, enabling the Band to develop well in course of time and often to be invited to play at Shillong during the season.

A major expedition up the Dibong valley in 1899 to punish Mishmi tribesmen in the area of present-day Roing is recalled mainly because it showed up the unnecessary high expenditure of employing regular troops for minor tasks. Colonel Molesworth's column which proceeded on this assignment consisted of (besides the Lakhimpur Police personnel) eight companies of regulars from various battalions, supported by a company of Sappers. It stayed out three months, costing the Government Rs 2 lakhs, whereas the whole task could have been accomplished by just the 200 Lakhimpuris who went with the column.

In 1902 the Battalion was issued with Martini-Henry Rifles.

The remainder of the decade saw the Battalion being used mainly to assist the civil power in putting down the first serious acts of "sedition and strikes" in the Surma Valley and in East Bengal. The nationalist sentiment in India was clearly on the upsurge and the British felt compelled to call in the Frontier policemen when things got too far out of hand.

The next occasion when the Lakhimpur Battalion was employed in the field in conjunction with regular forces was in 1911. A strong force under General Bowers, consisting of two Gorkha battalions (1/2nd and 1/8th), the Lakhimpuris under their new Commandant, Captain Sir G. Sutherland Dunbar, bolstered by a detachment from the Lushai Hills M.P., 27-pounder guns, a Brigade Signal Company and some 3,000 Naga porters, was sent up the Dihang valley both to

explore and survey the territory towards the Tibetan border as also to punish the Minyong Abors (around Pasighat) for their treacherous murder of the Political Officer, Mr Noel Williamson and a missionary, Dr Gregorson, the previous March.

The column was to operate from a base at Kobo, for the preparation of which a strong detachment of the Lakhimpuris under the Commandant himself had been made responsible. From Kobo the column split into two, the main force advancing along the west bank of the Dihang to its forward base at Pasighat, whence it moved further up the Dihang gorge to Ringting and then turned up a side valley, making for Khomsin where the two Englishmen had been murdered. Meanwhile a smaller force of two regular and three Lakhimpuri companies under Colonel Fisher, O.C. of 1/2nd Gorkhas, struck out north-westwards across trackless jungle-clad foothills as a flank protection force, making for Mishing.

The operations lasted from mid-October to mid-December. There were periods of heavy fighting, particularly when the columns were ambushed and when attacking Abor stockades. The force suffered a number of casualties, including two British Officers severely hurt by contusions from "rock shoots" and *punjis*. The Abors seem to have used every jungle device to inflict casualties and thus had the upper hand in most of the skirmishes; furthermore, by melting away into the jungle-clad hill-sides whenever there was a chance of frontal engagements, they incurred less casualties than the column. In the end, of course, they came to terms; some fines were imposed and a few villages burned; and the murderers of Williamson and Gregorson were handed over. Once again it was felt that the whole operation could probably have been swiftly completed by the Lakhimpuris had they been allotted the task by themselves. This time there was quite a hue-and-cry both in the British and Indian press criticising the cost-effectiveness of this operation.

At the end of the expedition it was decided that a trading post and hospital, protected by men of the Lakhimpur Battalion, would be opened up in the mountains, as well as a police post two days march beyond that—both to be backed by a strong detachment at Pasighat. The total commitment was

for 325 men, which meant closing down some other posts in the Sadiya area.

One of the reasons why so much importance was being given to the Dihang and Dibong valleys was, of course, the desire to explore the unknown border-land towards Tibet. It must be remembered that this was still the period when it was not precisely known if, where or how the Tsang Po entered India from Tibet and was transformed into the Brahmaputra. Furthermore, there was every expectation of finding a suitable trading route into Tibet from the Sadiya area.

During 1912-13 survey parties were pushed up the Dibong and Dihang valleys and far into the Abor and Mishmi hills, beyond points never reconnoitred before. The security of these parties fell on the shoulders of Lakhimpuri escorts. The Battalion was also called upon to provide protection for a survey and road-building party sent up the Lohit valley, the intention being to try and open up a trade route with south-west China via Rima, in Tibet. This party succeeded in cutting a bridle path up to Walong, after which the work was discontinued.

3rd Assam Rifles (Naga Hills Battalion)

After it was decided to reorganise the old Military Police battalions into three "territorial" units of Frontier Police, it became obvious that the Nowgong Battalion, the senior unit, would be fully occupied with the Cachar-Nagaland border and the Naga tribes; in fact even while it was still under the Nowgong administration, this unit was unofficially alluded to as the "Naga Hills F.P." It was not till 1872, however, that the Nowgong Battalion moved to Nagaland under Captain Butler, who then took over the administration of the Angami country. At first its headquarters was established at Samguting, but this was found to be neither centrally located nor suitable from the health point of view; and in 1878, after some reluctance on the part of Government, the Headquarters of the Administration was moved to Kohima.

The Government also objected to Captain Butler's proposal to set up a strong post under a civil officer at Wokha, a Chief's village in Lhota Naga country. It was not until Captain

Butler himself was killed in an ambush in Lhota country that permission was granted to establish a post at Wokha.

This was not the end of a jinx period for the Battalion's Lhota policy. The new P.O. at Kohima, Mr Damant, who appears to have been at loggerheads with the officers of the F.P., disagreed with them on all matters concerning military preparedness. He was not convinced that there was any trouble to be expected from the Lhota area; nor was he in favour of the building of defensive works at Kohima, such as clearing of fields of fire or the building of stockades. He was soon to pay dearly for his misjudgments.

In October 1879 Mr Damant set out with a small escort on a visit to Khonoma. Despite warnings from local villagers, he left half of his escort with the baggage party at the bottom of the Khonoma hill and walked up to the village with the remainder. The Khonoma villagers allowed him to approach the door of their village wall, which they had locked against him, and then from the top of the wall opened fire on his party, killing Damant and most of those with him. The tribesmen then swarmed down the hill, killing many of the baggage guard and dispersing the rest. Total casualties were 39 killed, including a F.P. Jemadar (more than half the original force) and 20 wounded.

Nor was that the end of the story. The Khonoma tribesmen, aided by others from nearby villages, then laid siege to Kohima. The enemy, by some accounts, were 6,000 strong, though this was probably an exaggeration. In Kohima itself, where there were women and children to be protected also, Damant's previous obstinacy was very nearly the cause of a second disaster. The defences had not been completed and soon the tribesmen had closed in, cutting off the water supply, setting fire to one of the two stockades and firing into the other at will from the cover of trees and boulders that should have been cleared as a matter of routine. Indeed, the garrison commander was on the point of surrendering—which would probably have been a disastrous course—when Major Johnstone (Butler's successor) hurried in with reinforcements from Manipur (where he had been at the time) and arrived just in time to prevent a major tragedy.

The tribesmen thereafter fled towards Khonoma. Major

Johnstone, encouraged by offers of assistance by friendly Nagas of nearby villages, made plans for prompt pursuit before Khonoma could be properly organised for defence. He was prevented from carrying out his plan because he received orders to await a larger force being organised under General Nation for a deliberate attack on Khonoma. This eventually turned into a major operation, though it did not receive adequate publicity subsequently—mainly because the Second Afghan War had already started and attracted all the attention.

In the third week of November General Nation's force of 1,000 regulars (mostly Gorkhas), 200 men of the Surma Valley F.P. and 100 from the Naga Hills Battalion assembled at the base of the formidable Khonoma feature. The village consisted of a triple-walled fort on top of a 5,000 ft spur, strongly defended with *punji* lined ditches, *sangars* and loop-holed walls protected by thorn entanglements. South of the village rose higher peaks, up to and over 3,000 metres, into the almost inaccessible sides of which further defences had been built, called the "Chakka forts".

Before starting his main assault from the north, General Nation sent a detachment of two companies of regulars and 30 men of the F.P. to the south of the fort as a cut-off force. 200 Manipuri troops (who had come up as reinforcements under Major Johnstone) were positioned on a flank for a similar purpose. Only then was the main assault launched.

The frontal assault was led by the General himself and a flanking attack on the right by Lieut Ridgeway (who earned a Victoria Cross for his part in this operation and subsequently rose to the rank of General). The going was not only very steep, at times almost perpendicular, but made more difficult by numerous obstacles the tribesmen had had time to prepare. Showers of bullets, spears and rocks rained on them all the way. It was not surprising that casualties were heavy. Four of the nine British Officers were killed; and 25 per cent of the troops were either killed or wounded that day.

Nightfall forced the attackers to bivouack on the lower slopes of the spur, it being found impossible to carry the wounded all the way to Base at the bottom of the hill. However, when the attack was to be renewed at daybreak it was found that the defences had been evacuated by the enemy who, un-

fortunately, had been able to escape to their Chakka hide-outs because the cut-off force was withdrawn during the night owing to a misunderstanding.

So fell Khonoma; but the besieging force had been too badly mauled for General Nation to consider pursuing the enemy up the far mountain to the Chakka forts. The result was that the Khonoma Nagas got away to their retreat and continued to remain aggressive. It was not until 1880, following a raid by those same tribesmen on tea gardens in north Cachar, that it was decided to capture the Chakka forts. A force was being assembled for this purpose when the Khonoma clan sent down a deputation offering final and definite submission. There followed heavy fines and confiscations, dispersal of the community among neighbouring villages and the imposition of forced labour for road and cantonment construction at Kohima: only then did a quietude settle on the Angami country for a few years. The clan was later allowed to return to Khonoma, which meanwhile had been made a temporary post for regular troops, eventually taken over by the Naga Hills Battalion—an arrangement that continued for thirty years or more.

After the settlement of these disturbances the Battalion at last found the opportunity to put into effect the reorganisation scheme of converting to a "territorial" unit—the Naga Hills Military Police Battalion. Under its first Commandant, Captain Plowden (a Bengal Cavalryman), it settled down to making a proper cantonment at Kohima. At the same time Pipers were trained, later to give way to a 25-piece Band.

The posts held by the Battalion roughly conformed to the extent of the British controlled Naga Hills territory: from Dimapur south to the Manipur border; in the west along the Kopamedzu Range and the Dikku river; a northern line lying roughly westwards to Borpathar. However, the next few years saw a policy of creeping territorial expansion by the British—as in the Lushai Hills, already related—by pushing out eastwards from the Angami country towards the Burma border and northwards, extending the northern boundary till it touched the Sibsagar border in the plains. The first step in this policy was to take over an area under "political control" before eventually incorporating it into the Naga Hills

District. The condition and meaning of the term "Political Control Area" have been explained in a note by Captain W.M. Kennedy (who later became Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills):

The area of Political Control, and the policy to be adopted in the administration thereof, were decided by the Government of India in February 1886. The Political Control area at that time included the Ao Naga subdivision, which was not added to the Naga Hills District till 1890. The said area was constituted in order to stop raids and crimes of violence along the borders of the Naga Hills and Sibsagar districts, which, of course, had an unsettling effect on those tribes directly under our rule, as well as to interpose a barrier between our settled districts and the wild tribes beyond. Officers are not supposed to interfere much in the internal affairs of villages in a politically controlled area. It is only obligatory to punish murder cases, but officers may settle inter-village disputes if they can. Such villages pay no revenue, and are not even guaranteed protection against raids by independent tribes from beyond the boundary of our control. It is laid down that 'protection must depend on proximity and convenience'.

In 1887 Plowden was succeeded by Lieut Macintyre, 2nd Gorkhas, during whose tenure the drab uniform of the Battalion was brightened by narrow scarlet piping round collars and cuffs and down the trouser seams. It was also decided to allot porters and ponies to M.P. personnel out on patrol in the hills; before this only regular troops were entitled to this privilege—one porter for every three men and a certain number of pack ponies for Battalion Headquarters. This put an end to the old unsoldierly sight of men carrying their rations tied up in a sheet across the chest (or on his back, supported from the forehead).

Macintyre's tenure of command also saw the incorporation of north-eastern Ao tracts and the trans-Dikku Sema Naga villages as part of British administered Naga Hills District. By 1889 formal sanction had been given to establish M.P. posts at Mokokchung and Mongsemdi, north-east of Wokha. At the same time extensive track-building activity resulted in connecting many of the important villages to Mokokchung or even to Kohima direct. A cart-road connecting Kohima to Dimapur via Nichuguard was also completed about this time.

A nimble confidence trick brought the Somra tract into the

British administration about this time. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr Porteous, escorted by 1,000 men of the Naga Hills Battalion, had agreed to visit the hitherto unvisited and unsurveyed area of the Somra hills, under the shadow of Saramethi Range (which rises to peaks of nearly 3,600 metres) in order to settle a claim forwarded by Manipur state in whose sphere of influence it lay. However, once there, though Manipur's claim was proved beyond doubt, Mr Porteous proclaimed that that State was "not sufficiently strong to prevent the Somra people raiding and levying tribute where they chose", so he decided that "this area was therefore deemed to come under the British Naga Hills Administration".

The next bit of excitement for the Naga Hills Battalion came in the wake of the Manipur rebellion of 1891, in which the ruler of the state was deposed and the Political Officer and a number of other British Officers treacherously murdered by the *Senapati* of the Army, Tikendrajit Singh. This is not the place to recount the full story of that rebellion. Suffice it to say that there was much bungling by the British and not a little disgrace attached to the incident—and after it was over several British Officers (in both civil and military employment) were court-martialled, two of them being cashiered for "gross neglect of duty in the face of the enemy" and for "other more private reasons for this sentence which were not made public".

At the height of the rebellion, the regular Indian Army force stationed in Manipur was dispersed and virtually chased out by the rebels of the Manipur State troops. (This State force, about 3,000 strong, was directly descended from the Levy raised by the British from among Manipuri settlers in Cachar during the first Burmese war, 1825.) It was at this stage that the Naga Hills Battalion came into the picture. The British decided to invade Manipur with three columns: one from Silchar; a northern thrust by Burma Army troops from Tamu; and a southern thrust from Kohima. Macintyre had, in fact, left Kohima with 200 men on his own initiative as soon as news was received of the tragedy in Imphal. In a brisk engagement against Manipuri forces his M.P. detachment had succeeded in capturing the border post at Mao Thana and pursued the fleeing Manipuris for nearly 16 kms. At that stage, however, they were ordered to await General

Collett's force (42nd Gorkhas). On the latter's arrival the column went forward unopposed and reached Imphal. The three companies of the Naga Hills Battalion remained there for a few months, employed on guard and escort duties.

The remainder of the decade was spent in comparatively peaceful circumstances, though some expeditions were mounted beyond the eastern borders, often into previously unvisited regions. The somewhat brutal treatment meted out to the Nagas on some occasions can be gauged from the account of an expedition across the north end of the Kipamedza range, to the Tita valley and to Yachumi, the furthest east that had been traversed till then. It tells of a Naga village where the reaction to a sudden appearance and the high-handedness of an armed British force were met by a tribal attack, in total ignorance of the British arms, methods and weapons. The only weapons the primitive villagers had were spears and cross-bows:

. . . As they still rushed on a volley was fired into the mass which brought down three or four warriors, and the mob stopped for a brief space to look at the fallen men and see what was being thrown at them with so much noise, evidently ignorant of fire-arms . . . 19 warriors were soon lying within 80 yards of the sepoys. This checked them.

Instead of conciliating and pacifying these simple jungle people, further dire vengeance was inflicted on them. When the Nagas retreated into their village, the gates were forced open and the village entered. "The village was a large one of over 500 houses, well built of stout timbers and thatched and in some cases shingled roofs; for its hostility it was destroyed." It is gratifying to record that later, when the Government discovered that the expedition had crossed the border and burnt a village beyond it, orders were issued against such action occurring again.

During 1910-11 a long-range column went out to the area of the Saramethi range again to punish the Aishan Kukis for their raids towards Somra. Cooperation of two columns of the Burma Army from Homalin in the Chindwin formed an interesting feature of this expedition. On one occasion a stockade was built at Makware, "standing very high and overlooked by Saramethi, 3,400 metres, on one side and by

another peak of 2,800 metres to the north.”

During the winter of 1912-13, the Battalions supplied a number of escorts for surveys of the Mishmi and Aka areas. In the first, contact was made with the people on the Tibetan border. In the Aka area the party traversed Tenga Valley and visited Rupa and Jamiri—names that were later to become familiar to the Indian Army in what later became Kameng Frontier Division.

FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1918)

SOON after the declaration of war against Germany in early August 1914, it was decided to send an Indian Corps of two divisions to France (Meerut and Lahore Divisions). Before the end of September the first two brigades had arrived at Marseilles; and by 21 October they were in action on the Flanders front, where the rest of the Corps joined them within a week or two.

Trench warfare exacted a high rate of wastage, particularly in the Infantry. Casualties suffered by the Indian Corps were so heavy that the Indian Army Reserve could not cope with the numbers of reinforcements required. Gorkha Regiments were, of course, the worst off in this respect—because of the difficulty of calling up reservists from distant villages in the Nepal hills. Six Gorkha battalions went with the Indian Corps to France and many others followed later to other theatres of war. Short of Nepali recruits, the Indian Army turned to the Assam Military Police for additional reinforcements for Gorkha battalions. The response was immediate; they were all volunteers and they came forward in numbers. In the first batch, in early 1915, 500 Gorkhas from the Assam Military Police were despatched to France.

There was nothing inappropriate in sending men from the Military Police battalions of Assam to fight with regular Indian Army battalions in a European theatre of war: the gap between their military training and that of the regulars was not so great as to cause an appreciable lowering of operational efficiency by this process. It must be remembered that in 1914 the Army in India was not a highly trained force; it had been trained only for Frontier war or for minor overseas expeditions (that is, around the Indian Ocean sea-board) and was armed

and equipped for this purpose. Even though Lord Kitchener had improved previous methods of training out of all recognition—and had instituted his famous “Test”—troops in India were given no opportunity for the more sophisticated training required for European warfare.

At the same time, training and administration in the Assam Military Police battalions had been so greatly militarised as to make them more like Army units in civil employ than police forces. They were para-military forces *par excellence*. As far back as in 1887 the Chief Commissioner of Assam had asked the G.O.C. Assam Brigade to inspect units, detachments and posts of Assam Military Police whenever he found himself in their vicinity. By 1890 these inspections had become annual occurrences (except perhaps in the case of the Lushai Battalion, which had no regular units in their area and so was not often visited by the G.O.C.). The other two battalions underwent annual inspections, including “field days”, and were reported on to the Chief Commissioner. In time, methods of carrying out duties such as reliefs of posts, care of arms, clothing and equipment matters, discipline and other aspects began to follow precisely the methods of regular Infantry units. It was small wonder that when the Naga Hills Battalion was inspected by the G.O.C., Lucknow Division, before its first draft went to France, he reported it to be “as good as most Indian regiments for Frontier defence, and being more self-reliant and thoroughly accustomed to roughing it, its men are in many ways far more efficient.” After the start of the war, in order to enable the Assam M.P. drafts to be trained to face conditions obtaining in France, particularly trench warfare, a number of .303 rifles, a Lewis gun, barbed wire and entrenching tools were sent to each headquarters station in Assam and the men put through the drill.

Another interesting point to record is that the Assam Military Police battalions had made rapid progress in signalling procedures and training from 1892 onwards. From 1895 to 1901 the Lushai and Naga Hills units stood out pre-eminently in this respect. Reports by the Army Signalling Officer at his annual inspection showed that in 1901 the Naga Hills Battalion was 54 points better than regular battalions stationed in Assam. Two years later the annual report

showed that the Naga Hills Battalion's signallers stood equal in marks with a regular battalion which had stood second in the whole Indian Army, while the Lakhimpur Battalion stood equal with the tenth in order of merit. As a further commentary to their efficiency, it is interesting to learn that seven signallers from among the M.P. drafts joined the Indian Signal Corps in Poona and served with it in various theatres of war.

Even the rationing system had changed over the years—particularly after the first major Lushai Hills operation, which had been the incentive. Up to this period men of the force had received no ration money and had to provide their own food—as in the Civil Police—except in the Naga Hills M.P., whose men received Rs 1/8 per mensem. The prevailing attitude was that men's rations were no concern of Government, and that if a grant for the same were given it might only be spent in drink and gambling. During the Lushai hills operation, however, it was found impossible to buy food locally, hence arrangements were forced on Government to supply rations for the posts located at Aizawl, Fort Tregar and other places. Thenceforth a ration scale was laid down, the Lushai Hills M.P. receiving what were called "free rations" even though a deduction of Rs 3/8 per mensem (only a fraction of the whole cost) was made from each man's pay on this account. A little later a corresponding but by no means identical concession was made to the other battalions. (The fiction that the men provided their own rations was still maintained, though a cash allowance equal to the amount by which the cost of a standard ration exceeded Rs 3.50 was made to each man. The pecuniary effect so far as the individual was concerned was the same as in the Lushai Hills Battalion: technically the Government accepted no obligation to supply rations—it provided the cost and the man was supposed to buy his own. In practice, the procedure actually adopted was that the rations were supplied by a contractor under the Commandant's supervision and the payments were made by deductions from the men's pay.)

Raising of Fourth Battalion

Thus it will be seen that both training and administrative

systems of the Assam Military Police battalions approximated conditions obtaining in the regular Army. This made the men eminently suitable as reinforcements to Gorkha battalions during the war. Even in the matter of the extent of the "reservoir" from which reinforcements could be drawn, circumstances could not have been more fortunate. In early 1913 a fourth battalion of Assam Military Police had finally been sanctioned for duty along the Darrang and Kamrup borders. The necessity for this had arisen in 1910 when it was decided to withdraw the regular Indian Army battalions from Dibrugarh, Kohima and Silchar. Consequently, the burden on the Lakhimpur (and sometimes the Naga Hills) Battalion to furnish troops for rationing and relieving these distant posts had proved too great, even after all battalions had been sanctioned an increase of strength by ten per cent. At last the necessity for raising another battalion was accepted by Government. The new unit (at first called just the "New Battalion" and later styled the "Darrang Battalion") was raised at Dibrugarh by Major Bliss (8 Gorkhas, at the time Commandant of the Naga Battalion), its nucleus formed by N.C.O.s and men from the other three battalions. Subsequently the independent detachments at Silchar and Tura (the last remnants of the old Surma Valley and Garo Hills units) were added to it. The sanctioned strength was 800, subsequently raised to 1,000, as with all other battalions, for the duration of the war. The location of the fourth battalion was changed after the beginning of the war because of the necessity of withdrawing the regular battalion from Manipur; and the new "Darrang" Battalion was sent to Imphal in March 1915 to take its place. This eventually became its permanent location. The title "Darrang" was dropped from its name and the unit formally became the Fourth Assam Rifles in September 1917.

With a base of four battalions from which drafts could be sent, the Gorkha battalions in France—and later in Egypt, East Africa, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli, North Persia and the North West Frontier—were well served indeed. In all, the Lakhimpur Battalion sent seven Indian Officers and 988 men, the Lushai Hills Battalion eight and 817, the Naga Hills Battalion three and 720, the "Darrang" (Fourth) Batta-

lion five and 649—making a total of 23 Indian Officers and 3,174 men furnished as reinforcements to regular Gorkha battalions on active service—an equivalent of the whole sanctioned strength of the Force. That they proved their worth and more is evident from the many letters of appreciation written subsequently by Commanding Officers of Gorkha Regiments to the Inspector General of Police, and by the fact that 11 Indian Officers and 69 other ranks received various honours and awards for gallantry—including three I.O.M.s, five I.D.S.M.s, and 12 Meritorious Service Medals. The total casualties incurred by the Assam Rifles during the Great War were: five Indian Officers and 237 O.R.s killed; six and 247 wounded.

The ease with which the Gorkhas from Assam fitted in with the battalions—often in regiments recruiting different classes of Gorkhas—was in no small measure due to the fact that many of the officers of these regular battalions had served with the Assam Battalions and may well have known some of the draftees personally. An excerpt from a letter from the C.O. of the 2/2 G.R. to the I.G. Police illustrates this point:

It is difficult adequately to express the gallantry, keenness and willing cheerful spirit displayed by the men of the A.M.P. whilst serving with us. They quickly settled down to trench warfare and conditions utterly unlike any they had formerly experienced, and rapidly identified themselves with the interests and spirit of the Regiment.

At Neuve Chapelle, Richebourg 9th May and Aubers Ridge 25th September, 1915, they took part in the attacks, showing the utmost gallantry. On the 9th May only two men of the assaulting Brigade reached the German line, both belonged to this Regt and one of them was from the Sadiya Battn (2nd A.R.). It was on this occasion that Jemadar Bakhatman Gurung was killed while leading his platoon in the assault, while Capt Mathew, who had been several years with the Garo and the Naga Hills M.P., was mortally wounded.

Similar letters, extolling the efficiency and valour of Indian Officers and men from the Assam Rifles were sent by the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Gorkha Rifles. Just one more quote will suffice from the C.O. of the 2/7th G.R.:

Reference your No. 7344-54 of 27.7.21. I would like to address you on the subject of the most excellent work performed by men of

the Assam Rifles who were attached to us during the Great War. Drafts from all A.R. units served with us. The first one of 200 rifles joined this Battn when it was in process of reforming in Mesopotamia after the fall of Kut in April 1916, and you may be pleased to learn that out of nothing we made a Battn again in five months, were sent up to join the 3rd Division, and one month later were in action, being the first of the reforming units to go up to the front line again. In December 1916 volunteers were called for to swim the Tigris at night and reconnoitre the Turkish position, two men of ours and two of the A.R. being chosen. These gallant four set off in the dead of the night in bitterly cold weather, but unfortunately the two Assam Riflemen were drowned in the courageous attempt. I could tell many tales of their bravery and devotion to duty at all times and of their exceptional cheeriness when circumstances were most trying and uncomfortable.

It was with great regret that I parted with these men on our return to India from Palestine. For four years they had served with my Battn on active service in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and their loyalty, devotion to duty, and gallantry, was beyond praise.

A word about recruitment of Gorkhas from Nepal might be of interest here. Nepalis were first recruited into the Cachar Levy in the (elder) Capt Butler's time, about 1850. A recruiting depot was started in Sylhet in 1865 to recruit Nepalis and Cacharis centrally for all the Levies, but this was closed down in about 1876, each unit thereafter having to get its own recruits as best as it could.

About 1887 the Government of India prohibited the enlistment of Gorkhas (Magars and Gurungs) from Nepal into the Military Police Battalions because it interfered with recruitment for regular Gorkha regiments. This caused some difficulty for the Assam Military Police, which had to increase their quota of Cacharis and Jaruas. The situation was relieved in 1891 when a new recruiting depot was opened in Purneah (near the foot of the Darjeeling hills, opposite Eastern Nepal) for the recruitment of Kiranti Nepalis—Rais and Limbus—from Eastern Nepal, to which the M.P. units were allowed to send recruiting parties.

The Nepal Government had, prior to the outbreak of the Great War, agreed to provide recruits for 20 Gorkha battalions of the Indian Army (two per Regiment), for one company of Gorkhas in Guides Infantry, for certain battalions of the Kashmir State Forces and for the Assam and Burma

Police battalions. The demands increased greatly as the war progressed—not only because of the heavy losses in trench warfare but also because of the expansion of the Gorkha Regiments by 14 new battalions and of the Guides, who raised 2nd and 3rd Battalions each composed of 30 per cent Gorkhas. To meet these demands the Kathmandu Durbar introduced conscription in Nepal, by which means it was enabled not only to maintain its own ten battalions of infantry but also to meet all commitments in India and Burma. As for the Assam M.P., a steady source of recruits from Nepal meant that, by 1916, they could supply drafts to Gorkha battalions at an average rate of 200 men a month till the end of 1917, when the Kuki rebellion obliged these drafts to be discontinued as every available man was thereafter needed to meet this considerable internal security threat.

Reorganisations

All the battalions except the Naga Hills one changed their organisation during the war, in order to bring themselves more into line with the regular battalions of the Indian Army. Since the late 1890s the Military Police battalions of Assam had been organised into 800 rifles in eight companies of two platoons each—that is, four companies of Gorkhas, three of Jaruas and one of Cacharis. The new organisation consisted of four companies each of four platoons. The Third (Naga Hills) Battalion adopted an organisation peculiar to itself because of experience of insurgency operations gained in the extensive Kuki operations during the latter half of the war. Because of the necessity for reliance on quick reactions from junior leaders acting on their own initiative, the platoon system superseded that of the company. On conclusion of the operations, the battalion strength was fixed at 840 rifles, arranged in 14 platoons of 60 rifles each, two of these being headquarter platoons in which were placed all who on mobilisation would remain with Battalion Headquarters—such as Pay Havildars, Office clerks, bandsmen, Drill N.C.O.s and others.

The Great War also caused a much desired increase in the officer strength of the Assam Rifles. Prior to 1882 the

Frontier Police were officered from the Civil Police but, as we have seen, on reorganisation into Military Police Battalions each unit was given an Army officer as Commandant, with an English sergeant to assist in training recruits and in certain matters of internal economy. With only one British officer per Battalion work was continuous and heavy, or less so according to the energy and conscientiousness of officers; on the other hand, it taught Indian officers to rely on their own initiative, to accept their own responsibility and much else that would not otherwise have been required from them. This was somewhat altered in 1904 when the sergeants were withdrawn and an Assistant Commandant was given to each Battalion, the officers being lent by the Indian Army for fixed periods—in the case of Commandants four years extendable to five as heretofore, in that of Assistant Commandants for two extendable to three years. At the same time, there is little doubt that operational efficiency of the battalion as a whole was increased thereby.

In 1915 a further stimulus was given to the efficiency of the Force by increasing the sanctioned strength of British officers per Battalion to four, viz the Commandant and three Assistant Commandants. (At first, many of these additional officers were sent from the cadre of the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, as most of the serving officers had to rejoin their Regiments for service in France and elsewhere.) Mounted Infantry detachments were also tried in the 1st, 3rd and 4th A.R., but they were found to be too expensive and difficult to keep up, and so did not last long, the ponies being then given up to transport purposes.

It had long ago been thought advisable to have a Deputy Inspector-General appointed to Assam to relieve the Inspector-General of Police of the increasing work entailed on him by the M.P. Force. This, however, did not materialise till the strain of the Great War, the training and dispatch of drafts to the Army and other emergency factors brought the matter up again seriously and the billet was created, but not till the latter part of 1917. Colonel L.W. Shakespear (the author of the first History of the Assam Rifles and a former Commandant of the Naga Hills M.P.) was appointed D.I.G. and held the post till October 1921. On Colonel

Shakespear's retirement from the Service the post was abolished—and not revived for another forty years or so.

In October 1917, in order to mark its recognition of the excellent services rendered in the war by men of the Assam Military Police Battalions, the Government of India sanctioned the old title of the force being changed to that of "The Assam Rifles". The battalions now came to be entitled:

- 1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion, the Assam Rifles
- 2nd (Lakhimpur) Battalion, the Assam Rifles
- 3rd (Naga Hills) Battalion, the Assam Rifles
- 4th Battalion, the Assam Rifles

Unfortunately, at the time this numbering took place, in September 1917, little if anything was known by those at the Centre regarding the history and development of the A.M.P. force. Otherwise the Naga Hills Battalion, the senior unit, dating from 1835, would undoubtedly have been given pride of place as the 1st A.R., while the Lushai Hills Battalion, developed from the old North Cachar Hills F.P., would have been the 2nd A.R. and the Lakhimpur Battalion (1862-3) the 3rd A.R.

With the change of title in 1917 the whole force adopted the black buttons and badges of Rifle Regiments in place of the silver ones of the Military Police.

An unfortunate aspect of substituting for the regular Army while the latter was out fighting a European war was for the Assam Rifles to be called out on aid-to-civil-power duties. In late 1917 a composite column (300 men of the 3rd Battalion and 100 each from the 1st and 2nd) under the command of Major Vickers, Commandant of the 3rd, had to be sent to Patna and Arrah in North Bihar. Its task was to put down a nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress, which had stirred up large-scale disturbances. Needless to add that the Assam Rifles carried out their duties satisfactorily and helped restore law and order—but even the British historian of that period had the grace to describe the task as "unpleasant".

In April 1918 while the Kuki Rebellion was in progress and causing much anxiety, the Daphlas added to the general

strain and stress by raiding the Tezpur plains, capturing a number of people and destroying the village of Hellem. To put a stop to this a combined detachment of the A.R. was assembled at Tezpur under Captain Goodall (with Captain Nevill, Political Officer of that Frontier) and entered the hills. Opposition was very slight, the villages concerned in the raid were burnt, the captives released and a fine levied on the tribes concerned.

In the winter of 1918-19 the question of linking the Burma railway system with that of Assam via the Hukawng valley was again forced on the notice of Government. This was because of the exploits of the German cruiser "Emden" in the Indian Ocean, which had seriously threatened the sea route to Rangoon. Survey parties under escorts of the 2nd and 3rd A.R. worked through the Patkoi range during the next two winters to discover a lower and more feasible pass than earlier surveys had found. This matter, however, was again shelved after the conclusion of the War.

COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS
ON THE MANIPUR-BURMA FRONTIER
(1917-1919)

✓

THE operations conducted by the Assam Rifles in the State of Manipur and Chin Hills towards the end of the First World War deserve a special place in this record because of their unique character. For the first and only time in India's military history an entire counter-insurgency campaign lasting nearly two years was directed and fought solely by para-military forces—the Assam Rifles. On the Indian side of the border the Government's forces virtually constituted an "Assam Rifles Brigade" with the D.I.G., Colonel L.W. Shakespear, the *de facto* Brigade Commander (though, of course, the operations were politically directed by the Political Agent in Imphal). All four battalions of Assam Rifles were involved, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions sending drafts totalling nearly 2,000 rifles which, together with 4th Battalion, already stationed in Manipur, brought the "brigade" strength to over 2,600. Forces from the Burma Military Police further increased this figure to nearly 3,000.

The "Kuki Rebellion", as the British termed the uprising, was more in the nature of a tribal outburst against oppressive measures than a "rebellion". What happened was that in 1917 one or two griffins in the Political Service used high-handed methods in giving effect to the Government's plan to raise a Kuki labour force for service in France. In the previous year no difficulty had been experienced in recruiting such a force from the Nagas, Lushais and other clans, people who had done this sort of work before and knew the rewards. It had earned them good pay and the Nagas and Lushais had enlisted willingly. In 1917, as demands from France and Mesopotamia increased, the Political Department decided to extend the recruitment to the Kuki clans of the hill regions of

Manipur State. The Kukis, as we have seen, have a stronger tribal affinity than the Nagas. Furthermore, they had never left their hills before and were thoroughly suspicious of the British.

Kuki chiefs to whom the first approaches were made declined to send any men for the labour force. Continued efforts at persuasion by the Political Agent produced only angry refusals. It was then decided to meet jointly with the chiefs and to explain to them the nature of the work, the scales of pay and other aspects. For this purpose a Durbar was arranged to which the Kuki chiefs were invited. Unfortunately there was a change of Political Agents at this juncture. The previous incumbent, Colonel H.W.G. Cole, had been sent to France with the Naga Labour Corps and thus the personal touch had been lost. Officiousness took over. At the same time, though there was no direct evidence of it, it was suspected that Bengali nationalist organisations from Sylhet and Cachar sent emissaries to the Kuki chiefs of the southern clans encouraging them to resist the high-handed methods of the British.

Whatever the reason, the main objectors among the Chiefs, Chief Ngulkhup of Mombi and Chief Ngulbul of Longya, two important villages south of Imphal, refused to attend the Durbar. They were even said to have sent "insolent replies" and threatened that if force was used against them they would retaliate in like measure to resist the British.

Instead of continuing with further conciliatory approaches, it was decided to use a show of force. In September 1917 the new (temporary) Political Agent sent Capt Coote of 4th Assam Rifles with a hundred men to Mombi, where they were met with open hostility. Coote attacked, pushed out the villagers and wantonly set fire to the village, but at that point he was recalled. However, the damage was done; the two chiefs were understandably incensed and followed up the incident with a defiant message saying that they had "closed the country to the British".

At this juncture a quaint and intriguing interlude occurs. Mrs Cole, the wife of the permanent Political Agent (who was away in France with the Labour Corps), decided to take a hand in the proceedings. Both she and her husband had been personal friends of the Chief of Mombi and she obviously

thought that the situation was not being handled properly by the officiating Political Agent. Relying on her friendship with Chief Ngulkhup she sent him a message asking him to meet her at an appointed rendezvous at Shuganu, four days march from Imphal, on the edge of the Mombi Hills.

Ngulkhup agreed and Mrs Cole set out, alone except for an interpreter. She reached Shuganu and talks were held between her, Chief Ngulkhup and three of his headmen. Unfortunately the lady did not succeed in persuading the Chief to fall in with the British plan. Tribal dignity had been assailed and it was too late for a compromise. Thus, a plucky attempt failed and Mrs Cole returned to Imphal.

Preliminary Measures

The Political Agent then decided to mount a punitive campaign against the Kuki clans in Manipur. It was obvious that this would have to be mainly an Assam Rifles effort, because most of the Indian Army was away overseas fighting in the war. Accordingly, Assam Rifles' drafts to the regular Army were discontinued in December, because it soon became apparent that the Assam Rifles would find it difficult to find the manpower to meet the numerous requirements of a campaign in the Manipur-Burma frontier. In fact, in the matter of drafts and reinforcements the tables were turned on the regulars and the wheel came full circle. At one stage it was the regular Army (2/2 Gorkhas) which had to provide a detachment of three British Officers and 200 men to take over garrison duties from the Assam Rifles at Kohima and Imphal in order to release the latter for operational service against the insurrectionists!

A word about the land and the people would not be out of place here. The terrain of operations eventually included the entire hill country surrounding Manipur Valley, covering an area of about 20,000 square kilometres. Only the valley of the Manipur river, at a height of 800 metres and 3,000 square kilometres in extent, is flat; the rest of the country surrounding the valley is intensely mountainous, beautiful in its rugged, forested ranges that touch heights between 2,500 and 3,000 metres. The mountains are everywhere cut by deep valleys or

narrow ravines. The higher slopes are covered with pine and rhododendron while massive Manipur oak and the flowering *Bauhinia* cover the lower slopes.

The Kukis of these mountains are of nomadic habit, constantly changing their village sites. Unlike the Angami Nagas, therefore, they do not build stockaded villages. Instead they build a number of small stockades of stout timber with *punji* abattis or concealed breastworks around the village, to guard the likely approaches. Because of the more centralised and autocratic nature of Kuki leadership, they have a greater power of combining effectively against a common enemy—and at this period they were much feared by other tribes.

The traditional weapons of the Kukis had been bows-and-arrows, spears and *daos*, but the incidence of fire-arms was on the increase. The Kukis also used a curious form of leather “cannon” made from buffalo hide rolled into a compact tube and tightly bound with strips of leather. A vent was bored at the base into which they poured a quantity of their own rough powder. As missiles they used slugs or stones packed into the open end of the “barrel”. The weapon was usually fastened to a tree so as to command an approach along a track. It was either fired by hand or by a trip cord that caused a heavy stone to drop on the percussion cap on the vent—and this fired the charge. If sited well it could cause some damage to an approaching enemy, but the “cannon” usually burst with the first discharge.

The civil authorities had considerably under-estimated the number of fire-arms possessed by the clansmen, a miscalculation that resulted in set-backs to the Assam Rifles at the start of the operations. Instead of the 70 or so rifles “scattered about the hills”, as the civil authorities had reckoned, the Assam Rifles found a large number in each village they attacked; and by the time the operations ended the total number of fire-arms captured came to nearly 1,000 weapons. It is true that the fire-arms were of obsolete types—mostly flint-lock or percussion muzzle-loaders—but they were effective in jungle terrain and adequate for the type of hit-and-run methods the Kukis used. The usual tactics were to dog the columns in tall grass or dense jungle, ambush them on the march and, often, to fire into camps at night. The

range was never long, so that antiquated weapons could be used to maximum effect. And the Kukis seldom offered open battle; only in a few cases did they make a prolonged stand behind their defences.

In December the Mombi and Longya chiefs, seeking revenge for the wanton burning of Mombi, began a series of small raids into the southern end of Manipur valley. They were soon joined by the chiefs of villages to the south-west of Imphal. After a serious raid on a police station near Palel, the Political Agent decided that punitive measures would again have to be taken. Accordingly, two detachments from the 4th Battalion at Imphal, each 80 strong, were sent out—one to Mombi and the other south-west to Hinglep. Neither detachment succeeded in inflicting much punishment on the Kukis; on the contrary, both columns returned after suffering initial reverses. The detachment under Captain Halliday suffered some casualties at the Chokpi river crossing near Mombi—and had to withdraw, leaving behind the bodies of their dead. The unseemly retreat served to put the Kukis' tails right up. Soon the whole of the southern and south-western hills had risen in arms and had begun to mount raids, destroying government rest houses and damaging the telegraph line. In the process they closed the Burma road (which ran from Imphal, through Palel and Tamu, down to the Kabaw and Chindwin valleys). It was time for more effective measures to be taken.

Colonel Shakespear, the newly appointed D.I.G., went to Imphal and began a systematic drive to organise the available resources of men and materials for the effective conduct of operations. He wired to his counterpart in Burma for reinforcements and received immediate promise of cooperation—because by then the Kuki disaffection had begun to be felt down in the Kabaw and Chindwin valleys as well.

A major disadvantage was lack of transport. Colonel Shakespear set about arranging for a labour corps of Nagas, 800 strong, for employment in the Manipur operations. This was collected at Kohima and sent down to Imphal, escorted by a rifle platoon. (Capt Montifiore and 150 men had already been sent from Kohima to the Chin Hills via Aizawl.) From Silchar, 2nd Assam Rifles despatched a column of reinforce-

ments of 100 men under Capt Cloete.

As the Manipur Battalion, like all the other A.R. battalions, found itself with an overload of both older men and young half-trained recruits (because of the pressure of drafts from France) an intensive three-week jungle warfare course was started for all A.R. personnel. A training cadre for porters, to teach them to carry the 7-pounder mountain guns and for other specialised tasks such as casualty evacuation, was also hurriedly organised.

The Columns Move Out

By mid-January two bases forward of Imphal were established at the foot-hills, one at Palel and the other at Shuganu, where supplies and medical stores were stocked for operations. It was decided that the priority tasks would be, first, to join hands with a Burma column which had been despatched from Tiddim in the north Chin Hills; and, second, to open the Burma road. These tasks were allotted to two columns:

Column one — under Capt Coote; task—to move south through Mombi and Longya in order to make contact with a Burma column under Capt Steadman (the D.I.G. and the Assistant Political Officer were to accompany this column);

Column two — under Capt Hebbert; task—to open the Burma road and to punish the villages in the neighbourhood of Tamu (the officiating Political Agent was to accompany Hebbert's column).

At this point it is necessary to make a digression in the narrative in order to explain events that had occurred in the far south of the Chin Hills necessitating intervention by the Assam Rifles. It happened that the authorities in Burma (which was, of course, under the Government of India at that time) were confronted with a revolt in the Chin Hills similar to that in Manipur. They also had tried to recruit a

Labour Corps in that area. This, aggravated no doubt by the unrest in Kuki country in adjacent Manipur, caused a sudden, unexpected and serious outbreak in the Chin Hills that took the authorities quite by surprise.

In early December 1917 the D.I.G. Assam Rifles received a wire from the Superintendent Chin hills inquiring if he had any knowledge of likely trouble on the Chin Lushai border. The D.I.G. replied that he had no such knowledge. Twelve hours later came an urgent wire to Shillong from Falam, the headquarters station in the Chin hills, saying that the southern Chins had risen and that Haka station was surrounded; it asked for urgent assistance.

The D.I.G. sent orders to Captain Falkland, Commandant 1st Assam Rifles at Aizawl, to march at once with 150 rifles for Haka. Within a few hours they were on their way, intending to cover the 16 marches as rapidly as possible. A few days later another urgent wire from Falam called for even stronger reinforcements. As active trouble had not as yet started in Manipur, Captain Montifiore with 150 rifles of the 3rd A.R. at Kohima was ordered to the Chin hills, travelling as expeditiously as possible—by rail to Chittagong, river steamer to Rangamati, country boats to Demagiri, whence onwards a fortnight's hard marching to Haka. As neither Falkland nor Montifiore could reach the disturbed area till well after Christmas, and details of their moves and actions in the Chin hills did not reach Shillong for some weeks, we can leave them on the march and turn back to the Kuki troubles fermenting in the Manipur State.

Of the two columns that took off from their forward bases south of Imphal in the third week of January 1918, the task of the second was by far the simpler. None of the villages to be destroyed by Capt Hebbert's column were at any great distance from the main road and the column did not experience any hard marches over long distances. By early February it had opened up the road, administered the punishment it had been required to do and returned to Imphal.

In contrast, Captain Coote's column had to face some very arduous marches over difficult terrain, fight pitched battles and sustain fairly considerable casualties. It would therefore be interesting to follow the progress of this column in some

detail because it was typical of the active service conditions in which the Assam Rifles found themselves engaged during counter-insurgency operations for almost two years.

Coote's column left Imphal on 23 January. Higgins, the A.P.A., and Colonel Shakespear, the D.I.G., accompanied this force. A three-day forced march brought them to Shuganu, the forward supply base at the foot of the tribal hills. The column then entered the hills and made for the Chokpi river crossing, just short of the village of Mombi. The crossing was found to be undefended, but a gruesome sight met the men of the Assam Rifles. They found the badly mutilated bodies of the men Halliday had lost a few weeks earlier, flung into a small ravine.

Aware that the direct route to Mombi was strongly stockaded, Coote decided on an outflanking march over a high ridge to the east. The column began its climb in single file, the only way to advance up a steep spur covered with small trees and scrub jungle. After going for about an hour several shots rang out in front, to which the advance guard replied. Not a single Kuki was seen, but they had wounded three riflemen and vanished. Crossing the top of the ridge the same thing occurred again but this time without effect. As it was already dusk, the column camped in a small but friendly hamlet. It was subjected to sniping during the night, in which one man was mortally wounded, dying the next morning.

The next march was along a ridge covered with the long grass of disused cultivation, at the far end of which the village of Nampho Kuno came in sight, field glasses showing the presence of many armed Kukis in it. At this point firing was suddenly opened on the column from both flanks accounting for three more wounded—one rifleman and two carriers. Again, no enemy could be seen in the long grass. The area was thoroughly searched, while the mountain gun opened on the village at 900 yards. The first round plumped into the place dispersing all in it; it was then destroyed.

While this was going on Coote noticed a great column of smoke far to the south-west. This could be Longya village being burned, though it was doubted if Steadman's column from the north Chin hills could have reached it so soon. A

steep descent followed by a most fatiguing climb brought Coote on to Mombi hill the following afternoon. A few ineffective shots were fired from the forest *en route*, but the stockaded defence was found empty, as also the site of the village burnt the previous September. Here the column bivouacked for the night.

Mombi stands about 1,300 metres up and commands a most extensive view to the south and west, the eye ranging over a sea of tangled hills and valleys from the plain of Manipur to the far distant Chin hills, the great mass of Khatong, 2,100 metres, closing the view to the south-east. Helios at once tried all hill points around in the hope of getting in touch with Steadman, but without success. A halt had to be made at this stage to escort the wounded to the Shuganu base and to bring up a further supply of rations. Coote set out with 70 rifles. On the way down the Tuyang valley he ran into a Kuki war party. In the ensuing scrap the Kukis lost four killed and, judging from blood trails, apparently carried off a number of wounded in their flight. One of the bodies, from its ornaments and weapons, was obviously of some importance and was sent back to Mombi, where it was identified by a Manipuri official with Mr Higgins as one of the more prominent trouble-makers.

During the first night at Mombi the camp was fired at but no damage was done. The next day those left on the hill heard faint sounds of distant firing. As a high wind was blowing the actual direction of the sound was not easy to locate, but it was thought to be Steadman in action somewhere. A reconnoitring party discovered the new village of Mombi, some 6 km along the ridge to the east, which was destroyed unopposed. The camp had a few more shots fired into it that night.

After Coote's return with fresh supplies the column moved off again, making for Longya. On two successive days it was sniped at by tribals and on each occasion the suspect village was destroyed by burning. It was from the second of these two villages, Khailet, that Coote obtained his first distant view of Longya, across the Manipur river. The village was seen to be in ashes, giving an indication that the Chin Hills column had already been there. So the signallers got out their helios and tried all the likely hill-tops in that vicinity, in an attempt

to raise an answering flash. At last, after two hours of effort, a faint answering helio-flicker came from the far south. This was Lenakot, the Chin Hill column's advance base just over the border. The Subedar there reported that Steadman's column had reached Longya sooner than expected—on 27 January—and had burnt it without opposition. Steadman had then descended to the Manipur river, crossed it and climbed the steep slope to Haka, where he was to have met up with Coote's column. Instead, he found himself faced with a very long stockade barring his path. Inexperienced in insurgency operations, Steadman tried to rush the stockade by a frontal attack. He failed to take it, lost 11 killed and many wounded and he himself was hit in three places. The porters began to panic and bolt; so the column was obliged to return to Lenakot to lick its wounds.

As any meeting or joint operation with the Chin Hills column was out of the question by then, and there were no signs of the Kukis who had opposed Steadman, Coote proceeded to carry out the second phase of his programme on his own—punishing the Mombi Chiefs' eastern villages. Five strenuous marches involving incessant and steep ascents and descents, bivouacking in forests which had first to be cleared for camp spaces and then strands of barbed wire fixed round the perimeter to prevent it being rushed, brought Coote to Nungoinu village—about half-way to his destination. There was a strong stockade at the entrance, but fortunately it was evacuated on his approach. Nungoinu and a neighbouring village were therefore destroyed without opposition.

On 7 February, as his column was threading its way along the top of a densely-wooded ridge, shots rang out and the leader of the left flankers was killed. The advance guard extended and was soon busy. No enemy or position could at first be discerned and pushing through the tangled jungle it was found that a high ridge of rocks crossed the hill at right angles. A dip in the centre through which the narrow track led was heavily stockaded and the space in front of the rocks for some 40 or 50 metres was littered with a mass of trees felled by the rebels, forming a serious obstacle to negotiate. Two of the advance guard were killed and several wounded at the near edge of this obstacle. At this juncture both Mr

Higgins and Colonel Shakespear decided to take the field as junior leaders. With a group of riflemen they tried to turn the flanks, but the ground being very precipitous and covered with dense thorn jungle, no way could be found. For three-quarters of an hour heavy firing went on, so the gun had to be brought up to break down the stockade. At the third round the gun Havildar, the gun layer and two others of the gun team were badly hit. This effectively put the gun out of action, while Higgins received a somewhat severe contusion on his shoulder from a spent bullet. All that could be seen of the enemy were the muzzles of muskets thrust through interstices in the rocks, fired, and rapidly withdrawn again. The Kukis must have had some 70 or 80 muskets and the whole time the most astonishing din of men shouting and drums beating arose from their position, adding to the noise of the action.

As no way round either flank was possible, Coote decided to rush the position with Jemadar Kharga Sing's platoon on the left, covered by the fire of another holding the front. With the Jemadar went the D.I.G. However, to "rush" was impossible, as each man had to climb over or under the innumerable tree trunks thickly littering the ground. One outburst of fire came from the rocks as the platoon broke cover, but no one was hurt. Then there was a sudden silence in the position, and as the first lot of men began climbing the rocks, Coote's firing ceased. The enemy had bolted, carrying their wounded (for many blood patches were found), but they had left behind some weapons and drums in their hurry. The position, by nature strong, had been rendered still more so by the piling up of loose rocks and timber breastworks at weak spots, while the passage through was stockaded with a double row of heavy timber posts, loop-holed. From the large number of firing platforms, the trampled state of the ground and the food left behind, it could be estimated that there were probably some 300 Kukis holding the position and of whom there was now not a sign. A mile beyond this was the large village of Khengoi, well situated on an open spur overlooking the Kale-Kabaw valley (Burma), with glimpses of the broad Chindwin river further eastward winding its way through forests. It was found to be empty. A huge stuffed tiger skin set up on

trestles greeted Coote at the village entrance; and accommodation for all was soon arranged in the houses.

The column was running short of supplies again but luckily helio contact was made with Tamu, about 30 kms to the north-west. It was arranged that Tamu would send a ration party to meet Coote's column at Withok, a convenient meeting-place down in the Kale-Kabaw valley just over the border with Burma. After burning Khengoi village, an operation that drew some desultory but ineffective sniping fire from the surrounding jungles, the column moved down into the thick forest below and so on to Withok, a pretty Burmese village set amidst rice fields and surrounded by a loop-holed palisade of thick teak timbers.

The *Myouk* (Burmese Civil official) met Coote and led him and his men to a large field in which rows of shelters for them had been run up, with supplies stacked nearby. A clean house had been allotted to the three British Officers and there they spent two days resting. Captain Grantham (Burma Police) and Lieut Kay Mouatt (Burma Bombay Trading Company), both of the Indian Army Reserve, rode out from Tamu, 35 kms away, bringing carts to take Coote's wounded and sick back to their hospital. They brought the news of the spread of the rebellion to the Chindwin valley. They also said that a Burma Column was being formed at Tamu which would shortly be joined by another coming up from Tinzin under Captain Patrick, both intended for operations against the Chassadh Kukis who had begun serious raids near Kangal Thana and Homalin. News was also received from Imphal to the effect that the rebellion had spread northward into the hills towards Kohima, and that the Silchar road had been closed, with many rest-houses destroyed by the Kukis. Meanwhile, Major Cloete's column from Sadiya had reached Silchar and was now on its way to clear the main road to Imphal.

On 11 February Coote's column left Withok. After a few miles across the open the forest swallowed the column again. Apart from the destruction of Changbol, Gnarjal and Pantha (deserted rebel villages) a little firing into camp at night and a last short scrap near the top of Rekchu hill (1,750 metres) nothing of particular interest occurred. It was all hard marching and climbing, but the men were in good

training by then.

The defence of Rekchu hill was evidently intended to be a big affair, the enemy having prepared a line of breastworks and shelter pits commanding the track up which the column was toiling. However, they had not noticed the flankers and opened fire too soon. The flankers were also in ignorance of the presence of an enemy until the shooting started; and each little party found itself on the right and left of the Kukis. The latter, on seeing their flanks turned, bolted down the far side of the hill after the first brief interchange of shots.

From Pantha, the last rebel village punished in this area, the column left the hills and descended into the Manipur valley at Palel, whence two marches brought it—now a ragged and, in many cases, a bootless crowd—to Imphal, after an extremely hard five-week operation. However, their experiences had vastly improved the training, efficiency and morale of all ranks.

Joint Operations with Burma

By the time Coote's column returned to Imphal the Kuki uprising had spread to the tribes inhabiting the hills north-west of Imphal; and most of the villages on the fringe of the valley, nearest the hills, were in a panic because many had already suffered from sudden raids. The "HQ" at Imphal was finding it more and more difficult to collect sufficient troops to maintain constant pursuit of the many raiding parties in the hills. Cloete's column of 100 rifles had again been held up on the way and was still 40 kms from Imphal. In any case, as soon as it reached Imphal, it was earmarked to be sent off on a punitive patrol to the Maphitel range (25 kms west of Imphal) against certain rebel villages.

Messages were sent to Kohima and Sadiya for reinforcements. Meanwhile the D.I.G. had to find sufficient rifles to mount two strong patrols that were to be sent to the frontier to cooperate with the Burma Military Police in a joint operation to destroy rebel villages in the Chassadh hills which lie astride the Indo-Burma border just north of the Chindwin valley at Homalin. In these circumstances, when a sudden threat arose in the Jampi area (between the Barak valley and

Imphal) the D.I.G. had to turn to 3rd Assam Rifles in Kohima to order out a column of 150 rifles under Lieut Sanderson to deal with the trouble. Sanderson destroyed Dulin village, the centre of the trouble; but thereupon the tribesmen moved north-east, carrying the insurrection towards the Kohima-Imphal cart-road and thus creating a new alarm. Further detachments had to be sent from both Kohima and Imphal jointly to conduct operations in this area and then establish posts at Kairon and Kanpopki for the security of this vital road link.

In early March Colonel Shakespear moved out to Tamu with an escort of 50 rifles to keep a rendezvous with Colonel French-Mullen, the D.I.G. of Burma, to work out the details of the projected joint operation. As a result of their talks it was decided that the Chassadh area would be cleaned up by the coordination of four columns, two each from India and Burma. The two latter (one from Homalin under Major Hackett and another from Kangal Thana under Capt Patrick) would join up with an Imphal column under Capt Coote and move northwards into the Somra area to act as stops for tribesmen fleeing north before the Chassadh "drive". Since the mounting of this joint operation would further denude Manipur valley of troops, the D.I.G. issued order to 1st Assam Rifles at Aizawl to send 100 rifles northwards to Bangmual on the Chin Hills-Manipur border as an emergency reserve force. From Bangmual it could reinforce either the Hinglep area south of Imphal or operate in the Manipur valley at Lenakot. When all these details had been tied up Colonel Shakespear returned to Imphal, his party being ambushed on the way near Tengnoupal though ineffectively. (During the ambush one of the curious leather cannons of the Kukis, described previously, failed to explode and was taken back to Imphal.)

Within a few days of his return from the meeting with the D.I.G. of Burma, Colonel Shakespear set the first phase of the joint Indo-Burma operation into motion by despatching Coote's column (150 rifles, platoons from 2nd, 3rd and 4th Assam Rifles, with an extra British officer—Lieut Parry—and accompanied by Mr Higgins) to the Chindwin valley by way of the Aya Parel villages south of the Maphitel range; and

the Somra column, 200 rifles from the 3rd Assam Rifles under Lieuts Prior and Sanderson, down the Tizu river to enter the Somra tract through Melomi. This was to be the "stop" that was to prevent the tribesmen driven out from the Chassadh hills to the sanctuary of the Saramethi Range.

Coote's and Patrick's column met up on the Mangha river north of Kangal Thana and the combined force moved up to attack Kamjong, the main village of the rebel Chief Pachei. A brisk action followed in which a British officer Lieut Molesworth was killed. Without giving a chance to the tribesmen to reform, the column went on to take Chattik and Maokot. At the latter action it lost one man killed and Lieut Kay Monatt (Burma M.P.) and four men wounded. Chief Pachei, however, escaped through the "stop line" put out by the Kohima column and vanished into the Somra hills, an almost unknown tract. Despite the failure to get the Chief into the net, it was decided to establish three posts in the unadministered territory north of the Somra Tract—at Kerami, Niemi and Matong.

The next phase of the operation started when the Homalin column under Major Hackett joined the force at Sayapo. Hackett had been delayed because of a considerable action at Dan Sagu. By the time he reached Sayapo, most of the tribesmen had either submitted or escaped into the Somra hills. As it was mid-April by then and the heat of the lower heights was becoming quite oppressive, it was decided to call off the operation for the time being. Coote was ordered to return to Manipur valley by taking a steamer from Homalin to Kendat and then marching through the Kabaw valley, via Tamu. On the way he was ordered to "punish" some rebel villages south-west of Tamu. Having carried out this task, the column reached Imphal in mid-May.

The valley had been fairly quiet during April, except for a few minor alarms. Recurring trouble in the Hinglep-Ukah-Manhulung area had been put down by a column sent out under Capt Goodall and Lieut Carter, ably assisted by Subedar Bhawani Sing and his detachment (sent up from Aizawl to Bangmual in March, under the D.I.G.'s orders). In the Shuganu-Palel area, a detachment under Lieut Taker (assisted by Goodall's column from Hinglep) destroyed Aihang and

Aimol in retaliation for the Kukis cutting down all the telegraph lines again. Then there was nearly a serious affair when a ration convoy from Silchar under Lieut Hooper was attacked near Kaopum. The porters bolted and many were cut up by the Kukis. Lieut Walker had to be sent post-haste from Imphal with 50 men to extricate the ration convoy.

By then the summer was well advanced, making operational measures by either side impracticable—the Kukis appearing to feel the heat of the plains as much as the British and Gorkhas. So the valley settled down to a period of summering inactivity. Strong posts were put out at prominent points, round the edge of the valley—at Moirang, Bishenpur, Shuganu and Palel; while in the hills those at Ukhrul and Kaopum—east and west of the valley respectively—were strengthened. Posts were established on the Somra and Jampi approaches from the 3rd Battalion at Kohima.

Colonel Shakespear was returning from Imphal to Shillong in early May 1918 when a message reached him at Kohima informing him that Kuki raiding parties were out in the north Cachar hills and the small civil station at Haflong and the tea gardens were in a state of panic. This meant that measures for protecting that area had to be taken quickly. 2nd Assam Rifles was ordered to dispatch 100 rifles at once under Captain Copeland to Haflong, where the D.I.G. met him. Here it was found that a raiding party of 70 to 80 Kukis had come to within 14 miles of the station but had then retired. The state of panic was such that a detachment of the Railway Volunteers with a maxim gun had been railed to Haflong, but were sent back on the arrival of Copeland. Posts were then established at Laitek, Hangrung and Baladhan on the Manipur border, which were kept out till November, but nothing further transpired on this side.

The Column from the Lushai Hills

It will be remembered that in early December 1917, in answer to a S.O.S. from the Chin Hills Capts Falkland 1 A.R. and Montifiore 3 A.R had been sent to the rescue of besieged Haka. Reports of their operations were not received for nearly two months but we can now turn to their activities on

the Burma frontier.

Their journey entailed long marches through the Lushai Hills; by the time they crossed the border into the Chin Hills, Haka had already been relieved (after a fortnight's siege) by a Burma M.P. column sent from Rangoon, which had to fight two considerable actions between Falam and Haka. Falkland's force, arriving shortly thereafter, was detailed to join a large Burma M.P. column under Colonel Abbay (with whom also went Mr Wright, Superintendent, Chin Hills) for operations in the southern hills, the principal actions being against the Yokwa Chins in the Kapi-Aiton area. Like the Lushais, the Chins are stout fighters and offered severe opposition. Falkland's force suffered many casualties; and both Mr Wright and another British civilian, Mr Alexander, were badly wounded.

Montifiore reached Haka a few days after Falkland. His force was first sent to the region north of Tao Peak to subdue tribesmen in the Bawkwa area. Then, in late February, he was given command of a mixed force of Burma and Assam M.P. personnel and sent north to the Manipur border at Lenakot to retrieve the disaster to Steadman's column (already reported). He successfully attacked and destroyed the big stockades near Haka, incurring a few casualties but causing much loss to the Kukis, amongst whom was the redoubtable Gnulbul, Chief of Longya, shot while trying to escape from the stockade carrying his little son in his arms. Thereafter Montifiore moved against the village of Tolbung on the Khatong range, which offered but slight resistance. In April the column came south again and soon found itself operating on the upper Boinu river (Kaladan). There was some fighting at Wanty and still further south at Laitet and Ngapai, where Montifiore linked up with Colonel Abbay and Captain Broome's columns.

In June Falkland was allowed to march back to Aizawl; and in July, Montifiore. His column was to return by sea, via Rangoon and Calcutta. Both columns had received much kindly assistance in clothes and other comforts supplied by the Ladies' War Society of Rangoon, greatly appreciated as both had been through an extremely strenuous seven months' active service. Montifiore was awarded the O.B.E. for these

operations.

The southern Lushai country was also not without its stir, for Chin raiding parties in May 1918 crossed the upper Kaladan. Mr Bartley (Civil Police), in charge of Lungleh, moved out with a detachment of the 1st A.R. to drive them back. Ambushed half-way down the Narchong ravine near South Vanlaiphai (which post had been given up a couple of years earlier), he had two men killed and two or three wounded, but eventually he was able to drive the raiders through Sangao back into the Chin hills, inflicting some loss.

The summer months and the monsoon season passed relatively quietly in Manipur. Petty raiding continued but on a much smaller scale. The detachment of 2/2nd Gorkhas sent to Kohima in December were sent back to Peshawar, so that the Assam Rifles were left in sole charge of security in the Naga Hills and Manipur area—a task for which they had now gained considerable experience. However, reinforcements would be required before the winter, since it was apparent that further extensive operations would have to be mounted on both sides of the border.

This was time to take stock of the logistical situation of the force. Many conferences were held in Shillong, at which the needs of the Assam Rifles were set forth—main among them: more British officers for the units; clothing and boots; new rifles to replace the old worn-out Martinis; mountain guns; rifle grenades; transport animals, and many other items against the procurement of all of which there was always the argument of financial limitations.

In June the Chief Commissioner went up to Simla, taking the D.I.G. with him, to put the Assam Rifles case personally before the Commander-in-Chief. About this time there was a minor insurrection in the Daphla area north of the Brahmaputra, to deal with which Capt Goodall was sent to Tezpur with a detachment of 100 rifles from 3rd and 4th Battalions. This helped to highlight the operational diversity of this force and thus was Simla persuaded to become more forthcoming. Release orders were at last issued to rearm the Assam Rifles with new rifles (the .303 long Lee-Enfield magazine), four more mountain guns and supply of rifle grenades. At the same time more Reserve Officers were detailed for duty with the

force; and fresh kit was issued free to all ranks.

Second Phase of Operations

Command arrangements were also reorganised, within the limitations imposed by the exigencies of the war. The Commander-in-Chief directed that the coming winter's operations would be placed under Major General Sir H. Keary, shortly to take over as G.O.C. Burma Command, with Colonel Macquoid as the local commander in Manipur. Meanwhile, the D.I.G. was directed to start planning for the winter operations.

A new scheme for this second phase of the operations, originated by Major A. Vickers of 3rd A.R. and carried through with but slight alterations, was to divide the rebel hills into smaller operational "sub-areas". Each "sub-area" was to have its own detachment disposed in lines of posts. These were to be established sufficiently strongly to enable them to combine together to mount a number of columns against Kuki villages and if possible to drive them on to lines of posts in other "sub-areas".

The various "sub-areas" into which the rebel hills were divided were: Jampi (with supply bases at Bishenpur, Henema and Tapoo); Hinglep (supply base at Moirang); Mombi (supply base at Shuganu); Burma Road "sub-area" (supply base at Palel); Chassadh "sub-area" (supply base at Yangaipopki); North Tangkhul, towards Kohima (supply base at Tadapa); and the Somra Tizu "sub-area" (supply base at Melomi).

On the Burmese side of the border the Chindwin and Chassadh areas were similarly divided into "sub-areas" of operations, with their bases at Thamanthe, Mannngkan, Homalin and Kungal Thana.

In August General Keary and Colonel Macquoid (soon to be promoted to Brigadier-General) arrived in Shillong to tie up the details of the plans for the winter operations. After the G.O.C. had approved of the plans for the Assam Rifles force, he took Colonel Shakespear with him to Burma to coordinate the Burma M.P. plans with those of the Assam Rifles. The core of the joint plan lay in simultaneous columns marching out from the various "sub-areas" into which the forces had

been disposed, thus mounting a joint offensive against known Kuki strongholds.

Minor operations during August and September resulted in the Chief of Jampi being captured. Thereupon the leadership in this western area was taken up by a couple of notorious malcontents one of whom—Enjakoop—had served in the 3rd Assam Rifles some years previously. In the south the Chief of Pachei offered surrender under certain terms but was refused, whereupon his tribe began a new series of raids on villages in the Ukhrul region. A column of 3 A.R. personnel sent into the area succeeded in capturing a number of rebels.

In October 17 extra British Officers (mostly from the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, many of whom had served in various theatres of the Great War) joined the Assam Rifles to take up their duties with the units. Reinforcements from Sadiya and Aizawl were received in Manipur, so that by early November the Assam Rifles force for the second phase of the Kuki operations reached a total of 30 British Officers, 55 Indian Officers and nearly 2,400 rifles. (The "Asian Flu", however, took its toll of the force, incapacitating some 240 men.)

On 7 November the force was handed over to Brigadier-General Macquoid and his newly established Headquarters. General Keary made his HQ at Kendat in the Chindwin valley. As soon as the weather cleared in mid-November, the various columns were set on the move, with orders to keep up continuous all-round pressure on the rebels so that they would have little chance to escape into convenient sanctuaries anywhere.

It is not necessary to record in detail the activities of all these columns, but mention of one or two might give the reader an idea of the scope and method of General Keary's operations.

The column from Kaopum moved across to the Jampi area against Enjakoop's gangs and fought a big action at Laibol. The force burned the village and then pursued the rebels westwards, fighting actions at Kebuching and Layang, where they were able to inflict a large number of casualties. At the same time another column, under Montifiore, moved in from

Tapao to try and pinch out Enjakoop between Layang and Dulin.

In the south-west the Hinglep column fought some hard actions during December and early January, experiencing strong opposition at Ukah and Hengtham. After establishing posts in this region the column moved south to establish a link with the Bangmual column from the Lushai Hills.

The column from the Mombi sub-area under Captain Coote chased Chief Ngulkhub all the way to Tamu, a 150 km run in 5 days. At Tamu the Chief and his following at last gave themselves up.

In the Chassadh "sub-area" the column pushed eastwards through Langli, Poshing and Chatti. After linking up with the Burma M.P. column, the joint force turned north and went after Chief Pachei again, following him into the Somra area. In early March 1919 after some skirmishing near Kalinaw the force succeeded in dispersing the rebel gang in the area. It then pushed on further, into the North Somra tract, driving the remnants up against a column under Captain Prior who had moved down from Meloni to Mauvailoop. There a meeting between the north and south columns was effected.

By then it was becoming obvious that the Kukis had had enough. They gradually began to surrender on all sides; and in April Chief Pachei threw in the towel. He had been harried all over the hills for months, though never caught: now he marched into Imphal and gave himself up. This event together with the capture of other rebel leaders, including Enjakoop in the Jampi area, virtually marked the end of the uprising. In May General Keary ordered the operations to be brought to a close and for the columns to be called in and dispersed to their stations, though a few key posts were allowed to remain *in situ* for a while longer—such as those at Ukhrul, Kerami, Mombi and Poshing.

An interesting fact about the motivations of the uprising came to light during the course of the operations. Mention has been made earlier that the Kukis had been encouraged by emissaries from Bengali nationalists in Assam, but any thought that the Germans had also had a hand in it had not occurred to any one. However, at Tamu in May 1918 after the first phase of operations, a Medical Officer on his round of inspec-

tion came upon some Sikhs of the Burma M.P. in a hut tearing up some papers they said they did not want. The M.O. picked up some of the papers and found among them photos of two Germans, one in uniform. On the back of one of them was written in Hindustani: "If you fall into rebel hands show these and they will not harm you." The sepoys could only state that when they were leaving Burma for the scene of the disturbances a "Sahib" had given them these papers. No one ever found out who the "sahibs" were—or if any of them had visited the Chindwin valley.

The Assam Rifles can be justly proud of having managed and conducted a major counter-insurgency campaign that eclipsed all previous such operations—even including the one conducted by General Tregear in the Lushai Hills in the 1880s. The Kukis proved a formidable foe, as staunch in battle as the Lushai tribes—and armed with fire-arms into the bargain. They were also better organised and better led and displayed a tribal aptitude for guerilla operations. They certainly extracted a high price from their enemy. The Assam Rifles casualties were: killed in action—one Indian Officer and 34 riflemen; wounded—one Indian Officer and 47 riflemen. In addition 84 other riflemen had died of sickness and other causes.

The awards made for these operations were: One C.I.E., one O.B.E., 14 I.D.S.M.s, one King's Police Medal, besides several mentions-in-dispatches and "Jangi inams". The operations were included in the conditions for the grant of the Great War's Victory Medal.

After the suppression of the Kuki rebellion the British introduced a set of Rules for the Administration of Manipur, according to which a state *Durbar* was appointed to administer the hills on behalf of the Maharaja. The Governor of Assam was made the appellate authority in the event of differences between the Maharaja and the *Durbar*—a measure that had the effect of virtual removal of the hill areas from the jurisdiction of the Maharaja.

After the end of the Kuki operations the area of responsibility of 4th Battalion was expanded by including in it the Garo Hills. This area had been left without any military police cover since the raising of 4th Battalion because the

old Garo Hills Military Police had been amalgamated with it. Now a detachment of the Battalion, consisting of one Indian Officer and 100 men, established a permanent post at Tura, the administrative centre of the area.

INTER-WAR YEARS (1919-1939)

THE process of demobilisation after the Great War saw the return of hundreds of Assam Rifles volunteers from the regular Army to their parent units; as a result, all Assam Rifles battalions found themselves grossly over-subscribed in N.C.O.s and men. Wisely, the powers-that-be decided that this was a good opportunity to raise a fifth battalion to fill the Darrang "vacancy" (caused by the move of the original "Darrang" Battalion to Manipur).

Raising of 5th Battalion

The new Battalion was raised at Lokhra on 10 June 1920. Captain Hooper came from 4th Battalion to receive drafts from the other battalions and occupied the Political Officer's buildings at Lokhra, vacated for the purpose. Later Captain Ogilvy 1 G.R. took over as first posted Commandant of 5 Assam Rifles, which achieved full strength in 1921; and the following year new barracks were built for the Battalion.

Immediately on completion the Battalion took over responsibility for the Kamrup and Darrang borders, which marched with Aka and Dafla territories. It was required to furnish posts at North Lakhimpur, Harmati, Dikulmakh, Hathipaithi, Udalguri and Darrang. Since all these posts were located in the hot and humid plains of north Assam, it was decided to set up a hill-station post in Happy Valley, on the outskirts of Shillong, to permit a turn-over of officers and men from the posts in the plains for rest and recreation. For accommodation the old barracks of 123 Outram's Rifles were purchased at a pleasingly low figure when they were auctioned in 1921.

Fifth Battalion's first call of duty outside its own area of responsibility was the unpleasant and onerous task of Aid to Civil Authority in suppressing riots and disorders connected with Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22. It will be remembered that the years 1920-22 were a period of upsurge for the Indian nationalist movement. Atrocities had been committed by the British authorities in the Punjab during the regime of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, its Lieutenant-Governor, culminating in the infamous cold-blooded massacre of Indians at Jallianwala Bagh by General Dyer in 1919. "The shadow of Amritsar lengthened all over the fair face of India" (The Duke of Connaught). A special session of the Indian National Congress was held in Calcutta in September 1920, at which Mahatma Gandhi moved the famous resolution pledging total non-cooperation with the Government till the wrongs committed in the Punjab were redressed and the guilty officers punished.

Another incentive for the nationalist upsurge was the decision to dismember the Ottoman Empire (according to the Treaty of Sevres, 1920) contrary to all assurances made by Britain prior to the commitment of Indian troops against Turkish forces in the war theatres of Mesopotamia and Palestine. This breach of faith by the British caused great resentment among Indian Muslims, who started the powerful *Khilafat* Movement aimed at the preservation of the Turkish Empire and Caliphate—a movement supported by the Indian National Congress. In the Punjab and in Bengal the nationalist upsurge took the form of terrorist attacks against the Government.

In Assam the nationalists instigated riots at various places and organised strikes in the tea gardens and on the Assam Bengal Railway, so that the Assam Rifles were frequently called out in aid of the civil authority. At one time more than half the effective strength of the force was so employed. In addition, it provided signallers to assist the Railway system to keep its telegraph lines open; and also staged a number of major flag marches through disaffected areas.

It was an unpleasant task for the men of the Assam Rifles—having to act against fellow Indians, assailed on all sides by insult and obloquy; and it was not the last time they would be

asked to perform it because the nationalist movement gathered strength as the years passed. In December 1929 the Congress passed the Independence Resolution and later in March it launched the famous Civil Disobedience Movement, which spread to every corner of the country. In Assam and Bengal the services of the Assam Rifles were requisitioned by the Governments of the two provinces to help deal with the situation. Detachments from all the battalions were despatched to disturbed areas, to Sylhet, Calcutta and Chittagong (the latter being the scene of the Armoury Raid of 1931). Later in the decade, Sylhet became the main area of disaffection in Assam. Between 1931 and 1938 1st Battalion in Silchar was constantly called upon to send detachments to Sylhet and surrounding areas—including the tea gardens in which mass strikes had been staged.

Reductions and Reorganisations

In 1922 it was decided to close down the Recruiting Office in Shillong and the Recruiting Depot in Gauhati which had been opened in 1915 to assist in local recruitment. Two years later further reductions were made in the strength of the Force; conditions in tribal areas were considered to be sufficiently stable for the Government to order a reduction of one British Officer and two platoons in each battalion. At the same time, the fighting potential of the Force was improved by the introduction of the .303 MLC short rifle with which the regular Army was equipped.

After the end of the Kuki uprising an experiment was made in enlisting this tribe into the Assam Rifles (4th Battalion). At first the newly recruited Kukis deserted fairly frequently; but later, when they found that service with the force exempted them from labour service, they came in more readily and ultimately made up two platoons of the Battalion.

Meanwhile the terms of service for the men of the Assam Rifles had also been improved, mainly as a reward for their sterling services during the Great War. In 1922 the men's pay was raised from 9 to 11 rupees per month and the deductions on account of rations reduced from Rs 3/8 to Rs 2/8 per month, thus virtually adding another rupee to their pay. The

system of making a man pay for his kit against an annual kit allowance was replaced by a standard kit being issued and maintained by Government, provided the men took care to make the items last a prescribed time. Thenceforth the system of kitting and equipping the men of the Assam Rifles followed that of their confreres of the Indian Army.

In 1923 a rebellion broke out in Rampa State Agency (near Waltair), a sequel to the Moplah rebellion of 1922. The Government of Madras asked for the assistance of the Assam Government to quell the trouble; and in January 1924 a force of 400 rifles (later reinforced by another 250 men) from all the Assam Rifles Battalions, under the command of Major Goodall (Commandant 2nd Battalion) was sent by sea to Narsapatnam, whence they proceeded inland to the scene of the disturbances. The troubled area was extensive and densely forested, constituting some 15,000 sq kms. Goodall decided to tackle it along lines found successful during the second phase of the Kuki operations. He divided the area up into a number of "sub-areas", each with its mobile column, fixed posts and "I" staff. When the men got to know the ground they were able to flush the insurgents out of their hiding places. After a number of skirmishes the rebel leader was killed and his confederates either killed or captured. By June, after five months of arduous service, the Assam Rifles successfully quelled the uprising. Three Indian Officers were awarded the King's Police Medal.

In 1924, as further recognition of the war services of the Assam Rifles as second line reserve, the Government approved the permanent affiliation of the five A.R. battalions to the various Groups of Gorkha Rifles of the regular army. The scheme provided for affiliations as under:

- 1st Battalion to the 2nd Group (2 and 9 G.R.)
- 2nd Battalion to the 5th Group (7 and 10 G.R.)
- 3rd Battalion to the 1st Group (1 and 4 G.R.)
- 4th Battalion to the 4th Group (5 and 6 G.R.)
- 5th Battalion to the 3rd Group (3 and 8 G.R.)

It was intended that, as far as possible, each battalion would be officered from its own affiliated Gorkha Rifles

Group; and in return each battalion would serve as a reinforcement unit for its affiliated Group. It was, however, made clear that the affiliation in no way envisaged any change in the status of the Assam Rifles as "a military force under the provincial Government".

By 1924 the institution of the Subedar Major in Assam Rifles battalions had grown to the same stature as it was accorded in the regular Army. Indeed in the Assam Rifles a Subedar Major performed more responsible tasks than did his counterpart in the Army. Due to the very few British Officers authorised in an Assam Rifles battalion, the Subedar Major not only acted as the "Indian Commandant" in his normal capacity but had at times to shoulder the responsibility of the command of the battalion when all the British Officers were out on tours or expeditions. Even otherwise, with only two or at the most three officers present in a battalion at any one time, the command structure had of necessity to rest on these pillars of strength to a much greater extent than was necessary in the Indian Army. The British Officers realised the importance of this and selected and groomed the Subedar Majors accordingly. Their services were often rewarded with titles of "Rai Bahadur", "Sardar Bahadur" and "Khan Bahadur".

One such stalwart was Subedar Major Jamaludin of 3 Assam Rifles who retired on 1st January 1924, after nearly thirtyeight years of meritorious service which had been recognised with the awards of the Order of British India and the title of "Khan Bahadur". He had been born and brought up in the Battalion. Following the examples of his father and grandfather who had both served in the Armed civil police and then in the old Frontier Police, he entered the ranks of the Naga Hills Military Police when the class composition of the Military Police was still of a mixed type. Because of his fine qualities he was retained even after the class composition was made exclusively Gorkhas and Jaruas. The appointment of a Muslim as a Subedar Major of a Hindu battalion was unprecedented but in his case certainly proved very successful.

The services of another such stalwart were recognised when Subedar Major Jangbir Lama of 2nd Battalion was granted the title of "Sardar Bahadur" in the same year. Earlier, on the occasion of King Emperor's birthday in 1920,

a similar honour had been bestowed on Subedar Major Hetman Rai of 4 Assam Rifles when he received the title of "Rai Bahadur". Thereafter, such awards to outstanding Subedar Majors became a regular feature.

Consolidation of Tribal Areas

By the second decade of the present century the Government had been able to extend its writ to most of the tribal areas of Assam, but the process was far from complete. The greater part of the erstwhile "unadministered" areas had been taken over by the Government, either under direct administration or under "political control", but there were areas still where the Government's writ did not run strong. Its authority in the remoter tribal areas of Balipara, Sadiya and Tirap frontier tracts, in the Naga and Lushai Hills, and in Manipur needed consolidation. Along the northern frontier the Tibetan administration continued to encroach south into areas inhabited by the Monpa and Mema tribes in the Towang and Pasighat regions, where the authority of Tibetan *dzongpens* often held sway. In the Lushai Hills, the area south of the Kaladan river still remained partly unadministered.

Even within the administered areas doubts and problems about tribal rights, many of them legacies of history and tradition, required urgent attention. For example, the system of land grants in the plains made by the Ahom kings to loyal Nagas—called *khats*—had proved to be a constant source of irritation. As the Nagas would not deign to live in the plains to work on their lands they had traditionally appointed plainsmen as *khatakis*—their rent-controllers. As can be well imagined, the *khatakis* often cheated their absentee Naga landlords, one of the many reasons for the latter's periodic raids into the plains. In 1921 the Government finally settled this matter by deciding that certain fixed amounts would be paid to the Naga landlords—and the *khats* were thereafter administered by the Government.

The Great War had interrupted the gradual process of smoothing out these problems but by 1924 the work of consolidation was in full swing again. This period also witnessed the expansion of survey operations and the establishment of

posts as close to the borders as possible. The Assam Rifles were of course intimately involved in these operations. They or their predecessors of the Military Police had been "the pioneers of every advance into the interior" and so they continued to be. Some of the more important expeditions are chronicled in the following paragraphs.

In 1925 two platoons from 3rd Assam Rifles provided an escort to a survey party to the border of Sibsagar district, penetrating into areas that had not been visited for many years. The escort remained out for three months.

In the Lushai Hills the Zongling area (west of the Kaladan valley, on the Arakan front) drew three separate visits by the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills during 1925-26, each escorted by men of the 1st Battalion. Eventually, in 1931-32, Zongling was incorporated in the Lushai Hills District. Thereafter, two platoons of the Battalion were employed in supervising the construction of a road linking Lungleh with Sherphor, near Zongling. The tour of the Superintendent of this newly acquired area thereafter became an annual event.

The Constitution Act of 1935 classified the Naga Hills and the Lushai Hills as "excluded areas"—which meant that no Act of the Centre or the Assam Provincial Legislature would apply to Nagaland unless the Governor so specifically directed. This was a form of safeguard for the tribal people.

"Rani" Gaidinliu

The remarkable story of the rebellion led by a young girl of the Kabui Nagas can be linked both to the Kuki insurgency of 1917-19 (in which the Kukis treated the Kabui Nagas very badly and the latter received no redress from the British) and to the nationalist tide sweeping across the face of India during the inter-war period. Gaidinliu was born in 1915 in the Kabui village of Nungkao in the Barak valley of western Manipur state. Her family belonged to the chief's clan. From childhood she grew up as an independent, strong-willed young lady, whose tomboyish ways were often looked upon with disfavour by the women of the village. When she was thirteen years of age she became associated with a political agitator called Jadong, a Kachha Naga of Manipur.

In late 1930 Jadong proclaimed a "Kabui Naga Raj" with himself as the Messiah.

Gaidinliu became Jadong's chief lieutenant in his socio-political movement to rouse the Kabui Nagas of the Barak valley on the Manipur-Cachar border. In early 1931 the British became alarmed at Jadong's activities and decided on armed action against him. A joint Assam Rifles operation was mounted to quell the disturbances. The Silchar detachment of 1st Battalion sent a platoon into the area east of Silchar; and a platoon from 3rd Battalion established an outpost at Henema. At the same time Mr Higgins, the Political Officer, marched into Cachar escorted by two platoons from the 4th Battalion in Manipur. Jadong was captured, brought to trial in Imphal and eventually executed. That was not, however, the end of the trouble, for his followers continued to spread his message.

Jadong's execution was followed by the imposition of harsh and oppressive measures on Kabui and other villages which had helped Jadong, including the imposition of collective fines and the confiscation of all fire-arms. Gaidinliu thereupon assumed leadership of the movement, which had by then spread to the Naga Hills also. She was declared a "Rani" by her followers, and a large number of young warriors volunteered to join her forces. Many villages offered her money and supplies.

By 1932 the movement had assumed the proportion of a minor rebellion and the Assam Governor-in-Council ordered punitive operations to be mounted against Gaidinliu's forces. The operations were to be placed under the direct control of the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills.

Under the D.C.'s orders 3rd Battalion from Kohima established posts at strategic points in the affected areas of the Assam and Manipur border. Photographs of Gaidinliu were printed in large numbers and distributed to the posts which were to be used as bases for search operations. On one occasion one of those posts actually succeeded in capturing Gaidinliu but she managed to escape—and returned the next night to incite the Nagas to attack the fortified Assam Rifles post at Hangrun. Thereafter rigorous searches were carried out for her, but she skilfully eluded her would-be

captors, even though a 500-rupee reward was announced for her arrest.

Eventually Gaidinliu went into hiding in the North Cachar Hills, where a column from 3 A.R. was sent to seek her out. A long and arduous operation followed, during which there were many hard-fought actions. Gaidinliu's forces often took the offensive though just as often were repulsed, lost heavily and had their villages burned as reprisal. Failing to find security in Cachar, Gaidinliu escaped back into the Naga Hills and sought refuge in Angami territory.

Her *reclame* by then was well established—and still spreading, even to the District Headquarters in Kohima. There were many sympathisers among the Kohima inhabitants who regularly sent Gaidinliu information regarding moves of Assam Rifles sub-units. Mr Mills, the D.C., felt that the “real danger of the movement is the spirit of defiance now abroad”. A major worry was the danger of Gaidinliu allying her movement with the powerful Naga village of Khonoma, which had staged an uprising in 1879.

In October 1932 the “Rani” moved into Polomi village and began to convert it into a fortress after the pattern of the Assam Rifles palisade at Hangrun. When completed, the fortress would accommodate four thousand of her warriors; and there she planned to make a determined stand against the British. Before the fortifications were ready, however, Captain Macdonald made a surprise attack and captured the village. “Rani” Gaidinliu was arrested, taken to Kohima for trial and sentenced to life imprisonment. She spent fourteen years in five different jails in Assam before she was released by Pandit Nehru after Independence.

Unrest among the Kachha Nagas persisted despite the successful conclusion of the Government's operations against Gaidinliu. A number of minor expeditions had to be mounted against them till well into 1933. In the process the 3 A.R. post at Henema was moved to Bopungwemi, a village that had been particularly troublesome. It was not until the end of the year that matters began to settle down again.

Amalgamation and Other Measures

In April 1932, as part of the post-war economy drive, 5th Battalion was disbanded and its personnel transferred to the 2nd to form an amalgamated, composite unit comprising 2 headquarters and 18 service platoons. The composite 2nd Battalion was deployed as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Sadiya | 2 HQ Platoons and 4 Service Platoons |
| Pasighat and Abor Hills posts | 4 Service Platoons |
| Denning | 1 Service Platoon |
| Tirap (winter location only) | 1 Service Platoon |
| Nizanghat (winter location only) | 1 Service Platoon |
| Happy Valley, Shillong | 2 Service Platoons |
| North Lakhimpur | 1 Service Platoon |
| Lokhra | 4 Service Platoons |

In the same year the force was issued with .303 Mark II High Velocity short rifles and Mark VII ammunition.

Meanwhile, the long awaited raise in the pay scales of the Assam Rifles had been introduced. The pay of the riflemen and buglers was raised from Rs 12/8 and Rs 13/8 to Rs 13 and Rs 14 respectively. Deferred pay at Rs 2 per month to N.C.O.s and riflemen was also sanctioned; and Indian Officers became entitled to a Kit Allowance of Rs 100 on first commission and Rs 2/8 per month for subsequent maintenance. In 1934 a change in the terms of service of Assam Rifles personnel increased the period of engagement from three years to four.

Organisational changes that had been introduced in the post-war period were: Education was officially introduced in the Assam Rifles and regimental schools were started in the battalions; Platoon messes were sanctioned, a system that is followed to the present day.

In 1934, a rehabilitation training centre was started in 1st Battalion for training personnel due for retirement in arts and crafts that would help them obtain employment in civilian life. In the same year the system of recruiting Gorkhas through the Assam Recruiting Offices for Gorkhas in Kunraghat and

Ghoom (Darjeeling) was introduced and proved most satisfactory.

To revert to operational activities, the most noteworthy task carried out by the Force in 1935 was to provide escorts from 3rd and 4th Battalions for a Survey of India party that proceeded to the unadministered area between the Naga Hills and the Burma border. Although there was little or no fighting with tribals, the living and working conditions were most trying; and the operation provided an exercise in maintenance, in keeping the various escort parties supplied for more than six months in an area where communications were virtually non-existent.

In 1936, 3rd Battalion mounted a major expedition to the Burma border in connection with the suppression of slave trade in that region. The D.C., Mr J.P. Mills, submitted a report to Government on the criminal activities of Pangsha, a village of the Kalo Kenyo Nagas beyond the "Control Area". In their raids on Saochu and Kejuk, which lay within the control area, they had during the previous six months been responsible for over 300 deaths and had taken 230 heads. They had also taken captives and sold them as slaves. The D.C. advised that an expedition be mounted against them, even though Pangsha lay outside the Control Area. The Governor of Assam recommended the proposal and it was approved by the Central Government.

3rd Battalion provided an escort of 2½ platoons under Major W.R.B. Williams (7 G.R.) the Commandant, with a porter force of 360 under a Police Officer. (Dr von Fuhrer Haimendorf, the famous Austrian scientist who has described the expedition in his book *The Naked Nagas*, obtained special permission to accompany the column.)

The column left Mokokchung on 13 November, crossed the Dikkoo and Yangnu rivers and headed for the Pangsha area. On 24 November it captured Chingmei village, released its captive slaves and burned the village as a reprisal. Pangsha, the powerful village of the Rolykenyo clan, was tackled next and taken, though only after some heavy fighting. All the slaves from this and another village were recovered. On its return journey the rearguard of the column was heavily attacked. Subedar Balbahadur Gurung was the rearguard

commander and though greatly outnumbered and cut off from the main body, he fought with remarkable courage, keeping the Nagas at arm's length till help arrived in the form of a platoon from the main body under Subedar Bhotu Gurung. The tribals were then driven off. It was mainly due to the skilful handling of the column by Major Williams and great courage and presence of mind displayed by the two Indian Officers that the column arrived back at Mokokchung on 13 December without having incurred any casualties. Each of the officers was awarded the King's Police Medal, while an N.C.O. commanding the section in the rearguard that was subjected to the heaviest attacks received the Indian Police Medal.

In 1937 Mr C.R. Pawsey, M.C. (who had taken over as D.C. from Mr Mills), on receiving reports of continued slave-trade activities, took out another column from 3rd Battalion to stamp out this malpractice in the Nokhu area of the Burma frontier. The escort consisted of four Indian Officers, 167 other ranks and 417 permanent porters—all under the command of Major B.C.H. Gerty. The column left Mokokchung on 1 November, passed through Chingmei and reached Nokhu on 13 November. They found the gates to the village closed against them; and in the distance could be heard much drum-beating. It transpired that the tribals had concentrated in the far corner of the village, preparing to attack the column from the flanks. However, the column scattered the leading elements as they approached, and the rest thereupon dispersed. The village was burned after the captive slaves had been restored to freedom; the column returned to base unhampered. Together with much commendation from the Central and Provincial Governments, one award of the Indian Police Medal was made—to Havildar Foo Lama.

In 1939 Pangsha and the neighbouring villages of Yungkao, Tamphung and Dapha were again reported to be head-hunting and taking away captives as slaves. Mr Pawsey, escorted by Major A.R. Nye, M.C., and three platoons from 3 Assam Rifles, mounted a third expedition to this region, this time burning Pangsha and Ukha and imposing stiff fines on other villages. A few guns were provided to some endangered villages for their protection against future raids. As far as is

known, this was the last time that any serious slave-trading or head-hunting was reported from this area.

The McMahon Line at Towang

Disputes about the McMahon Line figured prominently in Sino-Indian confrontation after India's Independence. It is interesting therefore to read about the timidity of the British government who, despite several urgings by New Delhi, persistently refused to make public the proceedings of Sir Henry McMahon's Simla Convention of 1914, including the boundary agreements and maps. The Great War came and went, another two decades passed, and still the whole thing was kept secret. Even the Assam Government was kept in the dark regarding the agreement about the border. For instance the Political Officer of the Balipara Frontier Tract in the early 'thirties, an officer of the Indian Forest Service, had been officially briefed that the boundary between India and Tibet lay along the Se La range. In a book entitled *The Adventures of a Botanist's Wife*, his wife Eleanor Bor records that when they had been invited by some Lamas to visit them in Towang, ". . . we were not allowed to accept (the invitation) . . . just beyond that wind-swept pass (Se La) lay Tibet."

It was only when new constitutional reforms (the Government of India Act of 1935) necessitated a more accurate definition of the tribal areas of Assam, and the fact that all through the years the frontier of India had been wrongly shown on the maps, that in an effort to assert its rights over the Towang region (where Tibetan officials from Tsona Dzong still performed all functions of government) Shillong decided to send Captain Lightfoot, then P.O. Balipara, to undertake a "preliminary and exploratory" mission in Towang.

Accordingly, on 12 April 1938, Lightfoot set out from Charduar with a force of two platoons from 2nd Assam Rifles under the command of Major W.F. Brown. The column went from Lokhra via Doimara, Shergaon and the Manda la pass to Dhirang. There they encountered Tibetan officials, the so-called Dzongpens of Dhirang, who created difficulties about obtaining porters. However, the Assam Rifles succeeded in commandeering villagers and the column left for Towang via

Senge and Se La, reaching its destination on the 30th.

The local Tibetan officials were friendly but evasive, not wishing to enter into any discussions. Lightfoot and Brown toured the Towang area for a full two months, impressing upon the local Monpa leaders that they were all British subjects according to the Simla Convention of 1914.

Lightfoot found that the Monpas had been badly misgoverned and much exploited by the Tibetans' high-handedness. The inhabitants, he reported, lived in mortal dread of Lhasa's henchmen and were willing but afraid to come under British protection. He therefore recommended a gradual take-over of the administration, including that of the powerful and prestigious Towang monastery.

Despite pressure from Shillong, New Delhi refused to be hustled—making financial stringency the excuse for inaction. So the whole thing was left "to simmer for the time being". After the withdrawal of Lightfoot's column Monpa leaders who had cooperated with the British representatives were taken severely to task by the Tsona Dzongpens and the monastery officials—a sad commentary on British policy of that period.

Meanwhile the Chinese Government continued with its cartographical offensive in claiming Towang as part of Sikang province—and the Tibetan Government, over whom the Chinese claimed suzerainty, continued to collect taxes on the Indian side of the border. The British, as ever hyper-sensitive to possible Chinese reactions, refused even to lodge a protest.

Events moved swiftly thereafter. The death of the 13th Dalai Lama and the long process of installing his successor coincided with the outbreak of the Second World War. China became an ally and found itself, by proxy, a Great Power. President Roosevelt of the U.S.A., far removed from the realities of the situation, lent his support to Chiang Kai-Shek's machinations in regard to Tibet. Much power politics followed, and many proddings from Washington on China's behalf—till finally, in the oft-cited Eden Memorandum of August 1943, Britain recognised Chinese suzerainty over Tibet though only on the understanding that Tibet was to be regarded as "autonomous" (whatever the Chinese took that to mean).

To revert to Towang, the Tibetan government sent an army detachment to Towang in November 1942 to establish authority over all the Monpa areas, even to the south of Se La—in the Rupa and Kalaktang areas. Government of India took no action except to send a strong protest to Lhasa—which availed them nothing. The Tibetans remained in occupation of Towang and Dhirang valley.

In 1941 the Assam Government established an Assam Rifles post at Rupa, but that was only to protect the Sherdupkens from harassment by the Mijis and the Akas. It was not a measure against the Tibetans. The Towang problem lapsed by default—and that was what the situation was when India gained Independence.

An account of the inter-war years would not be complete without mention of the aid given by the force to civil authorities in times of widespread natural disasters. In June 1929, during a period of torrential rain, Aizawl became completely isolated because of land-slides in surrounding areas and the washing away of stretches of roads due to heavy flooding. The Superintendent of the Lushai Hills called on the Assam Rifles for assistance. Four platoons of 1st Battalion cleared 28 miles of road in six weeks; other parties were sent to clear 25 miles of river passage below Sairang. Most of the men employed in these tasks contracted miasmatic fevers and subsequently had to spend long months in hospital.

Manipur was also visited by heavy floods that year. The lines of 4th Battalion were awash with water three feet deep, covering most of the Battalion living areas. The men of the Battalion not only spent long hours undoing the damage to their own area but also sent large parties to aid the civil authority in fighting the floods in other areas in Manipur.

ASSAM RIFLES IN WORLD WAR II

Border Operations and the Raising of "V" Force

AT the end of the decade of the 'thirties, as the international situation moved inexorably towards another major conflagration, the first distant repercussions of a coming European conflict began to be felt in India. However, it was only after the outbreak of hostilities that plans for expansion, re-equipment and re-training of the Army in India were put into effect. The execution of these plans would eventually change the character, size and shape of the entire military establishment on the sub-continent.

The Assam Rifles remained virtually untouched by the war during the first two years. Until the latter half of 1941 the Force remained preoccupied with its normal chores: patrolling the border; escorting administrative officials to remote areas; assisting them to establish the government's writ among recalcitrant tribals; and internal security duties in Digboi and Tinsukia to protect their oil installations against threats of sabotage in the midst of another upsurge of civil disturbance. Routine tasks, however, did not deter the Force from remaining alert and innovative in training matters. Sub-units and men were kept well trained for the type of operations they might have to carry out in the event of another insurgency among the tribals. 1st Battalion had introduced "Jungle Training" in its training cycle and, indeed, produced a pamphlet on this subject for use in the entire Force. An interesting facet which merits mention here was the reversing of the process of attachments for training vis-a-vis the regular Army. 1st Assam Rifles used to send 8 N.C.O.s to 2/2 G.R. each year for training. The Commanding Officer of 2/2 G.R. became so

impressed with the standard of efficiency of the Assam Rifle N.C.O.s in jungle warfare that he ordered that it would be *his* N.C.O.s who would thenceforth be sent to 1 A.R. for jungle training!

The foresight of the I.G. and senior officers of the force in introducing and maintaining a high level of jungle-craft paid dividends when the war finally caught up with this part of the sub-continent. From its remote para-military role in the backwoods of Empire, Assam Rifles sub-units were suddenly pitchforked into the front line of battle—there to shoulder strategic responsibility of a nature which any regular regiment or corps would have been proud to be entrusted with.

The first faint impact of the war was felt in early 1941, when demands were received for the transfer of volunteers from the Assam Rifles to the regular Gorkha battalions. As on a previous occasion, the response was immediate and enthusiastic. By April 2nd Battalion had sent 203 volunteers while the 3rd and 4th made available 100 men each—to their respective affiliated units in the Gorkha Brigade. It is interesting to record that one other rank from 2 A.R. was even allowed to transfer to the Royal Indian Navy.

The flow of volunteers to the Gorkha Brigade had soon to be discontinued because there arose a fresh source of demand for Assam Riflemen. Army Headquarters decided to raise a new Regiment for the Indian Army from the plainsmen and tribals of Assam, to be designated the Assam Regiment. In answer to the call for the provision of N.C.O.s and men, the Assam Rifles responded at once and by the end of the year about 500 men had been transferred from its four battalions to the newly raised Assam Regiment.

Re-raising of 5th Battalion

It had been foreseen that the provision of so many trained personnel for the regular Army would entail a heavy recruiting programme for the Force: and that a central training unit for these recruits would be a more efficient war-time measure. Accordingly, it was decided to re-raise 5 A.R. both to act as a Training Battalion for the others as well as to shoulder its former operational responsibilities on the northern border.

5th Battalion began re-raising on 1 April 1942.

To meet the manpower demands on the Assam Rifles it was decided to raise the strength of each battalion to 820 all ranks, organised in 14 platoons in place of the existing 12. Later in the year the number of platoons in the first four battalions was increased to 16 by transferring eight platoons from 5th Battalion, two each to each of the others.

The number of men enlisted during 1941 reached a record figure of 1,399. Most of the recruits were Gorkhas from Nepal, but because of the steadily increasing drain on manpower due to war expansions the new entries were of poor quality, many of them pathetically underaged. Thereafter, to ease the demand on Nepal the percentage of Lushais in 1st Battalion was increased from 12½ to 25%.

All recruits were sent to 5th Battalion for recruits' training. Despite the shortages of training aids and the fact that this Battalion had also to man posts on the Balipara and Sadiya Tracts, 5 A.R. fulfilled its responsibility with great credit as was amply proved by the subsequent performance of young soldiers in active operations on the Burma border. The Battalion itself was deprived of the opportunity ever to proceed on active duty against the Japanese, but it did yeoman service in keeping pace with the high recruit demands of the war.

Japan entered the war in December 1941. The sensational success of its forces in South East Asia made it certain that they would soon turn their attention to Burma; and an invasion of Burma would bring the enemy right up to the borders of India, in an area where virtually no regular troops were located; and in that event it was inevitable that a crucial operational responsibility would fall on the Assam Rifles, particularly because of their intimate knowledge of the terrain and the people of the frontier and trans-border tracts.

Nor were they disappointed; in January 1941 HQ Presidency and Assam District in Fort William made the I.G. Assam Rifles responsible for strategic reconnaissance astride the Indo-Burma border. The first trans-border patrols were sent out from 4th Battalion in January 1942, their tasks being to reconnoitre the jungle and hill approaches from the Chindwin and the Chin Hills into Manipur state. There were two such patrols—each consisting of two British Officers, one Indian

officer and ten other ranks. They carried out extensive surveys of the frontier region from Homalin in the north-east to Tamu in the south; their reports were of great help in subsequent operations.

Manipur state would obviously be the first target for Japanese attack and the State authorities were alerted accordingly. At 4th Battalion base in Imphal there was hectic activity in implementing plans for Passive Air Defence against Japanese air attacks, which were daily expected after the evacuation of Rangoon in March 1942. Every available man was put to digging trenches and building shelters for his own protection as well as for other inhabitants of the cantonment area.

3rd Battalion remained unaffected by the events of the war during this earlier period, except that it was required to maintain vigilance from its permanent posts at Kongyu, Wakching, Mokokchung and Wokha. Later in the year, when the United States Army Air Force established Air Warning and Observation Posts in the Naga Hills at Mokokchung, Wakching, Phekdzumi and Laruri, 3rd Battalion was given the task of escorting their personnel and protecting their posts. As demands increased, the number of platoons so deployed rose to six.

Other preparations for the expected emergency were also taken in hand. The Government of Assam, acting jointly with the State Government of Manipur, began the construction of the Tamu road which, it was forecast, would be needed to assist the tens of thousands of refugees that were expected to flee westwards from Burma. In the event, of course, even 17 Indian Infantry Division and other troops of *Burcorps* struggled back over this route.

Reception of Burma Refugees

The stream of refugees from Central Burma began to arrive at the Manipur border as early as in March 1942. 4th Battalion established a two-platoon reception centre in Tamu to organise and control the rush of suffering humanity and to provide what succour it could. Another such centre was established by the Battalion in the Sita area. The rest of the

unit was engaged in organising massive relief operations at Imphal: and 3rd Battalion's help was coopted for the onward movement of refugee columns to Dimapur via Kohima. When the burden of work increased, additional platoons from 2nd Battalion were sent to assist the Naga and Manipur battalions.

As the Japanese advance pushed further and further into Central Burma, the influx of refugees began to swell to uncontrollable proportions. The story of those harrowing days, when tens of thousands of ill-clad, starving and exhausted evacuees arrived from Burma—many collapsing from hunger and disease—need not be recorded in detail here. Suffice it to state that the Assam Rifles played a significant role in assisting the refugees, both civilian and Service personnel. All battalions sent detachments for this purpose to the various entry routes from Central and North Burma.

2nd Battalion was mainly responsible for the northern sector of the border, both for reconnaissance purposes as well as for refugee reception along the difficult jungle tracks that cross into India from the Hukawng Valley and the Fort Hertz area in North Burma. A party under Havildar Iman Sing Gurung was sent to Tirap, Margherita and the Chaukan Pass. A second party under Lance Naik Sukh Bahadur Rai was attached to 1st Battalion of the Assam Regiment and proceeded to Ledo for reconnaissance duties. A third party under Havildar Padam Bahadur Thapa was sent to Pangsau.

As for refugee reception, nine parties were detailed on different refugee routes on various dates during 1942. Perhaps the most important of them was a patrol sent out under Major Keene—a large group of 90 other ranks from 2nd Battalion to which was added 35 men from 5th Battalion. Major Keene's party was sent to the Nowngyang Hka river under order of HQ North Assam Brigade to assist the last of the North Burma refugees. Appreciation of their work was received from many quarters in glowing terms. A typical "citation" was the one regarding a detachment of 35 under Jemadar Ratnabhadur Limbu which was engaged on refugee evacuation duties for nearly three months, from end-March to mid-June. This platoon worked for some time under the Officer Commanding Abor Labour Force. When the platoon left to join "V" Force, the O.C. wrote:

This report would not be complete without a reference to Jemadar Ratnabhadur Limbu and the men of No 9 Platoon of the 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles. They were magnificent. There were no casualties, and little sickness amongst them. They worked harder than any platoon the O.C. has seen and during the past 8 years he has seen several. Their discipline and bearing were excellent, as was their jungle-craft. On the refugee route they brought in sick refugees, issued rations, cooked, in fact, did everything, including burying corpses. The O.C. Abor Labour Corps feels that such excellent work should not go unrecognised, and that the platoon's efficiency is only a reflection of its Platoon Commander's.

Mr Geoffrey Tyson in his book *Forgotten Frontier*, which describes the memorable activities of members of the Assam Tea Planters' Association in organising refugee reception in the Chaukan and Pangsau areas, gives a vivid account of Havildar Dharram Sing's platoon of 2nd Battalion sent on a mission to rescue a British tea planter, Mr Manley, and a party of refugees marooned at Tilung Hka, an inaccessible spot just across the border of Tirap in North Burma. Dharram Sing's men had only just returned from another arduous rescue mission; he himself was stricken with recurring bouts of malaria. Yet, when appealed to, he and his men agreed to go with Mr Mackrell, the leader of the group. The hazards and the responsibility of the expedition had been fully explained to the Havildar:

(Mr Mackrell) pointed out to the Havildar that if they felt equal to one last attempt, he himself would try to take them as far forward as possible together with their equipment and supplies by elephant. Once they reached a point from where further elephant transport would be impossible he would send them all alone as he considered the presence of an elderly European might be more handicap than help to these stalwart hillmen, once they were within striking distance of the Tilung Hka. Mackrell said he felt sure the rescue could be accomplished if they would agree to try. He asked for an answer next morning. The next day the Havildar saluted with, as Mackrell puts it, "a face like wood, giving no indication of the fateful decision they had reached": "Sahib", he said, "we will all go with you". This was the beginning of a day of great good fortune, for shortly afterwards they found a wild elephant which showed them the way up the cliff—a discovery which solved the transport problem for the first five camps.

Finding a lost elephant cost some hours delay on the Monday morning, but when the party finally got moving it was to follow wild elephant

tracks up and along a small stream to the top of a hill, from which Mackrell thought the Dehing Valley was just visible. In this he was mistaken, though it took the rest of the day to establish the error. Eventually on Tuesday September 1st, the first day of a new month, they found a way down to the river which they crossed, camping for the night opposite Webster's Camp Two, which was located on a land-slide. The whole of the next day was spent in an unsuccessful search for a short cut up-river, which once more demonstrated that whatever expenditure of time and energy might be involved it was almost always better to stick to the winding river bank. By Thursday, September 3rd, Mackrell had cut forward along the left bank to a point opposite Camp Three, beyond which he built a large *machan* and rationed it with rice, salt, *dhal* and a few seers of sugar. By now Mackrell had a feeling that they were really not on the right trail—a presentiment which was soon to be dramatically confirmed. On Friday he and Havildar Dharramsing did a long reconnaissance on foot, but failed to find a high level tract and movement was once again restricted to water level.

The story goes on to describe another week of frantic attempts to reach Manley and his party, during which Dharram Sing and his men shouldered heavy responsibilities, performed tasks of great physical achievement and, by their devoted and selfless efforts, succeeded in bringing about a fortunate end to the mission.

While the civil authorities were busily engaged in organising refugee relief, General Headquarters in Delhi was frantically trying to establish a force in north-eastern India to repel a possible Japanese invasion. General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief in India, faced an uphill task in trying to persuade the Chiefs of Staff in London to accord priority for a build-up of forces for the defence of the north-eastern sector. His appreciation was that this would be the likely target for the next Japanese offensive, whereas the Chiefs of Staff were obsessed with the likelihood of an invasion of Ceylon. The tug-of-war between Ceylon and Assam went on for some months, during which all General Wavell was able to induct into Imphal was 1st Indian Infantry Brigade. However, he located IV Corps at Ranchi, with 70 British and 23 Indian Divisions, as a possible task force for Assam. In April he established HQ Eastern Army, also in Ranchi, and changed the old military districts of Eastern Command into L of C Areas and Sub-areas. For immediate command and control in the Assam Zone, he created an *ad hoc* formation designated

“Assam Division”, consisting of the old Assam District HQ and 1st Indian Infantry Brigade.

The foregoing measures were mainly in the nature of organisational steps. The danger of a Japanese invasion of Assam made it imperative to take some operational steps as well. And the first troops General Wavell turned to were the operationally deployed Assam Rifles battalions under the I.G. Police of Assam. Thus it was that the Force came to be projected on to the strategic screen of India's defence at such a crucial period of imperial history.

“V” Force

In the face of continued reluctance of the Chiefs of Staff to agree to diverting any troops to the Assam front from the meagre resources then available in India Base, General Wavell had no option but to plan the defence of the Eastern front on a basis of local self-help. As the official War Office *History of the Second World War, The War Against Japan Volume II*, narrates (p 192):

Wavell therefore decided to organize a force from the hill people along the 600 miles of India's eastern frontier to undertake guerilla operations against the Japanese lines of communications, should they pass through the area. The initial strength envisaged was 2,000 men recruited from Tripura Hills, with a proportion of one British officer to approximately 200 tribesmen. If sufficient recruits were forthcoming, the strength would be increased to 10,000 men.

The organization, raising, arming and training of this force, which became known as “V” Force, began in April 1942 with the help of the Assam Government. It was built up on the foundation of platoons loaned from the Assam Rifles (a force of five military police battalions maintained by the Assam Government and composed of Gurkhas under British officers seconded from the Indian Army). It was planned that “V” Force should be organized into a headquarters and six groups, one to each of the six operational areas stretching along the frontier, each group consisting of a small headquarters, four platoons of Assam Rifles and eventually up to 1,000 enrolled tribesmen. The force was to be self-supporting and live on the country.

“V” Force was soon organised into a Headquarters and six groups—one each for the operational areas of Tripura, Lushai Hills, Chin Hills, Imphal, Kohima and Ledo (described in detail in the next section). The somewhat dramatic desig-

nation by which this formation came to be known derived from General HQ "Plan Five" for the defence of north-east India under which the tribes inhabiting the frontier areas would be used to resist the invader. The Official History states that the Assam Rifles were to be the "fighting element" of the Force. The tribal guerillas would be enrolled but not formally enlisted.

Initially four platoons each from 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions and eight from the 1st were inducted into the new Force, but ultimately nearly all the platoons from these battalions had to be trained for this special role and served in it at some stage or other. This was necessary in order to cater for the demands made on the Assam Rifles for additional tasks, or to provide reliefs for platoons committed for long periods on arduous operations. The Assam Rifles platoons were issued with Bren light machine guns for the first time; and intensive guerilla training was imparted to them, turn by turn, at a Jungle Warfare School organised by 2nd Battalion on behalf of "V" Force Commander, Brigadier Felix Williams.

In this connection it is sad to record that officers actually serving in the Assam Rifles battalions were not permitted to serve with their men in "V" Force. Instead, A.R. Platoons were placed under the command of specially deputed officers, mainly recruited from those who had personal knowledge of the local tribes and the areas in which they would have to operate—such as I.C.S. or police officers, tea planters and such like. Although this policy was justified by General Headquarters on the grounds that the tasks to be carried out by "V" Force were specialised ones, this remained a sore point with both the officers and the men of the Assam Rifles.

The very first task that the Assam Rifles as a part of the nascent "V" Force had to carry out was to send patrols to help extricate the remainder of Indian and Burmese forces still streaming across the border into India. An extract from the official history, *The War Against Japan (Vol II)*, gives an indication of the nature of the work involved:

The force first went into action patrolling across the frontier to locate, guide and assist the hundreds of thousands of refugees who were making their way on foot from central Burma to the frontier

near Tamu, from Myitkyina by way of the Hukawng Valley and from Fort Hertz over the Chaukan Pass to Ledo. Of those who followed the easier route to Tamu, about 190,000 eventually reached Imphal. Their arrival, in varying stages of distress, created a very serious problem for the Assam Government, for not only had some system to be organized to prevent enemy agents among them infiltrating into India, but thousands had to be fed, given medical assistance and transported into India. Rescue parties had to be organized and food and medical supplies dropped on groups of refugees marooned by the flooded rivers, as and when they were located by air reconnaissance. Some 100,000 refugees also crossed the Arakan Yomas and made their way along the coast to Akyab when they were taken by ship to Calcutta. Including those evacuated by sea and air, a total of some 400,000 refugees from Burma succeeded in reaching India. But many thousands died on the way.

On 1 May General Wavell at last ordered IV Corps to be established in Imphal, with 23 Indian Infantry Division and "V" Force under command. Corps HQ was given the responsibility of the security of the Assam frontier against the Japanese threat. General Irwin, G.O.C. IV Corps, had decided to retain 17 Indian Infantry Division (returning from Burma with *Burcorps*) in Imphal, to reorganise and re-equip *in situ* (sending 1st Burma Division of *Burcorps* to Shillong to be reconstituted as 39 Indian Division). The G.O.C. then allotted operational roles for the defence of Manipur, giving the Assam Rifles an independent, front-line operational task:

- 23 Division to cover eastern and south-eastern approaches to the Imphal plain;
- 17 Division in reserve in Imphal, with one battalion located in Kohima;
- Assam Rifles to cover the rest of the frontier (while "V" Force was being organised for operations);
- North Assam Brigade (newly raising) to defend the Digboi oilfields against a possible enemy advance through the Hukawng Valley and Ledo.

At Imphal during that period the most immediate threat of course was attack from the air. The air-raid drills of 4th Battalion were first tested on the morning of 10 May when two

flights of 18 Japanese bombers attacked Imphal cantonment. The bombing and strafing by the Japanese was accurate but the air-raid precautions taken by the Battalion stood the test. Casualties were light but unfortunate in that they included two key personnel. Subedar Major Sukraj Limbu received grievous wounds during the bombing and they eventually caused his death (he was posthumously awarded the O.B.I.); the Battalion Panditji was the other person to be wounded in the strafing. Material damage was also light, but again most unfortunate. The only direct hit recorded was on the Canteen building with all its stocks of rum!

After the raid the men's families were evacuated from the cantonment. Since many of the locals had fled to the hills after the bombing, the families could be temporarily accommodated in an abandoned village on the outskirts of Imphal, from where they were despatched to their homes when transport could be arranged.

The second raid came on 16 May. This time the only casualty was the (civilian) Medical Officer who had to be evacuated to the hospital in Kohima. The material damage was again light but, again, the building to which the Canteen stores had been shifted received the only direct hit, destroying among other things whatever was left of the rum—a coincidence that provided much humorous comment among the men.

It would be wrong to pretend that the Battalion morale was unaffected by the air bombardments. In fact it was quite badly shaken, and perhaps understandably so. There were even some desertions but these were mostly by family-men, and every single one of them rejoined the unit after he had ensured that his wife and children were safe and on their way homewards. Some of the young soldiers were sufficiently unnerved by the bombing to disregard their security duties, with the result that some stores and equipment were looted by stragglers of the retreating *Burcorps*.

Shortly after settling in, the Battalion was given a chance to redeem some of the self-esteem it might be presumed to have lost during the air-raid episodes. 23 Division called for a "special" patrol from the Battalion with the task of making contact with the Japanese west of the Chindwin river. Jemadar

Tilbikram Thapa and 10 Gorkha and Kuki other ranks were put under command of Capt Sutherland of "V" Force. It was a "special" patrol in that Sutherland would launch the men dressed as locals and not carrying any arms, army equipment or reserve rations. They were to move out in four parties of two each, pretending to be tribals out on a shopping mission to a village in the Kabaw Valley. The parties were to move one behind the other at intervals of an hour between each, so that if they encountered any Japanese they could quickly relay the information back through each following party.

The "patrol" remained out for four weeks and brought back valuable information. Sutherland was awarded the Military Cross and two of the men won the Indian Distinguished Service Medal. However, a little peccadillo on the part of the Gorkha Officer ended in tragedy. Tilbikram Thapa, with a Gorkha's penchant for *shikar* but in disregard of orders, took a shot-gun with him. Furthermore (also contrary to orders) instead of going in twos, one lot covering the other, he formed one group of five. After crossing Ho river, Tilbikram's party appeared to have been tricked into a trap by a party of Burmese villagers. All five were robbed, tied to trees and left to starve to death. Their bodies were discovered much later. Presumably the reason for this dastardly act was the lure of the 12 bore gun.

This was a very difficult period for Imphal. There were still thousands of civilian refugees in the area, all in exhausted condition. By mid-May their ranks were greatly swollen by the arrival of some 20,000 men of *Burcorps* who had limped back from Burma without blankets, ground sheets or cooking facilities—many on the lookout for local pickings. It was with some relief that 4th Battalion received orders from HQ 23 Division to move out of the cantonment to Uripok, a village about 2 km west of the cantonment, one of those from which the inhabitants had fled to the hills after the first air bombardment.

Area and Operational Commands

After HQ IV Corps took over operational responsibility for the Assam front it became necessary to recast the command

and control arrangements for "V" Force. First a request was made to GHQ in Delhi to place the Assam Rifles *wholly* under Army control. This was done gradually: the Force was made subject to the Indian Army Act on 25 June. In the second phase, with effect from 1 July 1942, it was taken over completely, including the responsibility for the supply of arms, equipment and rations. Assam Rifles personnel were thereafter granted rates of pay and allowances at par with the Indian Army—for as long as they served under its operational control.

HQ IV Corps decided to separate the training and organisational functions of "V" Force from its operational aspect. For the former, six "area commands" were established—five in IV Corps area and one in the area of the newly forming XV Corps (on the Arakan front). In the IV Corps area the HQ of the Area Commands were located as follows:

Ledo Naga Area with HQ at Ledo (Lieut-Colonel Pozey)—for operations east, south and south-eastwards from Ledo;

Kohima Naga Area with HQ at Kohima (Lieut-Colonel Lightfoot)—for operations east and south from Manipur;

Kuki Area with HQ at Imphal (Lieut-Colonel E. Murray)—for operations south, east and south-westwards from Shuganu;

Lushai Area with HQ at Aizawl (Lieut-Colonel Cuerdon)—for operations south, south-east and south-westwards from Aizawl;

Tripura Area with HQ at Agartala (Lieut-Colonel Haswell)—for operations south and south-eastwards of Tripura.

The Chin Area Command with HQ at Falam was located in XV Corps area.

According to IV Corps Operation Instruction No 20 of 7 June 1942, the hill tribes within these areas were to be recruited and organised under the direction of the Brigadier in charge of "V" Force stationed at Jorhat, who would "arrange for officers appointed in command of each of these areas to enter their respective hill tracts, recruit guerillas, arm those that it is considered desirable to arm, train selected men in

demolition and various forms of sabotage and others in observation and collection of info.”

In regard to operational commands, IV Corps Operation Instruction No 20 directed:

In principle, platoons of Assam Rifles will be employed in support of and to back up guerilla operations on their respective fronts. For this reason a provisional allotment of Assam Rifles platoons to the guerilla Area Commands was made by Assam District in order to enable Commander Guerillas to organize his guerilla force and dispose of it on some basis . . . Since the creation of this command arrangement, the situation has changed. An operational formation (IV Corps) has assumed command of the Assam border and in consequence certain adjustments in the system of command have been necessary. These are explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

Vide paras 3 and 4 of IV Corps Operation Instruction No 12 (of 21 May) IV Corps front is divided into four Operational Commands, to each of whom appropriate Assam Rifle battalions and affiliated guerillas are attached. Operational Commands will not be responsible for the organisation or policy or training of either Assam Rifles or guerillas. These will be directed from HQ IV Corps. Nor are they responsible for the exact position of the platoons of Assam Rifles supporting the guerillas or for the guerillas themselves until active operations commence. They are however responsible that the activities of the Assam Rifles and the guerillas attached to them shall be coordinated to the common end, for which purpose Commanders of Areas Force “V” will place themselves at the disposal of Operational Commanders. Once active operations commence all forces—regular Assam Rifles, Force “V”—will come under complete command of the Operational Commanders concerned.

In this connection, however, it is emphasised that Area Commanders of Force “V” must act as advisors to the Operational Commanders on peculiarly “Guerilla” matters and as liaison between them and Force “V”.

HQ IV Corps will lay down when active operations are to be considered as having commenced.

There were in fact five Operational Commands, four for IV Corps and one in XV Corps (in the Arakan):

- Ledo Naga Command—under Commander North Assam Brigade;
- Kohima Naga Command—under Commander Kohima Brigade;

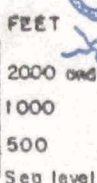
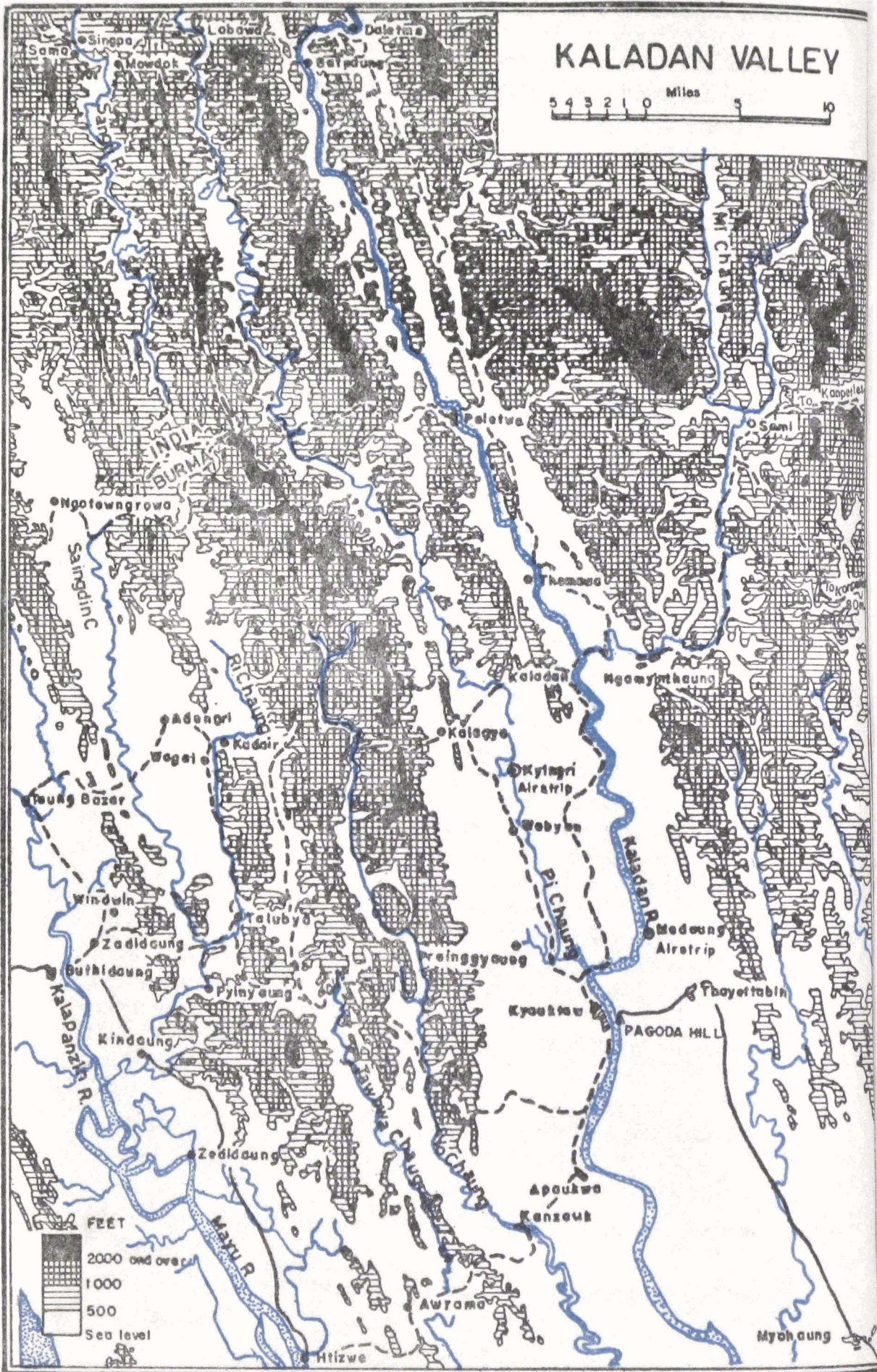
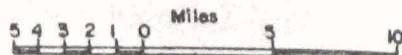
Kuki Command—under G.O.C. 23 Division;
Lushai Command—under Commander 109 Infantry Brigade;
Tripura Command (XV Corps)—under G.O.C. 14 Division
(with liaison with 109 Infantry Brigade).

Allotment of Assam Rifles platoons to Operational Command was:

Commander Ledo Nagas—4 platoons from 2 A.R.
Commander Kohima Nagas—4 platoons from 3 A.R.
Commander Kukis—4 platoons from 4 A.R.
Commander Lushai Guerillas—8 platoons from 1 A.R.

The fighting elements for the Tripura Command were to be provided by the Tripura Rifles, an Indian State Forces unit (from which, after Independence, was raised the 6th Battalion of the Assam Rifles).

KALADAN VALLEY



ASSAM RIFLES IN WORLD WAR II

“V” Force Operations with Lushai Brigade

WHEN it became apparent that the Japanese did not immediately intend to follow up their success in Burma, the original guerilla role of “V” Force of operating behind the Japanese lines was changed to that of gathering information. In addition, “V” Force was to provide guides and porters to, and form a link between, the Army and the local inhabitants: and, of course, it was to carry out harassing tasks whenever an opportunity offered itself. “But first and foremost they became the eyes of IV Corps in the dense jungles and hills in which they were born and bred. If only on this account, the experiment of raising “V” Force was fully justified by results” (Official War Office History).

Eventually, as the needs of IV and XV Corps grew, “V” Force was organised into two zones—Assam and the Arakan. Assam Zone had six groups on the northern and central fronts, the “fighting element” being provided by the Assam Rifles. The Arakan Zone had three groups, one of which acted as a link between the two Zones. The fighting element of the Arakan force was often provided by the Tripura Rifles (Indian State Forces).

Lushai Hills Op Command (1st Battalion Area)

In May 1942 Lushai Area Command, designated No 5 Command, began recruiting Lushai tribals and training them at Aizawl. These armed Lushais came to be called “Pasaltha”; each village produced its own batch of Pasaltha.

The platoons of 1st Battalion initially assigned to the Lushai Op Command were Nos 1-8 Platoons. Even before the first batch of Pasaltha had completed its training, Captain

Bowman of "V" Force (an I.C.S. Officer) established a forward camp along the border crests and ridges south-east of Tuipang. Three platoons allotted to this column were the two already located in the South Lushai Hills—No 3 (Jemadar Kul Bahadur Chhettri) and No 7 (Jemadar Ratan Sing Chhettri); and No 6 from Aizawl (Subedar Pakunga Lushai). Tuipang was to be column HQ, with its supply base established at Lungleh (Jemadar Lachhuman Gurung). From this column, patrols were to be sent out to reconnoitre suitable sites for ambushing the Japanese if and when they advanced into the Lushai Hills from the Arakan and the Kaladan Valley. At this stage more "V" Force officers were posted to take command of the Assam Rifles platoons. Lieut-Colonel W.J. Parsons (later awarded the D.S.O.) was appointed commander of No 5 Op Command, with his HQ at Aizawl.

In October No 1 platoon (Subedar Bure Lama) established a forward post in the North Lushai Hills, at Champhai, a border village on the track from Aizawl to Falam in the Chin Hills. This post provided patrols to the Burma border but they were not, at that juncture, permitted to cross over into the Chin Hills.

In the Central Lushai area Jemadar Bhim Sing Chhettri established No 8 platoon post at Thingsulthiliah, his task being to patrol the villages in the middle range west of the border. This post, however, was later merged with the one at Champhai; and a new outpost was established by No 2 platoon (Jemadar Deb Sing Chhettri) at North Vanlaiphai, about 30 km north of Fort Tregear, to patrol the villages on the upper reaches of the Tyao river, which forms the border with Burma.

By then the Japanese had advanced up to Akyab; and although two campaigns were fought during 1942 and early 1943 in the Buthidaung and Mayu River areas (the British-Indian offensive of September 1942 and the Japanese spring counter-offensive), no element of the Lushai Hills "V" Force took part in these Arakan battles except on their fringes—in the Kaladan Valley, as related later. (It was the Tripura "V" Force that operated with 14th Indian Division in the Arakan campaigns, providing critical Intelligence of Japanese locations on more than one occasion.)

In the middle of 1943 the area of No 5 Op Command was divided into two. The Aizawl Command (No 5) was allotted the area of the North Lushai Hills and placed under Lieut-Colonel W.A. Ord. Lieut-Colonel Parsons's command in the South Lushai Hills was redesignated No 8 Op Command and its four Assam Rifle platoons were concentrated in the south-east corner, around Tuipang. The rest of the platoons of 1 A.R. were deployed at Silchar, Aizawl and Lungleh under Battalion command.

In early 1943, as the Japanese counter-offensive started in the Arakan, No 8 "V" Force was finally allowed to cross the border and to send patrols into south-western Burma, particularly into the Kaladan Valley. At the end of January a column under Lieut-Colonel Parsons including No 3 Platoon (Havildar Kul Bahadur Sahi) and No 4 Platoon (Subedar Laxman Gurung) was ordered to move to Salechua in the upper Kaladan Valley. The first part of the move was made on foot; the second, from Saletwa to Salechua, in boats. At Salechua olive green uniform was air dropped on the force to enable Assam Rifles personnel to be dressed similar to other members of "V" Force. Reconnaissance patrols found no presence of the enemy.

By mid-May the Japanese had pushed 26 Indian Division out of the Mayu-Kalapanzin area and had moved up to the line Buthidaung-Maungdaw. It was appreciated that they would soon send advance elements up the Kaladan Valley. It was No 8 "V" Force that was sent to intercept any such northward enemy move.

Lieut-Colonel Parsons received orders to advance to Daletme (about 50 km north of Kaladan village). The Force took to its boats again and reached Daletme on 27 August, where it had its first encounter with the Japs. The enemy was only a small party and withdrew before the column reached the village. Parsons established a forward base at Daletme for further patrolling southwards. On 30 September a patrol under two British officers registered the first skirmish with the enemy when it bumped into an enemy camp in Mangseu village. A fire-fight ensued but the Japs withdrew when the patrol began to encircle the village, leaving behind 6-7 dead. No casualties were suffered by our patrol.

The next move was a further advance down the river to Paletwa—more than half-way to Kaladan village, an important track-junction on the west bank of the river. “V” Force again took to their boats but by then they had done this once too often. The fleet was ambushed on a S-bend in the river and nine men were killed. The river column was dispersed, so that it had to withdraw in bits and pieces. It was five days before the various groups collected together again at Daletme.

At Daletme the column was reinforced by No 6 Platoon. Weeks of vigorous patrolling followed but after that the only action against the enemy was an attack on No 4 Platoon by a party of Japanese, who were repulsed with losses. The Japs made no further move to advance north up the Kaladan; and “V” Force returned to Tuipang in June 1944.

Meanwhile, 1st Battalion HQ at Aizawl had been given the responsibility of training Lushai recruits for an *ad hoc* unit designated No 98 Infantry Company (The Lushai Scouts). Officers for this new unit were sent from No 5 Op Command; the V.C.O.s and most of the N.C.O.s came from the Lushais of Burma.

Lushai Brigade

On March 26, 1944, just after the Japanese unleashed their offensive against Imphal and Kohima, General Slim, G.O.C.-in-C. Fourteenth Army, issued orders for the raising of a self-contained Infantry brigade for operations in the Lushai Hills area. It was to consist of three regular Indian battalions and detachments from the Assam Rifles “V” Force and Chin Levies. The Infantry battalions were 1/9 Royal Jats, 8/13 Frontier Force Rifles, 7/14 Punjab and (later) 1 Bihar. The Brigade was given its own allotment of mules and porters.

Brigadier Marindin, Commander “V” Force, was appointed Lushai Brigade Commander. He took with him all the eight platoons of 1 Assam Rifles that had been under his command in Nos 5 and 8 Ops Commands. The Lushai Scouts also subsequently joined Lushai Brigade. The first role allotted to the Brigade was to take over responsibility for watch and ward on the approaches to the Surma valley through the Lushai and Chin Hills. Subsequently, when the Japanese from

the Kalembo area invaded India, Lushai Brigade was given the task of disrupting enemy traffic on the Tiddim-Imphal road.

On April 2, after Imphal was invested by the Japs, Lieut-General Stopford, G.O.C. XXXIII Corps, was given operational control of all troops in the Brahmaputra and Surma valleys, with the task of preventing Japanese penetration into these valleys. Lushai Brigade was placed under his command, its task being the security of the southern end of XXXIII Corps area of responsibility, with the special role of preventing the Japanese from infiltrating into East Bengal. Platoons of 1 Assam Rifles with Brigadier Marindin thus became part of a self-contained force from which (it was ordered) no troops were to be taken out to reinforce any other part of the front. On 8 April, by which date XXXIII Corps had been sent to Dimapur, General Slim took Lushai Brigade directly under Fourteenth Army's command.

The war situation was developing so fast that Lushai Brigade soon changed hands again. The Japanese offensive had been halted and the siege of Kohima raised. Although May to June was a period of attrition warfare, July finally saw the Japanese utterly defeated and on the run. On April 10, General Slim ordered a general counter-offensive to pursue the Jap 33rd Division and the Yamamoto Detachment retreating from the edge of the Imphal plain and making for the Chindwin.

The role of dislodging the Japanese from the edge of the Imphal plain and pursuing them down to the Chindwin was allotted jointly to IV and XXXIII Corps, the former along the axis Bishenpur-Tiddim-Lushai-Chin Hills and the latter down the Tamu road and the Ukhrul tracks. For this role Lushai Brigade was placed under IV Corps' command. The task given to it was to establish bases within striking distance of the Tiddim road along the stretch from Shuganu down to the Manipur River bridge near MS 120. From these bases attacks were to be made on the road at night (the Japanese had stopped using the road during the day because of Allied air attacks) and thus to "dislocate the Tiddim road as a Japanese L of C".

The counter-offensive down the Tiddim road took off in

early July. By the middle of the month 5 Indian Division had reached Moirang, some 15 km south of Bishenpur. Tiddim was still over 150 km away, but Lushai Brigade swung into action far to the south in the Chin Hills. Its patrols attacked Japanese troops and camps on the Tiddim road well to the rear of the retreating units of Jap 33rd Division. They also carried out raids in the area of the bridge over the Manipur River and in the gorge where the road follows the Manipur River half-way between Tongzang and Tiddim.

The Official War History adds an interesting comment regarding Lushai Brigade's role at this stage of the operations:

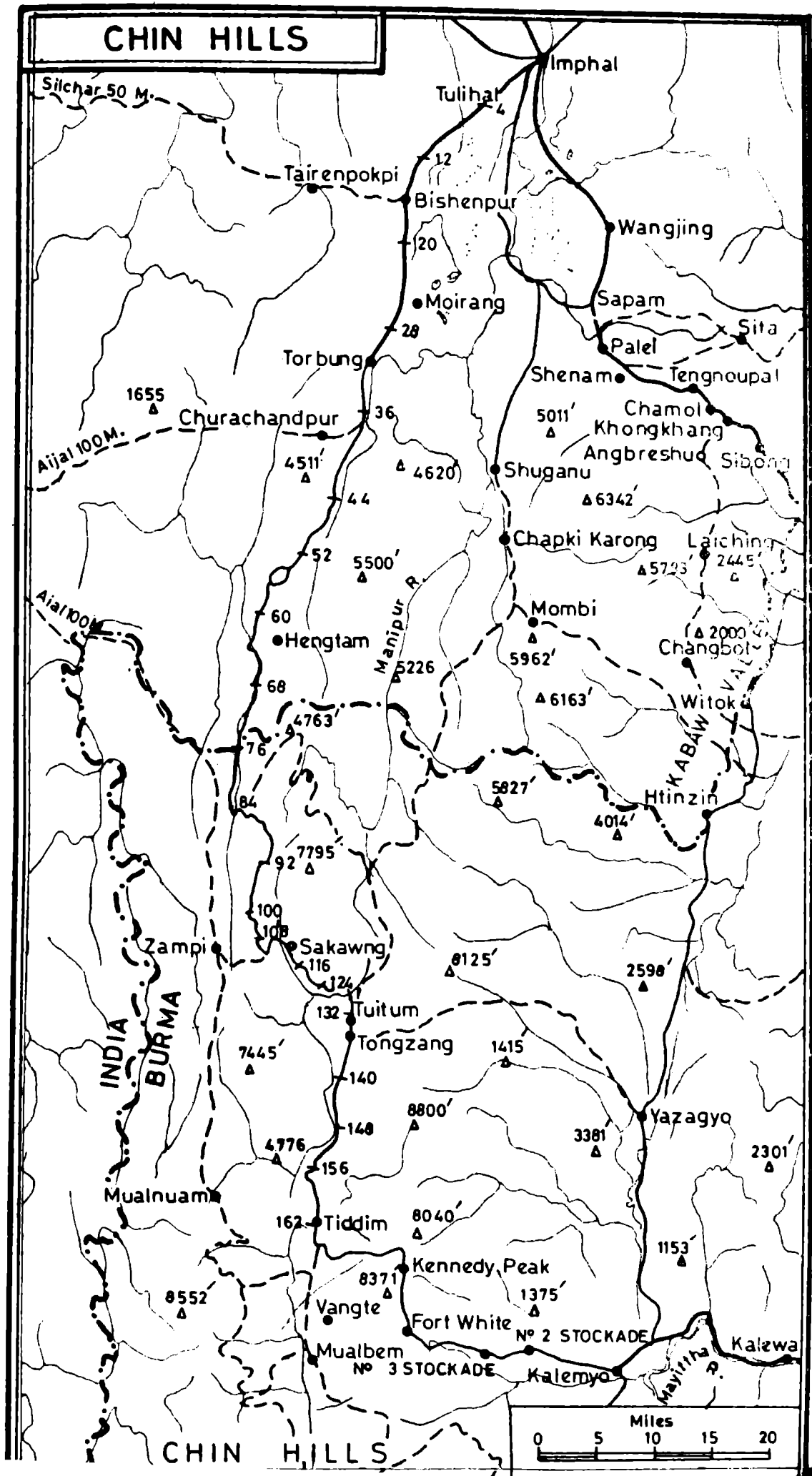
HQ Fourteenth Army suggested the establishment of a two-battalion (Lushai Brigade) road-block to hold out for a month until 5th Division made contact with it, but abandoned the idea when it became clear that it involved such a great change in the operational policy of the Brigade that it would be some three weeks before the block could be established and that in the meanwhile all the operations just started would have to be given up.

Late in July HQ IV Corps was withdrawn to Ranchi to reorganise in order to be in readiness for the autumn campaign; and HQ XXXIII Corps became responsible for the whole of the Central Front. This change in command caused a delay in the pursuit operations so that a large part of the Japanese force broke contact. Many formations and units had also been withdrawn to their rest areas—but the platoons of 1st Battalion with Lushai Brigade continued in the thick of it, raiding enemy encampments and ambushing retreating groups between MS 126 and MS 150 (about 30 kms north of Tiddim).

It was only on this front that mobile operations continued throughout the monsoons. By the end of July the remnants of Japanese divisions were retreating in great disorder and their 1st "Indian National Army" Division had disintegrated. Only 33 Japanese Division and the Yamamoto Detachment on the Tiddim and Tamu roads retained their cohesion—and they still had plenty of fight left in them.

On August 7 General Stopford issued fresh orders for an offensive down the Tiddim road to MS 126, where the road crossed from the west to the east bank over the Manipur

CHIN HILLS



River bridge. 5 Indian Division was to lead the offensive from the north; Lushai Brigade, deployed in the Chin Hills 150 kms to the south, was to cooperate with 5 Division by harassing and disrupting the retreat of the Japanese towards Tiddim. Thereafter, Kalemyo was laid down as the grand objective; the capture of Falam and Haka were subsidiary tasks for Lushai Brigade.

The platoons of Assam Rifles with Lushai Brigade that did most of the fighting from March 1944 to the capture of Tiddim were Nos 1, 2, 8, 9 and 10. In the earlier battles, during the Japanese 33rd Division's offensive up the Tiddim road, they had dogged the enemy and sent back vital information to HQ Fourteenth Army, ambushed small parties on the road and even attacked isolated encampments. One of the 1st Battalion platoons (under Lieut Woods of "V" Force) is reported to have captured the first Japanese prisoner of war taken in this sector. Then, after the battle had turned and the British-Indian forces were chasing the enemy down the Tiddim road, "V" Force elements of Lushai Brigade cooperated with 5 Division harassing enemy movement on the Tiddim road. Operations carried out by individual platoons of 1 Assam Rifles serving in Lushai Brigade during this phase of the campaign are summarised below, based on 1st Battalion's records.

No 1 Platoon (Subedar Bure Lama), originally at Champhai, had crossed the border into the Chin Hills and passed under command of Lieut Jones of "V" Force in the area of Tlangzawl. Its first task there was to establish an observation post at Khaute to keep a watch on the movements of the Japanese force in the Fort White area. From there it moved to Khiaugram, where it mounted an attack on a small Japanese camp at Lotheram, killing a number of the enemy and also capturing a quantity of arms and ammunition. Its next move, after the capture of Tiddim, was to the Myitha Valley leading to the Chindwin.

No 2 Platoon (Subedar Deb Sing Chhettri) had moved from North Vanlaiphai to Champhai in the Lushai Hills and then crossed into the Chin Hills, to come under command of Lieut E.A.C. Pascoe's "V" Force detachment in the area of Teikhang on the Manipur River. It carried out constant patrolling of the Tiddim road axis, laid many ambushes, killed

a number of Japanese and, what is more, destroyed quite a few of enemy vehicles during their advance to Imphal. Subedar Chhettri was awarded the Military Cross and Havildar Aisore Rai the I.D.S.M., while Rifleman Lianthanga Lushai was mentioned in despatches—no mean record for a single (para-military) platoon.

No 8 Platoon had originally been recalled to Battalion HQ at Aizawl whence, after a week's rest, it was taken over by Jemadar Krishna Bahadur Thapa and moved to Khuangphah on the Burma Border. From there it was sent to Vaivet in the Chin Hills, where it established a "V" Force camp. It laid a number of ambushes during the Japanese advance and was subsequently attached to 8/13 Frontier Force Rifles of Lushai Brigade. It moved to Jampi and then advanced southwards along the Lentlang ridge to Klan and then to Falam.

No 9 Platoon (Jemadar Lachhman Thapa and, later, Jemadar Jas Bahadur Limbu) was a replacement platoon sent from Aizawl to Vaivet, where it came under command of Lieut J.S. Halliday of "V" Force. It fell to this platoon's lot to take part in a long-range outflanking operation in early September 1944, when Lushai Brigade was temporarily put under command of 5 Division after the two formations made contact on the Tiddim road at MS 83.

The Counter-offensive Role

Early in the third week of August General Briggs, G.O.C. 5 Division, was faced with the prospect of forcing a crossing of the Manipur River at Tuitam. In early September he decided to do this by a combination of a frontal assault by 161 Brigade from the west and a long-range left hook from the east bank of the river. To get forces positioned on the east bank he decided to send 123 Indian Infantry Brigade all the way back—150 kms—to Shuganu, through Imphal and Palel, and then to come south again (there being no other bridge over the river between Tuitam and Imphal). From Shuganu (through Mombi and Lenakot, names that would have been familiar to Assam Rifles personnel of a generation ago) 123 Brigade was to advance southwards, by foot along mountain tracks, to come in behind the enemy in the area of Tongzang

near the Manipur River Bridge. The Brigade was to be air-maintained all the way. The task given it was to destroy the Japanese on the east bank of the river. No 9 Platoon, with its own complement of mules, porters and interpreters, went with this Brigade as part of its "V" Force detachment, to act as a screen during the march southwards. The Brigade was divided up into four successive columns for this arduous march through hills and jungles at the height of the rainy season. Each column was to move a day's march behind the one in front; each was allotted a screen of "V" Force personnel.

The leading column moved off from the Shuganu area on 4 September. No resistance was encountered during the march and, mercifully, the weather permitted the R.A.F. to drop supplies every day except on 9 September, when there was a violent storm. Leading elements of No 9 Platoon came out near Tuitam on 12 September and reported enemy positions at Tongzang, two kilometres to the south—astride MS 127. Elsewhere there was no contact with Japanese troops.

By this time 161 Brigade had moved up to the bridge site on the west bank and, finding the bridge destroyed, spent two days trying to throw a line across the Manipur River—a 100 metre width of torrents and whirlpools. It was not until 16 September that a company from 161 Brigade managed to ferry itself across the river.

While "V" Force elements kept in contact with the enemy, particularly their eastern flank, the rest of 161 Brigade shuttle-ferried across the Manipur River to join up with 123 Brigade on the east bank. By then the Japanese, after directing some intensive shelling at the Indian forces during 18-20 September, had decided to fall back down the road. The Manipur Bridge operation was over.

At that stage No. 9 Platoon was joined by No 10 Platoon from the west bank and together they moved to Dolhaung on the eastern side of Kennedy Peak. Lieut Lewis took over command of both platoons, Lieut Halliday having been sent off to take charge of a platoon of the Lushai Scouts for its move to Kalewa. Nos 9 and 10 Platoons of the 1st Assam Rifles then rejoined Lushai Brigade.

No 10 Platoon (Subedar Aswidhan Rai) was also a replacement platoon sent to "V" Force from Aizawl. It joined

“V” Force in the Chin Hills in early 1944, in the area of Hnahlan, where it came under command of Lieut S.G. Cameron of “V” Force. Its first operation was to attack a small encampment of Japanese troops in the area of Khuang-phah village, but just as the assault was to be mounted the enemy withdrew. This detachment of “V” Force was then sent north to enter Manipur State, where it was attached to 1/9 Royal Jat (of Lushai Brigade) operating in that area with the special task of fighting delaying actions during the Japanese initial advance up the Tiddim road towards Imphal. The Platoon laid a series of ambushes in the Churachandpur area and killed a number of Japanese including a Supply Officer, an operation for which Jemadar Rai was awarded the M.C. When the tide turned No 10 Platoon moved south again, crossed the Manipur River with 161 Brigade in mid-September and joined up with No 9 Platoon, as already related. Both platoons then reverted to Lushai Brigade for further operations towards Falam and Haka—and, later, towards Kalemyo. Havildar Lal Sing Rana of this Platoon was awarded the I.D.S.M. (See map on p. 132).

The next phase of the operations in the Chin Hills was the capture of the Tiddim-Falam-Haka area, an operation undertaken jointly by 5 Indian Division and Lushai Brigade. The former was to advance against Tiddim on a broad front, moving air-maintained along mountain tracks; while the latter operated further to the south, on the left flank and in the rear of the Japanese, strung out on an even broader front—along a long line running south from the Tiddim area towards Falam. Here again, elements of “V” Force acted as the eyes and ears of Lushai Brigade. An additional role given to it was to collect information about Japanese strengths and intentions in the general area of the Myitha River, a tributary of the Chindwin. The Myitha flows from south to north along an open valley parallel to the Chindwin. Kalemyo is situated on the Myitha, just west of its confluence with the Chindwin at Kalewa.

“V” Force patrols with 5 Division probed skilfully into the Japanese positions south of Tiddim. In fact one of them probed right through them, making contact with 3/2 Punjab south-west of Tiddim. Other patrols raided and ambushed

Japanese parties near Bamboo Camp, inflicting many casualties. On 10 October they had another major success when they killed 12 Japanese near Pine Tree Camp on the Fort White-Falam road. Continuing the following week "V" Force elements probed steadily eastwards along a broad front, threatening the Japanese L of C to Kalemyo. By this time the enemy, pressed by both 5 Division and Lushai Brigade, had begun pulling out eastwards. Tiddim fell to 5 Division and on 17 October troops of the Lushai Brigade entered Falam without opposition. Two days later Haka also fell to them. The Lushai Hills were at last cleared of the Japanese.

After the capture of Tiddim 5th Division began to close in on Kennedy Peak and Fort White, while Lushai Brigade on its right was ordered to move eastwards into Myitha Valley to isolate Kalemyo from the south. At the same time 11th East African Division (from Tamu) was advancing towards Kalemyo from the north through the Kabaw Valley. Thus, the Japanese 33rd Division, whose task was to delay the British-Indian advance along the Tiddim-Kalemyo road in order to cover the withdrawal of 15 and 31 Jap Divisions across the Chindwin, had continuously to look over both its shoulders to avoid being doubly outflanked—from the north by the East Africans and from the south by the Lushais. In the circumstances they offered remarkably stubborn resistance to the advance of 5 Division; and it was not until 8 November that Fort White was captured.

Capture of Gangaw

Lushai Brigade spent a few days in the Falam and Haka areas, concentrating and reorganising for the next phase of operations. The Assam Rifles platoons with "V" Force were again reformed into their two original groups—No 5 Op Command and No 8 Op Command. Since there was a shortage of troops by this time, "V" Force was destined to play a more "regular" part in the forthcoming operations. The Corps plan was to advance to the line of the Myitha River and establish a firm base at Yeshin. From there columns would be sent out in three directions; the Falam Levies to the north; No 5 Op Command of "V" Force and the

Lushai Scouts eastwards to the Chindwin; and No 8 Op Command and 1 Bihar to move south, from a firm base at Kan and operate southwards towards Gangaw. The eventual aim of Lushai Brigade was to concentrate for an attack on Gangaw.

Lushai Brigade, after its short "rest" period, moved east into the Myitha Valley according to plan and without serious opposition. By mid-November the Brigade was approaching the river-line on a broad front—from its confluence with the Manipur River southwards to Kan and Gangaw. Soon thereafter 5 Division's leading elements reached the outskirts of Kalembo where they made contact with a patrol of the 11th East African Division. The closing of the two gigantic arms of the pincer, however, failed to trap the Japanese 33rd Division, which retreated slowly and methodically and escaped encirclement.

5 Op Command reported its area clear of the enemy and was then ordered to move south. 8 Op Command, with 1 Bihar, crossed the river on the night of 26/27 November but as it began to move southwards along the river towards Kan, it encountered strong opposition along the east bank, forcing the column to recross to the west bank. Soon thereafter the Japanese evacuated Kan and the column followed the retreating enemy towards Gangaw.

Then followed a phase of operations in which Lushai Brigade was called upon to man an important sector of the front and carry out a major offensive, all on its own. So far it had been committed to battle dispersed in battalion groups, without artillery support. Now, because General Slim's sudden change in plan envisaged moving IV Corps secretly down from the north to the Gangaw front for an advance across the Myitha to capture Pakokku, all formations of XXXIII Corps except Lushai Brigade were ordered to pull back to Imphal. The move of IV Corps, to be carried out with the highest secrecy, had not yet started when Lushai Brigade was ordered to deploy at the head of IV Corps' projected line of advance, in contact with the Japanese defences at Gangaw, 160 kms south of Kalembo.

IV Corps' plan was to move 28th East African Brigade and 7th Indian Division down from Tamu for the capture of Pakokku, but since the deplorable state of the road, parti-

cularly forward of Kalemmyo, would delay the concentration of these two formations, Lushai Brigade was ordered to capture Gangaw and then lead the advance towards Pauk and Pakokku.

Gangaw was the only place where the British-Indian forces (Lushai Brigade) were in contact with the enemy at that time, the rest of the Japanese forces having withdrawn eastwards towards the line of the Irrawaddy River. The Japanese strength around Gangaw was about a weak infantry battalion, with two companies holding a strong natural position at Gangaw and the rest holding strong points to the north and east of the town.

The strength of Lushai Brigade at that time was down to its lowest ever. The two infantry battalions together could muster a total of no more than 1,200 bayonets; the only other fighting elements were four platoons of Assam Rifles. The rest of the irregulars—the Chin Levies, Lushai Scouts and the rest of "V" Force were still out in the mountainous region to the east or in the south probing towards Tilin.

As Lushai Brigade had no artillery, a set-piece attack was out of the question. Brigadier Marindin therefore decided on a two-axis probing attack: 1 Bihar with 4 platoons of Assam Rifles under command was to move through the hills and establish itself to the east of Gangaw. 1/9 Jat was to advance on Gangaw from the north. The only reserve Brigade HQ could muster consisted of one platoon each of the Assam Rifles and the Lushai Scouts.

Lushai Brigade's attack on Gangaw began on 8 December. The Jats advanced southwards along both banks of the river, meeting only minor opposition. Attacking with purely infantry tactics, on the fire-and-movement principle, the Battalion's progress was cautious; the aim was to test Japanese reactions before closing in on the strong points. On the 11th a determined assault was put in and a few Japanese were killed; but again lack of artillery support proved a grave handicap. Finding the river banks heavily fox-holed and opposition strong, the attack was called off to prevent unnecessary loss of life. Meanwhile, the Biharis and the Assam Rifles took two days to work round to the west. The Assam Rifles platoons under command there began to probe towards

Gangaw. Once the Gangaw position was encircled, it was decided to contain the enemy with a vigorous programme of day and night "jitter" patrolling by the Jats rather than undertake a frontal assault which, without artillery support, would have been unavailing and costly in casualties.

At this stage IV Corps issued orders that Gangaw was to be cleared expeditiously. To enable them to carry out the task a British regiment of 25-pounders was sent forward to support Lushai Brigade, while air strikes were also ordered. To put through the final attack, the Brigade Commander decided to relieve the Jats with the Chin Hills battalion. The former, on their last legs by this time, were brought into Brigade reserve. To the east of the Japanese main defences the Assam Rifles platoons were constantly engaged by the enemy and succeeded in killing quite a few Japanese.

On 30 December, after a particularly heavy air attack by a squadron of Thunderbolts and two squadrons of Hurricane fighter-bombers, phase one of the attack was mounted. The Levies and the Assam Rifles platoons of Brigade reserve put in a bayonet assault and cleared west Gangaw, "the Assam Rifles showing particular dash" (Official Indian War History). The Japanese reacted strongly with artillery and mortar fire and the attack could progress no further.

The second phase of the attack went in on 10 January, with the Chin Hills Battalion attacking from the north, the Bihar Regiment from the west and the Chin Levies and Assam Rifles in the centre. This culminating operation before the start of the IV Corps offensive was witnessed by a distinguished gallery of spectators including Generals Slim and Messervy (Army and Corps Commanders) and General Dan Sultan (American Commander of Northern Combat Area Command). Four squadrons of B/25 medium bombers and four of fighter-bombers supported the attack by attacking the six pin-pointed strong points. "Everything went like clock-work", reports the Official History, "and the Japanese scuttled away after a brief fight." The enemy withdrew eastwards from Gangaw, bypassing the Biharis in the thick jungles around Lema.

According to plan Lushai Brigade was to have led the advance to Pauk; but by then the men were very tired, having

been almost incessantly in action for many weeks. General Messervy therefore decided that the fresh 28th East African Brigade would take over on the fall of Gangaw "using the name, style and codes of the Lushai Brigade" to continue the deception. The Chin Hills Battalion and the Lushai Scouts were to pass on to 7th Indian Division; the Levies and the Assam Rifles platoons were to be withdrawn with Lushai Brigade. This order came into effect on 12 January and the Brigade commenced its withdrawal to Kan.

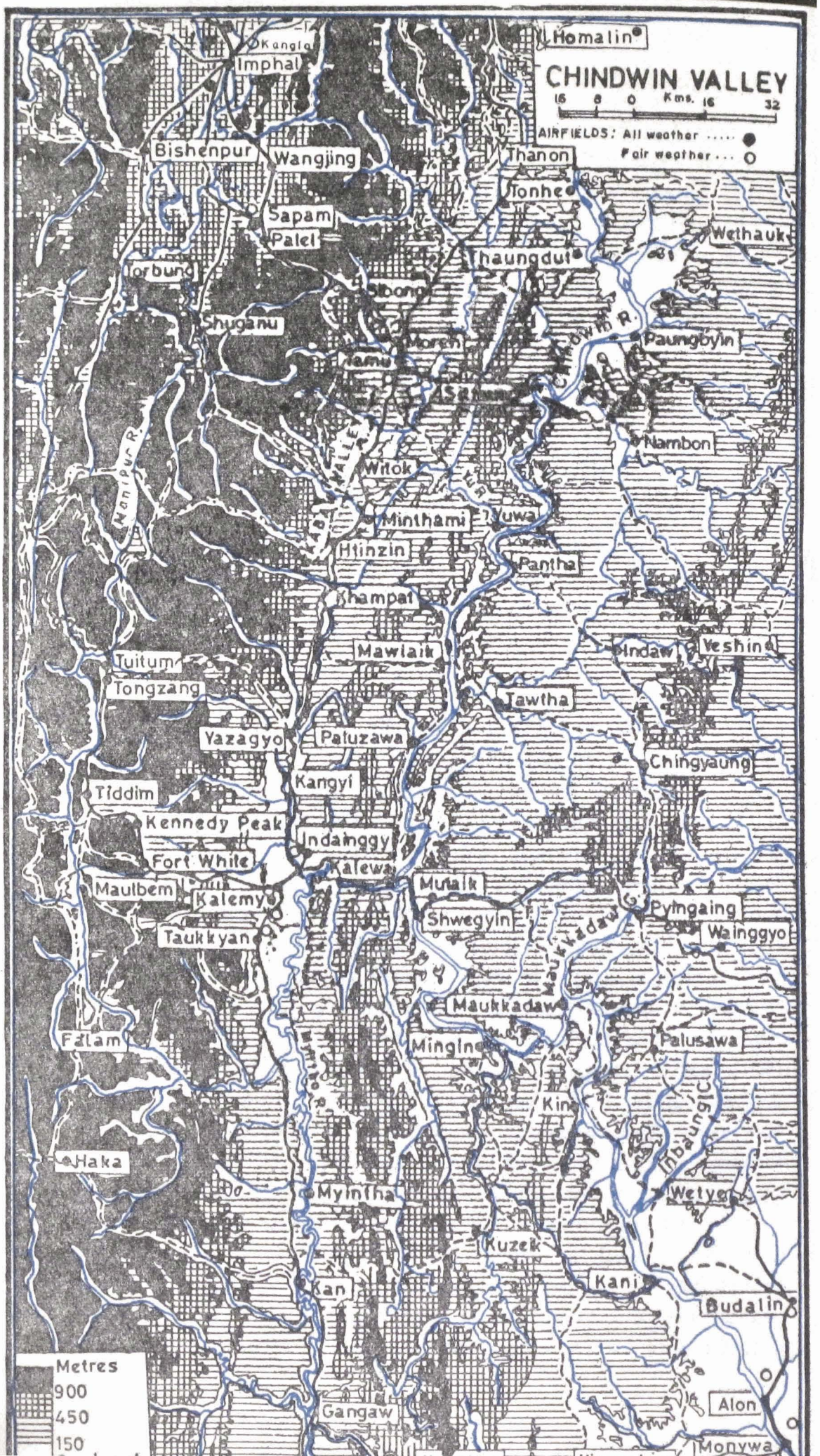
This concludes the story of the exploits of 1st Battalion's platoons with "V" Force in Lushai Brigade. They started as guerillas in the Chin Hills, were constantly in action for nearly a year, carried out innumerable operations against the enemy and inflicted many casualties; and they ended the glorious episode by taking part in a regular Brigade set-piece attack against a prepared Japanese position.

ASSAM RIFLES IN WORLD WAR II

Operations on the Chindwin Front

SPECTACULAR as were the operations carried out by 1st Battalion's platoons in Lushai Brigade, a much more crucial part in the overall Allied design was played by the platoons of 3rd and 4th Assam Rifles. As for 2nd Battalion, initially its platoons were deployed on the Chindwin, in the far north; but they were withdrawn after the United States Forces established an American Area Command in that sector.

It was the platoons of the Kohima and Manipur Battalions (3rd and 4th) which acted as the "eyes" of IV Corps, the Intelligence cover deployed between Tamanthi in the north and the Kabaw Valley approaches near Tamu in the south; and it was they who gave Corps HQ the first accurate information of the Japanese offensive of 1944. After the Japs launched their offensive, these Assam Rifle groups resisted the enemy advance as best as they could; when forced back, they shed their tribal elements and withdrew to the Imphal and Kohima areas to fight defensive battles in these two "boxes" as regular troops. The crowning glory of the Force was the epic performance of seven platoons of 3rd Battalion (with some elements of 4th Battalion) in the defence of Kohima under their Commanding Officer Lieut-Colonel G.A.E. Keene and their Subedar Major Sardar Bahadur Bal Bahadur Gurung. And their exploits continued thereafter, though the employment of Assam Rifles platoons as members of "V" Force was supposed to have ceased after General Slim's offensive crossed the Burma border. By then they had proved themselves so useful in the Intelligence role that original plans were unceremoniously disregarded—and Assam Rifles detachments were employed as the forerunners of 14th



Army's pursuit across the Chindwin, into Central Burma and beyond—to the border of Siam.

“V” Op Command No 1

In the far north, astride the Patkoi Range, 2nd Battalion provided four platoons for “V” Force in the northern sector, as part of Op Command No 1 (Ledo), though in this sector the presence of the Japanese was minimal. (Earlier in the war, after the initial Japanese advance of 1942 had come to a halt roughly along the Chindwin, the Allied plan for the northern sector was centred on the construction of the Ledo Road, which President Chiang Kai-Shek of China had urged during a visit to New Delhi in February 1942. The projected alignment of the road was to be Ledo-Pangsau Pass-Hukawng Valley-Mogaung-Myitkyina.)

Starting in August 1942, four platoons from 2 Assam Rifles were seconded to No 1 Op Command:

No 2 Platoon (Jemadar Chhabilal Limbu) 19 October 1942;
No 5 Platoon (Jemadar Bharatram Gurung) 22 September 1942;

No 9 Platoon (Subedar Ratnabhadur Limbu) 24 August 1942;

No 10 Platoon (Subedar Nandabir Gurung) 15 September 1942.

No 2 Platoon proceeded from Margherita to Machum where it came under command of Lieut Brampston of “V” Force. No 5 Platoon went from Margherita to Pepu and later to Khalak Ga where it came under Captain J.R. Wilson of “V” Force. No 9 Platoon went from Margherita to Leju, where it established a protective outpost for forward patrolling. This outpost operated under command of its own Jemadar as no “V” Force officer was attached to No 9 Platoon. No 10 Platoon went from Margherita to Punyang, Pepu and Khalak Ga, also under Captain Wilson's command.

The platoons under Wilson were the only ones that had a brush with the enemy. They operated in the Pepu-Khalak Ga area from October 1942 till April 1943, when they left “V” Force. Wilson's report on them was:

From October 1942 until the withdrawal in April 1943 these two platoons have played a most important part in all operations and other duties. We arrived in the area to find enemy forces in occupation of Shingbuiyang. The subsequent patrolling and outpost duties and constant guards fell to the lot of the Assam Rifles . . . during the entire period. They have worked in enemy country and their work has been invaluable. With clothing worn out and rations more often short of scale than not, they have been willing and cheerful throughout.

Parts of No 10 Platoon were holding the flank position at Shamdak Ku when that post was attacked by enemy on 6 March. Their behaviour under fire was excellent and their Bren Guns were certainly responsible for enemy casualties during events. In April this year their steady efficient services continued. I am proud to have had them under my Command.

In April and May, after the U.S. Forces established their own command in the north, designated Northern Combat Area Command, "V" Force platoons of 2nd Assam Rifles returned to Battalion HQ—all except No 9, which returned in August. All personnel were granted one month's special war leave in recognition of the arduous duties they had performed.

That was not, however, the sum total of 2nd Battalion's contribution to the war. Two major reconnaissance operations were carried out for the Army during 1943, under orders of G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Army. The first of these, code-named "Yellow Line Project", was a long-range expedition to survey possible routes from the extreme north of Burma, over the Dipukh la pass, into the Walong valley—in case the garrison at Fort Hertz was forced to withdraw to India along that axis. Preparations for the expedition took many weeks but because Japanese pressure on Fort Hertz did not materialise as foreseen, the route was changed.

As an alternative a route via Tibet was chosen—from Denning to the Tibetan border by way of Mizong. An additional task of the patrol was to report on the possibility of air drops along the route. Accordingly, Lieut P.P.P. Hutchins, Jemadar Chandrabahadur Gurung and 13 other ranks of No 4 Platoon, together with a Medical Officer (Captain Lax), a medical platoon and wireless section set out on 17 April 1943. The task took over a month to complete and the patrol returned on 23 May 1943.

It was decided a month later that, as an alternative to the Denning route, the evacuation from Fort Hertz may have to take place over the Chaukan Pass—the “Green Line Project”. Accordingly, Major Keene with two platoons (No 1 under Subedar Tark Chandra Rajbanshi and No 6 under Jemadar Amarbahadur Gurung) set out from HQ on 5 April and crossed over the pass into North Burma. He spent two months on the job and returned on 8 June 1943.

Thereafter, No 1 Op Command became more or less redundant, because the American Area Command established its own Intelligence network with the help of Kachins of North Burma; however, individuals from the Assam Rifles were often used by the American Command, both officers and men. In November 1943, 2nd Battalion (and some platoons of 5th Battalion) reverted to the I.G. Police, Assam.

The main reason for the reversion of 2nd Battalion to the Government of Assam just at that juncture was that the Central Government had planned to institute a “special policy” in regard to the northern border of Assam. It had been foreseen for some time in Delhi that developments in China would inevitably have their effect on Tibet; and that special vigilance measures would have to be taken to safeguard the border with Tibet. Accordingly, during the next two years permanent Assam Rifles posts were established at Karbo, Riga, Pangin and Pasighat in Siang valley; and at Walong, Changwinti, Hayuliang and Denning in Lohit valley. These were the first permanent moves deep into what is now known as N.E.F.A. Maintenance of these posts imposed a considerable strain on the Administration—until the R.A.F. agreed to air-supply these far-flung localities.

“V” Op Command No 2

By early 1943 the six platoons of 3rd Battalion (Major West) protecting U.S.A.A.F. observation posts in the Naga Hills had passed under command of “V” Op Command No 2 at Kohima, commanded by Lieut-Colonel Lightfoot. In addition to providing protection for O.P.s, some of these platoons had to cross the Chindwin to go to the assistance of isolated parties of the first Wingate expedition when they

began their withdrawal to India. Naik Dhansuha Gurung was Mentioned in Despatches for covering the withdrawal of one such party with his section. The timely action by him in repulsing a Japanese patrol in hot pursuit of the Chindit party saved the latter from being killed or captured.

The main role allotted to 3rd Battalion's No 2 "V" Ops was to organise the area between Tamanthi in the north and Homalin in the south for Intelligence activities. In the event of an invasion, No 2 Command was to stay behind and harass the Japanese L of C.

Later in the year, when the U.S.A.A.F. established additional forward posts at Nayasia, Shagot, Helipong, Ponyu and Late, the Battalion was asked to provide protection for them also. As these outposts were located in "unadministered" territory, the Assam Rifles platoons had to provide them protection not only from the Japanese but also from the local tribals—because at this stage of the war the Nagas and other tribes like those in the Chin Hills had turned somewhat hostile. They had witnessed with considerable consternation the plight of the defeated and routed British and Indian troops fleeing Burma, chased by the Jap invaders. Seeing the British on the run, their confidence as well as their loyalty had come under strain. It was only when the British regrouped in Manipur and began to reorganise and man their defences in a determined manner that this strain was eased and loyalties restored.

In November 1943 a "V" Force patrol of a platoon (from 3rd Battalion) based at Fort Keary (30 kms north-east of Ukhrul) was the first to encounter the Japanese in the Homalin area. This encounter provided the first indication that the enemy were back in the area in strength. The patrol also captured some documents which revealed that the enemy in that area belonged to the 31st Japanese Division, the first indication that a fresh division had been inducted (in place of the old 18th Japanese Division).

In December 1943 Rfn Lule Angami of 3rd Assam Rifles, working under No 2 "V" Force, earned much fame by his ingenuity and initiative which resulted in a group of the "Indian National Army" (I.N.A.) being captured. The Japanese were at that time carrying out a major reconnaissance

programme for their spring offensive; as a part of this programme they had sent out parties from the I.N.A. to infiltrate into the Naga Hills and Assam on path-finding and sabotage roles.

Lule Angami had been taken prisoner by the Japanese in May 1943 while out on a patrol. After capture he feigned a change of loyalty and offered to guide one of the I.N.A. groups through the Naga Hills into Assam. He led the group to a point about 50 kms from Kohima and then, abandoning his feigned role, he slipped away and made swiftly back for 3rd Battalion HQ with information about the location and intention of the I.N.A. men. A patrol from Battalion HQ moved out immediately and quickly laid, by dawn of the next day, a series of ambushes astride the main routes leading towards Dimapur. By 1000 hrs on 24 December, the I.N.A. patrol consisting of one Jemadar, one Havildar and one sepoy (all ex-Indian Army) had been put in the bag.

No 2 Op Command's "V" patrols, called upon to provide protection for U.S.A.A.F. Observation Posts, were being stretched further and further eastwards into North Burma as it became necessary to cover the enemy's northern airfields. Typical of the spirit of Assam Rifles "V" Force personnel is the story of a platoon of 3 A.R. (Subedar Bindraman Rai) under the overall command of Lieut Godfrey of "V" Force which was guarding an Observation Post in village Mompā across the Chindwin River from Homalin. On the night of 23/24 December, a Japanese force of about 20-25 crept up to the perimeter and attacked the post. The sentry was able to raise the alarm just before he was killed and so alerted the platoon in good time. Although the perimeter had been breached and the Post HQ was under assault, the enemy were beaten back after hand-to-hand fighting with *khukris* and bayonets. A second attack soon followed and this too was repulsed. Then a third and even more determined attack was launched and again penetrated into the Post HQ site, but again the *khukris* won the day and the enemy were flung back. However, in the process they managed to drag back with them one of the wounded defenders—Rfn Jamosin Kuki, whom they took away. The surprise and joy in camp can be imagined when a tottering but grinning Jamosin crept back into camp next

morning: he had given his captors the slip soon after being captured.

On the next night the Japanese put in another attack but when that also failed to carry the post the Japanese commander knew he was beaten and gave the signal to withdraw. Lieut Godfrey had been wounded by then and the Subedar was in command. Loath to see the Japs get away so easily Bindraman immediately organised a small pursuit party and, leaving a N.C.O. in command, set off in hot pursuit to harass the retreating enemy, though after a while he lost his quarry in the jungle.

The platoon suffered two killed and eleven wounded but chalked up one of the best actions in the annals of the Assam Rifles. Subedar Bindraman Rai was awarded the I.O.M., Havildar Ast Bahadur Gurung and Rfn Gandharv Rajbanshi the I.D.S.M. and Rfn Kharka Bahadur Chhettri the Military Medal. Few actions during the war in Burma could claim such a high *per capita* rate of gallantry awards.

By that stage No 2 "V" Force (HQ at Fort Keary) had established dominance over all the major tracks that led from the Chindwin westwards to Kohima and the Imphal road—the Tmanthi-Layshi track, the Fort Keary-Jessami-Kohima track, the Kongai track and others.

By late February it was fast becoming obvious from Japanese concentrations along the Chindwin that a major offensive was in the offing. HQ IV Corps made plans to meet this attack by pulling in troops that were too far forward and concentrating them for a defensive posture. Accordingly, Brigadier Marindin, who was at that time on a tour of No 2 Op Command area, issued instructions for a reorganisation of "V" Force. A few days later Major N. Stanley was given command of No 2 "V" Ops and began his reorganisation. However, the Japanese struck within three days of his taking over and Stanley just managed to pull back in time to withdraw his force with 116 Brigade towards Kohima. Subsequent exploits of Nos 2 and 3 Ops Commands and of 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles are recounted jointly in the section on the Kohima-Imphal battles.

“V” Op Command No 3

Captain Murray of 4th Battalion had been transferred to “V” Force in May 1942 and given the task of preparing the infrastructure for the organisation of No 3 Op Command in the Manipur area. This Command was allotted the crucial role of acting as the eyes and ears of IV Corps along the stretch of the Chindwin from Homalin in the north down to Pantha, the most obvious assembly area for a possible Japanese offensive. Thus, No 3 “V” Force was virtually made responsible for the Intelligence security of the Imphal plain, the Corps vital area. Luckily for 4th Battalion, Murray was promoted Lieut-Colonel and appointed commander of this Op Command, an unusual occurrence in “V” Force, as explained earlier. After raising, HQ No 3 “V” Ops moved forward to Sensam and, later still, to Sakok in Angouching.

Four platoons of 4th Battalion were initially allotted to No 3 Op Command. The platoon commanders were Subedars Basante Thapa, Nakulman Rai, Indra Lal Rai and Bom Bahadur Gurung. At first their task was to occupy posts in the mountains east and south-east of the plain. Later, when the close defence of the Imphal area had been properly established, they moved forward to the Kabaw Valley to patrol both banks of the Chindwin.

During the period when Imphal was being organised as a major base, Battalion HQ of 4 A.R. was much beset by numerous calls for guards for every conceivable purpose. So heavy were its obligations that a proper system of reliefs became impossible and some guards remained out, without relief, for as long as six weeks at a time. Important among the vital points and installations that were guarded by the Assam Rifles were: HQ IV Corps, Imphal airstrip, the Power House, the Waterworks, hospitals, petrol and supply dumps, Ordnance establishments and various workshops. In addition, numerous escorts had to be found for a variety of purposes—some more welcome than others. Among the former was the one which escorted Brigadier Felix Williams, Commander of “V” Force, for his tour of the Chin Hills early in 1943.

It was Subedar (later Captain) T. Lama who offered the suggestion of doing a swap with the Kalibahadur Regiment

that resulted in the Battalion's escape from these guard duties. The Kalibahadur (a battalion of the Nepalese Contingent) had been deployed forward in the Kabaw Valley; but because it was a condition of their secondment to the Indian Army that they would not be sent across the Indo-Burma border, their operational usefulness was limited. Subedar Lama suggested to the C.O. that 4th Battalion and the Kalibahadur should switch roles—a proposal that was promptly approved by HQ IV Corps. So the Nepalese got the guards and duties in Imphal; and 4th Battalion was able to provide eight platoons (half its strength) to "V" Force; it was then that they moved down to the Kabaw Valley. As far as 4th Battalion was concerned, its Imphal HQ thereafter became only a base for administration, rest and refitting, though this in itself was a demanding responsibility. It meant stocking for and rationing of four hundred men over L of C stretching to 150 kms—by three-ton trucks, then transferring to 15-cwts, then to jeeps and finally to the backs of Naga and Garo porters.

HQ No 3 "V" Force was first established at Moreh (just short of Tamu) and later moved to the village of Mombi, just across the Burma border. These eight platoons of 4th Assam Rifles were disposed in four layers: the first three along the line of the Chindwin River, patrolling astride it on both its banks; two platoons on the Angouching Ridge to the west of the river, stretching from north-west of Homalin down to the Upper Kabaw Valley; one platoon at Force HQ; and two disposed in depth at Sayiapao and Chassadh. Since the Japanese had thinned out along the upper Chindwin during 1942-43, there were no major brushes with the enemy, though patrolling activity continued throughout. However, it was as important for HQ IV Corps to know about the thinning out as it was to be informed of their presence.

This then was the picture when the Japanese launched their offensive against Imphal and Kohima in mid-March 1944.

Battle of Imphal Plain

The general plan of Lieutenant-General Mutaguchi's Fifteenth Japanese Army was to launch a surprise invasion of India with three infantry divisions moving along jungle

tracks and self-contained for three weeks. The invasion took off from bases along the Chindwin, stretching from Tamanthi in the north to Kalemio in the south. The Japanese 33rd Division in the south, in the Kalemio area, was to start off a week earlier than the others, attacking westwards along the Tiddim Road in hopes of drawing the British-Indian reserves southwards from the Imphal plain. In addition, Yamamoto Detachment of this Division was to attack northwards from Kalemio towards Tamu and Palel.

31st Japanese Division in the north was to make for Kohima in a three-pronged attack—the northern prong to advance from Tamanthi, via Layshi, to cut the Dimapur road at a point well to the north of Kohima; the central prong to attack along the Fort Keary-Jessami track and make for Kohima; the southern prong to move via Ukhrul and Mao to cut the Imphal road just south of Kohima. This three-brigade attack on Kohima was to constitute the main element of surprise.

15th Japanese Division, the weakest of the three, was to attack from the area of Thaugdut in two prongs: the northern prong to move north from Thaugdut, turn west south of Ukhrul, cut the Imphal-Kohima road at Kangpopki and then attack Imphal from the north; the southern prong would move in the general direction Chassadh-Litan and attack Imphal from the north-west.

It will be seen that whereas No 2 Op Command posts faced what was to become a cohesive front—against the two northernmost prongs of 31st Division—No 3 Op Command (4th Battalion's platoons) faced the prospect of being divided in two—the northern elements being pushed back towards Kohima by 31st Japanese Division and the southern elements being pushed towards the Imphal plain by the 15th Japanese Division and the Yamamoto Detachment on the Tamu road. In fact this is exactly what happened.

As early as in mid-February, No 2 "V" Force had reported that the enemy were collecting rafts in large numbers in the vicinity of Homalin; and a week later it confirmed that power boats had also appeared on the river—thus giving clear indication of Japanese intentions to cross the river in strength. Such evidence could not be ignored and Lieut-General

Scoones, G.O.C. IV Corps, ordered the withdrawal of engineer and labour units from the forward areas. In the southern half of the Corps sector No 3 "V" Force gave timely warning on 15 March that strong enemy columns had crossed the Chindwin and were making for Ukhrul. However, in the Kalemyo sector Assam Rifles patrol reports about Chindwin crossings were viewed with scepticism; the result was that when 33 Japanese Division and the Yamamoto Detachment launched their attacks in the Chin Hills, they achieved considerable surprise against 17 Indian Division (strung out along the Tiddim road) with near disastrous results.

In the Kohima-Manipur sector outposts of "V" Force were ordered to withdraw from their forward positions soon after the Japanese offensive began, because it became impossible to keep them maintained in their forward locations. Even here the Japanese 31st Division achieved a measure of surprise—as regards its direction of thrust, strength and its rate of progress—and IV Corps was caught on the wrong leg. Within four days the left prong of General Sato's Division had reached the vicinity of Ukhrul where, at Ongshim, it attacked a "V" Force post before it had a chance to withdraw. No 3 Op Command's HQ post was also attacked. Both attacks were repulsed, but the posts were nevertheless pulled back because they were not equipped to fight it out with a regular enemy formation.

A 4th Battalion outpost near Ukhrul destroyed its ration dump and withdrew in good time. The ration dump at Kangoi Corner, under Subedar Jeharman Limbu, was also destroyed before withdrawal.

Of the eight platoons of 4th Battalion operating with "V" Force, four returned to Imphal from the 20 Indian Division sector; one continued to hold the Mombi post, whence it successfully functioned as a guerilla force throughout the siege of Imphal. The three northern platoons caught by 31 Division's offensive found the route back to Imphal cut off and had to fight their way to Kohima instead.

Elements of "V" Force thereafter split up according to plan; while Assam Rifle personnel returned to their Battalion HQs, the tribal elements of the Force were ordered to remain behind to continue their harassing roles behind the

enemy "lines", in their own hills and jungles. 4th Battalion personnel came back to Imphal along various tracks and in various guises, sometimes in groups of ten or more, often in twos and threes and at times even singly. The Intelligence that many brought back was of great value to HQ IV Corps.

Typical of these returning parties was one under Nk Kalu Gurung, who returned with four riflemen—all disguised as Kukis. The N.C.O. and his four men had been captured by the Japanese at the start of the offensive, but managed to escape. They remained in hiding in the jungle until the advancing enemy echelons had passed. They then borrowed Kuki clothes from villagers and, once in disguise, tried to make their way back through the Japanese lines. Again they were captured; and this time they were produced before a Japanese officer. During interrogation, they pretended not to understand Hindi, merely repeating "Kuki, Kuki", in a wailing voice. Satisfied that they were only local tribals, the Japanese let them go. They confiscated the rice rations the men were carrying but issued them with a pass entitling them to go through the Japanese lines unmolested—a facility of which they took full advantage to gain as much information as they could as they made their way back to Imphal.

Platoons returning from the fighting could not expect any respite from their toils after they reached Imphal, because the town was feverishly preparing for a siege. The entire area in and around the township had been divided into a number of defensive boxes. 4th Battalion was allotted an area south of the Residency, but its personnel were expected to help out in the preparation of other defensive boxes also. Their first task was to dig weapon pits and other entrenchments in HQ IV Corps area, after which they were sent up the Kohima road to Kanglatongbi to help in the defence of the Ordnance Depot. They were the last to leave the Depot when enemy pressure enforced an evacuation—and endured the added indignity of being bombed and strafed by the R.A.F. as they were breaking out. In this regrettable incident, Jemadar Dhan Bahadur Thapa was wounded.

While the rest of the Battalion got down to improving the defences in their allotted areas (successively code-named "Hippo" and "Robin") the erstwhile "V" Force platoons

were sent off on more mobile operational roles. A large detachment operated in the vicinity of Kangchup, on the Tamenglong road. Other parties were sent to 5th and 20th Indian Divisions to act as guides and interpreters. Yet others were sent on patrol to the surrounding hills. Some of these patrols were given homing pigeons which had been attached to Battalion HQ for training and which came in useful for communication back to HQ.

4th Battalion set up an outpost at Tamenglong, 50 kms west of Imphal, which was gradually built up as a considerable strong point—and just as well. The northern prong of 15 Japanese Division, given the task of infiltrating into the hills west of Imphal, succeeded in cutting the Tamenglong-Imphal road, though the outpost held out till the threat abated. Cut off by road, the post was kept supplied by air and was able to gather valuable enemy information from the surrounding villages and to send it back to HQ by wireless.

Battle of Kohima

Meanwhile, 31st Japanese Division's offensive in the north gathered momentum and pushed the various "V" Force outposts opposing it back along the tracks from the Chindwin. It overran No 2 "V" Force HQ at Fort Keary, forcing Stanley to fall back on Kohima. By the evening of the 28th the 138th Japanese Regiment encountered and attacked 1st Battalion of the Assam Regiment (an unbrigaded battalion) at Jessami, but the attack was repulsed. Many of the men of this battalion were originally from the Assam Rifles, so the terrain and type of fighting were familiar to them. They gave an excellent account of themselves in the ensuing skirmishes. However, though General Sato's central prong was temporarily halted, the left and right prongs reached their objectives; and by the evening of the 29th the road both north and south of Kohima had been cut.

On the 22nd General Scoones, conscious of the danger posed by the northern Japanese thrust to the main base at Dimapur, issued an operation instruction to Colonel Hugh Richards (appointed commander of the Kohima garrison) charging him with the responsibility of holding Kohima with

a view to preventing the Japanese from moving on towards Dimapur. Kohima garrison was placed under 202 L of C Area (G.O.C. Major General Ranking at Dimapur) until the arrival of HQ XXXIII Corps when it would pass under Corps Command.

1 Assam, which had by then been joined by various detachments from Assam Rifles platoons retreating with "V" Force, continued to offer stout resistance to the Japanese main column attacking along the Jessami track. By the 30th, however, it was under heavy pressure and threatened with disaster unless it could be quickly extricated.

General Ranking had sent a battalion of the newly arrived 116 Indian Infantry Brigade (5th Indian Division) to extricate the Assam Battalion at Jessami, but this order was soon countermanded by HQ Fourteenth Army, which felt that the security of Dimapur base had priority over the defence of Kohima. 116 Brigade, the only troops available to the Area HQ, was therefore ordered back to Nichuguard for the defence of Dimapur; and 1 Assam was ordered to break contact and make its way back to Kohima as best as it could. In the event only about a third of the Battalion succeeded in doing so, though another 200 escaped north-westwards through the jungle and fetched up at Dimapur.

The delay imposed on the Japanese by 1 Assam and elements of Assam Rifles platoons of "V" Force proved invaluable to the Kohima garrison. In IV Corps' battle plans Kohima, unlike Imphal, had not been prepared as a deliberate defensive position because the Japanese had not been expected to attack it in such strength. When 31 Japanese Division's thrust across the jungles and hills of the eastern Naga Hills became known, a hotch-potch of troops was quickly assembled for the defence of this key tactical position atop the 1,500 metre pass. The only units available were a Nepali Battalion, two companies of a Burma Regiment, HQ of the 3rd Assam Rifles and a large number of transients and non-combatants. These were organised into sub-units and defensive boxes. The battered remnants of 1 Assam joined this garrison on 1 April.

On the morning of 4 April some 1,500 combatants and 1,000 non-combatants, supported by a single 25-pounder

piece, were hurriedly preparing defensive positions under the inspiring leadership of Colonel Hugh Richards, when the garrison had its first glimpse of enemy columns approaching along the Imphal road from Mao and along the Jessami track. The siege of Kohima had begun.

The role played by the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Mr (later Sir) Charles Pawsey, an old friend of 3rd Battalion, merits a mention in any account of the Battle of Kohima. Even though he had the option to leave Kohima before the siege, he elected to stay with the garrison throughout. Pawsey had a remarkable influence over the Nagas and he and they trusted each other implicitly. Whatever service Pawsey asked of them, even in the face of the enemy, they were always willing to carry out—from carrying food and ammunition, digging trenches and evacuating the wounded to passing through the Japanese lines to collect information. In fact it had been through Pawsey's sources that the Army first learnt that an enemy division, and not just a regiment, was moving against Kohima. During the siege, he would, old soldier that he was (M.C. and bar from World War I), walk round at the height of the battle talking to and encouraging the men of the Assam Rifles and the Assam Regiment, with whom he had always been so closely associated. In fact as an unarmed civilian in the midst of all the carnage, a more unruffled man one could not imagine, and he was a source of inspiration not only to the Assam Rifles and the Assam Regiment but also to British troops at Kohima and the garrison's commander.

For the defence of the township 3rd Battalion (Lieut-Colonel Keene) had been allotted the northern end of the ridge which had once been the location of 53 Indian General Hospital (and was still referred to as "Hospital Ridge"). The Battalion had seven platoons and the remnants of 1 Assam for this task.

A patrol from the Battalion was the first to give warning of the approaching enemy when, on 2 April, it fought a small action at Aradura (about 3 kms south of Kohima). The patrol inflicted casualties on the enemy and brought in identification of the enemy including a captured rifle. The next action was fought by another platoon from the Batta-

lion, located at the water reservoir. This patrol also shot up the enemy, inflicting casualties—but was forced to withdraw when an attack in strength was launched against them. One rifleman, left behind during the withdrawal, made his way back dramatically by sneaking through the Japanese lines that night. Another action took place when two platoons of the Battalion under a British Officer counter-attacked and recaptured Treasury Hill, which the enemy had occupied.

By 5 April the battle proper had started, with the Japanese closing in to within 600 metres of the perimeter. The defences were subjected to very heavy mortar bombardment. The lone 25-pounder was soon knocked out. Then, in Third Battalion's area the former hospital *bashas*, being made of wood and thatch, were set ablaze. Fortunately the Battalion was by then properly dug-in and well set for its allotted task.

The battle raged for more than a fortnight before the relieving troops from Dimapur were able to link up with the besieged garrison. The heroic saga of those critical days has been related in a hundred books and articles. This is not the place to recount the details of that epic resistance; suffice it to say that 3 Assam Rifles acquitted itself in a manner that would have done credit to any regular troops of the world. Not only did the men endure almost incessant shelling and bombing and other grave hardships such as shortage of water and lack of sleep, with courage and fortitude, they warded off a number of savage assaults on Hospital Ridge—inflicting heavy losses on the fanatical Japanese in the process. On one such occasion, when a portion of the sector held by the Assam Rifles was attacked by about 100 Japanese, the subsequent body-count yielded 15 dead bodies in front of the section holding that sector—the nearest corpse having been shot down when only two yards from the forward trench. Furthermore, observers of this action from a unit across the valley later confirmed that they had seen the retreating Japanese pulling back a number of dead and wounded to get them under cover.

Despite desperate assaults during both night and day, at no point were the Japanese allowed to breach the 3 A.R. perimeter. The enemy enjoyed the advantage of superior fire-power and overwhelming numbers—but the spirit of the

Gorkhas, the Nagas and all the other tribal folk of 3rd Battalion proved more than a match for all such adversities.

At one stage during the battle men of the Assam Rifles and the Assam Regiment formed a composite company to relieve a company of British troops (which had been sent from Dimapur as reinforcements) on D.C.'s Bungalow Hill. The company held on to the position for four days during which it was under almost continuous fire—and beat back a number of determined attacks. Another composite company was sent to relieve a hard-pressed detachment on F.S.D. Hill; these troops also gave an excellent account of themselves. Numerous acts of bravery and devotion to duty were performed by G.O.s and men of 3rd Assam Rifles Battalion and the Assam Regiment.

At the most critical time of the siege, when it looked as if the defences might be overrun, Jemadar Uttam Singh Chhettri's platoon fought a fierce battle against a party of enemy trying to work their way up a re-entrant and cut its way into the perimeter. The fighting closed to desperate hand-to-hand combat. Uttam Singh was hit on the head by a grenade, which must have partially stunned him; but he continued to exhort his platoon. Under his determined leadership, the enemy were eventually thrown back. Subedar Chhettri was awarded the M.C. for this action.

The nightmare was at last over when on 20 April the garrison was relieved by troops that had fought their way into Kohima from Dimapur. The siege had been lifted—but not a day too soon, for by then most of Kohima Ridge had been lost to the Japanese and the garrison was precariously clinging on to the last vital bit of ground (including Hospital Ridge) that today forms the Cemetery area and Raj Bhawan. 3rd Battalion's men remained unconquered and its defences intact.

On 22 April the relieved troops including 3rd Battalion moved down to Dimapur for rest and reorganisation. The Battalion, however, insisted on leaving one platoon behind in Kohima, thus entitling the Battalion to their proud claim that throughout its history it has never actually left Kohima. The Battalion stayed in Dimapur till 28 April when it returned to Kohima. For accommodation temporary *bashas* were constructed in the area of the old A.T. lines where the Batta-

lion was lodged till the new lines were constructed.

While 3rd Battalion was fighting the battle of Kohima, 2nd Battalion was also doing its bit in the plains down below. Three platoons of 2nd Battalion under Lieut Macleod were engaged on railway protection duties on the line from Amalguri to Dhansari, under command of 23 British Brigade; for, although the Kohima Garrison had halted the Japanese advance, there still existed a threat from small parties of Japanese infiltrating into the plains and disrupting communications. The Assam Rifles had, therefore, taken over the protection of all the vital points from the Armed Police, who were neither trained or equipped to meet this threat. After the siege had been lifted these platoons were shifted to Kohima where they were attached to 4/5 Gurkha Rifles who were engaged in clearing the Japanese from Treasury Hill, Kohima Ridge and the Naga village. The platoons quickly settled down to their new operational role and acquitted themselves in the best traditions of the Assam Rifles. Subsequently when 14th Army's general counter-offensive to push the Japs back across the Chindwin was launched, 400 men of 2nd Battalion were sent in to support 23 (British) Brigade's attack towards Ukhrul and operated under its command from 29 April to 29 July, 1944. An extract from the *Report of the Administration of the Assam Rifles for 1944* states:

At the end of March it was decided to bring in some (platoons) of the 2nd Battalion, which a few months previously had been handed back to the control of His Excellency the Governor, to help to protect the railway between Manipur Road and Nazira; and a few days later in April, a request was made, which was immediately complied with, for the services of eight platoons to accompany the 23rd (British) Brigade under the command of Brigadier Perowne in a flank attack through Mokokchung to Ukhrul. This was a great honour for the Assam Rifles as no other Indian troops were with this Brigade nor were they apparently asked for. After some weeks of very hard fighting in which officers and men of the 2nd Battalion greatly distinguished themselves, the objectives were successfully reached, and after the relief of Kohima and the general repulse of the enemy the officers and men of the 2nd Battalion returned to their headquarters. Unfortunately one of the casualties sustained was Subedar Major Sing Bahadur Raj who insisted on accompanying his men and was unluckily drowned during the course of the operations. The fine example which he set in insisting on accompanying the Battalion will long be remembered.

2nd Battalion suffered a total of two killed and six wounded in these operations, while earning two Military Medals, six British Empire Medals and five Mentions-in-Despatches.

ASSAM RIFLES IN WORLD WAR II

With "V" Force in Burma

REGIMENTAL official histories, both British and Indian, include no further mention of "V" Force after Fourteenth Army went on to the counter-offensive. It is assumed that the platoons of 1st and 2nd Battalions returned to their headquarters stations at Aizawl and Sadiya, respectively. Officially there was no longer a requirement for the services of Assam's "military policemen"—not after Fourteenth Army's operations took it beyond the border into Burma (notwithstanding that platoons of 1st Battalion had played a major part in recapturing one of the first strategic targets in Burmese territory!).

Albeit, that was not the end of the story for Assam Riflemen in World War II. We know from the records of two "V" Force officers, Lieut-Colonel N. Stanley (of No 2 "V" Ops, later awarded the D.S.O. and the O.B.E.) and Major J. Gebhart (of No 3 and 2 "V" Ops, later awarded the M.C. and O.B.E. and who changed his name to Bowen, the name which will be used hereafter) that not only did platoons of 3rd and 4th Battalions and individual N.C.O.s and riflemen of 1st Battalion continue to take part in subsequent operations, but that they played an important role in Intelligence gathering during Fourteenth Army's advance into Central Burma and in the hunting down of Japanese break-out groups in the Pegu Yomas after the fall of Rangoon. In the latter operation Assam Riflemen of "V" Force formed part of the War Office controlled Force 136. They were parachuted into the Karen Hills east of the Sittang, well behind the Japanese, and eventually fetched up on the Chinese border at Kengtung.

Details of these operations are available mainly from personal accounts of retired British Officers who led sub-units of Assam Rifles. The only official references traceable are

excerpts from the *Report on the Administration of the Assam Rifles (1945)* issued by the Government of Assam and the Official War History issued by H.M. Stationery Office, London: *The War Against Japan, Vol II:*

• Military operations.—With the end of the War coming in August military operations gradually ceased. Eight platoons of 1st Battalion operating with the Lushai Brigade were withdrawn from Burma, with the Brigade, early in the year. Five platoons of 3rd Battalion which were attached to "V" Force in the forward areas, also returned to headquarters early in the year under report. Four platoons of 4th Battalion which had operated with "V" Force in Burma were, however, still out at the end of the year. They were employed by IV Corps under three categories, viz., intelligence, guerillas and fighting patrol. 43 men of 4th Battalion were trained at Jessore as paratroops for the Burma operations and got their wings. 42 of them were actually dropped near the Sittang River Bend where they went into action (Government of Assam) . . . and:

Soon after the fall of Rangoon, the new tasks of IV Corps were defined as follows: IV Corps will destroy the enemy now attempting to make their escape out of Burma. The two main zones of destruction will be between the Pegu Yomas and the Sittang river and along the Martaban coastline between the Sittang and Salween rivers . . . An intelligence screen composed of Burma National Army and the local civilians had been organised east and west of the main road during the previous two weeks to obtain and bring news of the approach of Japanese parties to these divisions. This was organised by officers of Force 136, but "V" Force was also operating in the area . . . (H.M.S.O.).

Across the Chindwin

Colonel Stanley's 2 "V" Ops was reformed at Kohima, after the men had had a month's leave at the end of the siege of Kohima, and were earmarked to spearhead 19 Indian Division's advance into Burma as an "I" screen. Colonel Stanley established covering positions in the Somra Tract and along the Upper Chindwin, in front of the regular forces of IV and XXXIII Corps. From there patrols were sent down to the Chindwin, as far south as Tonhe.

Stanley recalls an incident in which one of his patrols across the Chindwin zoned in at the site of a Spitfire crash and rescued an Indian Air Force pilot who had survived the crash landing. In this connection, Colonel Stanley adds that

rescuing crashed pilots of the Allied air forces was an important function—though not an official task—of “V” Force, particularly Nos 2 and 3 “V” Ops. Often news of such crashes giving details of the pilots’ physical condition, would be received through the tribal grape-vine and rescue parties with stretchers and rudimentary medical supplies would be rushed to the spot. Stanley makes an interesting comment. All the pilots rescued by his patrols experienced great difficulty in marching back through the jungles because they were invariably unsuitably shod—soft suede shoes being the commonest form of footwear favoured by the pilots, particularly British and Indian pilots. Stanley had sent a report to HQ IV Corps recommending that the Allied Air Forces operating in the area be advised that their pilots’ chances of safe return in case of a crash would be greater if they wore Army type—or even the “hunter” type—boots when on combat missions. He was gratified to find subsequently that the Air Commands concerned had in fact accepted his advice!

In the Manipur area No 3 “V” Force had never closed down completely: it will be remembered that one of its posts remained behind in Mombi “sub-area”, commanded by Captain Fraser-Smith, M.C., and manned by a platoon from 4th Battalion (together with a floating complement of Naga and Kuki tribals). After the Japanese began their eastward retreat following the failure of their invasion, Fraser-Smith moved his group eastwards to the Yu river area west of the Kabaw Valley, to carry out harassing tasks. It was there that Bowen joined him in June 1944, subsequently taking over command of this group.

After the battles of Imphal and Kohima a large number of Japanese had taken refuge in the eastern Manipur hills adjacent to the Burma border and in the Somra Tract. Although armed with light machine guns, rifles and what ammunition they could carry on their persons, they were without rations, so that their only recourse was to raid the Naga villages for food. Accordingly, the first role given to No 2 “V” Force was changed to one of providing protection to the loyal villagers and to round up, destroy or expel the roving bands of Japanese soldiery. Thereafter “V” Force was to establish contact with the rear parties of the enemy across the Chindwin.

“V” Force personnel under Stanley and Bowen consisted mainly of two or three platoons from 3rd Assam Rifles and a platoon from the 4th Battalion. Only a few of the old hands among the Nagas and Kukis were re-employed; and most of these were shed once “V” Force moved forward of the Kabaw Valley. It was the Gorkhas and other elements of Assam Rifles, together with their officers, who remained with the Force.

For many difficult months, while regular forces waited for the monsoons to end before starting on their push into Burma, the Assam Riflemen and their officers carried out a series of long distance patrols deep into the Shan country across the Chindwin—operating outside territory of which they had had previous experience. Many of their patrols cooperated with General Stilwell’s American-led guerillas and Intelligence parties (consisting of Kachin tribals) and gradually set up an “I” Screen west of the Chindwin to cover the projected crossing of the river by 19 Indian Infantry Division. In these operations “V” Force came up against the *Hikari Kikan*, the Japanese Intelligence agency which had been given the task of rearguard and recovery of stragglers.

Soon after this, “V” Force was integrated into a single command; and Bowen’s group was placed under Stanley’s 2 “V” Ops. The Force was reinforced by a fresh platoon from 3rd Assam Rifles and a number of Gorkha operators from the Burma Signals who brought new wireless sets and generators. In place of the Nagas and Kukis they had shed, Stanley and Bowen recruited a small number of Shans for duties as guides and interpreters.

In the event, 19 Indian Division’s crossing of the Chindwin was unopposed. “V” Force and the American guerillas thereafter provided an “I” Screen on 19 Division’s left flank. The regular forces advanced so fast with their jeeps and trucks that the “I” Screen could keep up with them only by a desperate series of forced marches. Fortunately, the Japanese rear parties did not make a stand anywhere during this phase.

On reaching the rice plains at Pinlebu 19 Division veered south in the direction of Shwebo, leaving the “I” screen behind them. Bowen records in his book *Undercover in the Jungle*:

North of Pinlebu Colonel Stanley, who was worried about the fact that our unit was no longer playing a very vital role in the war, had one of those strokes of almost intuitive genius that made him into a great irregular leader. Judging that sooner or later Japanese resistance would stiffen before the regular troops arrived at the junction of the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers and that in any case 19 Division would inevitably get orders to jink left when it finally came onto the same axis of advance as the British 2nd Division, he sent Gillett and me across to the Irrawaddy to collect a fleet of country boats and bamboo rafts with which we could later help the regular troops to cross the river.

I spent a week at a little Burmese village called Tigyaing, holding conference with headmen and supervising the construction of two enormous rafts of bamboo on which we estimated that a 15-cwt lorry could be ferried across the river. Meanwhile Gillett crossed to the opposite bank where a brigade of the British 36th Division under the command of the American Northern Combat Area was advancing slowly against light opposition down the east bank.

When the rafts were ready and we had assembled twelve very large country boats into the bargain we set off along the east bank with an American Kachin Guerilla unit. For two days we drifted gently downstream keeping contact with a battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers on the east bank. At Kyannyat these were held up and the Americans received orders to cross behind them. At the same time we received a message from Colonel Stanley that he had himself reached the Irrawaddy at a point to the south. Accordingly we waited till after darkness and then put out into midstream and drifted past the enemy positions under cover of the night. At dawn we reached Male where Stanley had set up his headquarters.

In the meantime the situation had developed very much as Colonel Stanley had anticipated. 2 (British) Division and 19 Indian Division had effected a junction at Shwebo and the latter had been ordered to move east across the Irrawaddy in the direction of Mogok. Information from Thabekyin, the northernmost point at which it was intended to cross the river, was to the effect that there were no boats available and "V" Force had been asked to help. I was ordered to move south with my twelve country boats to Thabekyin. 19 Indian Division were not apparently interested in the rafts, which were considered difficult to navigate.

The night before I left we received orders from Imphal that 2 "V" Ops was to withdraw to India for reorganisation and further training.

At Shillong a number of "V" Force groups had been concentrated for training and reorganisation. Instead of disbanding the Force as had been the previous intention, it was proposed that a reconstituted "V" Force should be given a post-occupation guerilla role in Burma; but that proposal was

soon discarded for political reasons. It was eventually decided to mechanise the Force, re-equip it with jeeps and light wireless sets and use it to provide Intelligence detachments wherever Fourteenth Army might see fit to use them. Two of Colonel Stanley's platoons of 3rd Assam Rifles were accordingly sent to Delhi in January 1945 to attend a six-weeks' M.T. Course. On their return the old 2 "V" Force was reformed, with Subedar Nakulman Rai and 150 O.R.s of 4th Battalion but with no tribal elements in it.

Operations in Central Burma

No 2 "V" Ops was sent to Central Burma under Colonel Stanley, in early April 1945. Too late to take part in the battle of Meiktila, 2 "V" Ops was reallocated to 19 Indian Division with the role of covering the Division's left flank as it moved south down the Sittang valley to Toungoo.

After reaching Toungoo 2 "V" Ops' task was changed to that of patrolling the Pegu Yomas, the ridge of jungle-covered mountains that separates the valleys of the Irrawaddy and the Sittang. It was anticipated that the Japanese forces trapped in the Irrawaddy valley after the fall of Rangoon would try to break out through the Pegu Yomas, eastwards to the Siam border; No 2 "V" Ops' task was to seek out the possible escape routes. In the event, Stanley claimed that his patrols of Assam Riflemen reported on five out of the seven escape routes through the Pegu Yomas which the Japanese eventually followed in their break-out bid. HQ IV Corps was able to put this information to good use when the Japs did eventually burst through the Pegu Yomas to the Sittang valley. About 10,000 out of an estimated total of 20,000 enemy were killed by British-Indian troops lined up and waiting for them in the area north of Shwegyin. Among those who took part in the "kill" on the Sittang side was the other half of "V" Force—3 "V" Ops under Bowen!

To go back to Shillong in early April, Bowen's No 3 "V" Ops had also been reconstituted—under Lieut-Colonel G. Scurfield M.C., with Bowen as second in command; but they looked on gloomily as Stanley's No 2 "V" Ops was sent off to Burma. It appeared that No 3 would have to sit

the monsoons out in Shillong; the prospects of being sent into operations before the end of the year appeared dim. In fact it seemed quite on the cards that "V" Force elements still in Shillong would have to wait until the start of the projected invasion of Malaya before they could find operational employment. Then, out of the blue, Lieut-Colonel J. Hayter, coordinator of "V" Force operations at HQ Fourteenth Army at Monywa, sent a "wild and mysterious signal" to Bowen to the effect that No 3 "V" Ops and all Gorkha and other personnel volunteering as parachutists should be "kitted up in readiness to move".

Operations with Force 136

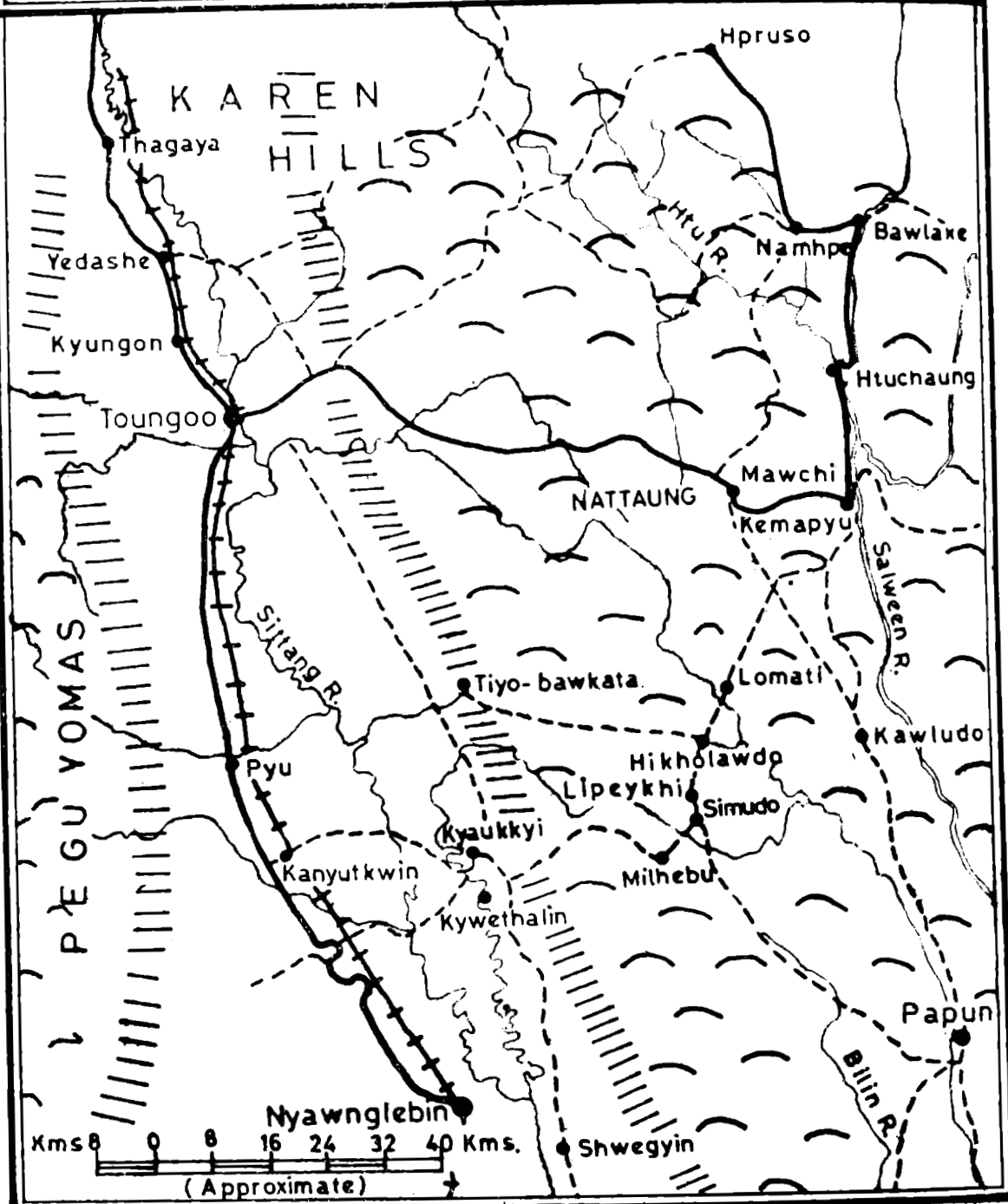
Major Bowen explains the "mystery" in his book *Undercover in the Jungle*, describing how "V" Force came to serve under Force 136 (the Far Eastern section of Britain's Special Operations Executive):

After the fall of Mandalay early in 1945 there had been very fierce Japanese resistance on the motor road which led to Rangoon. Then the 4th Indian Corps made a surprise thrust across the Irrawaddy to the south on the enemy's lines of communication, capturing the airfield at Meiktila; and the Japanese forces that had been opposing 19th Indian Division to the north had been obliged to withdraw east into the foothills of the Shan States. When our armoured thrust developed along the motor road running south from Meiktila through Pyinmana, Toungoo and Pegu to Rangoon the Japanese had not enough heavy equipment left in Burma to oppose it, and their troops escaped either westwards into the dense jungle-covered foothills known as the Pegu Yomas, where they linked up with their comrades from Prome and the Arakan, or eastwards across the Sittang River.

On the east of the Sittang there is flat paddy country for a distance of ten to fifteen miles and then the ground rises very steeply into the Karen Hills, which run as high as seven thousand feet in a few places and stretch beyond the Salween River into Siam. These hills grow enough rice to feed the Karen villagers who live in them. Before the war there was a tin mine at Mawchi which was worked by Gurkha miners. Except for this there was really no reason for strangers ever to penetrate into that country and the people led a healthy happy life with plenty to eat and very little to trouble them.

In early 1945, a minor rebellion had broken out against the Japanese in the Karen Hills between the Sittang and the

SKETCH MAP OF KAREN HILLS



Siam border. Special Operations Executive in Britain, represented by Force 136 in Burma, decided to drop parachutists into Karenni—as the Karen area was commonly called—to help the Karens, who had had little military training and possessed only antiquated weapons. Bowen continues:

The decision was taken to attempt to stiffen up the Karen resistance by dropping 3 “V” Ops, consisting of British Officers and Assam Riflemen, into the area. All personnel under training in Shillong were asked whether they were prepared to take part in a parachute operation at short notice. John Gebhard recalls that when this was put to his platoon of Assam Rifles the whole platoon at once volunteered. They, with the other volunteers from 3 “V” Ops, were at once transported to a secret airfield near Jessore in Bengal, where a few days later they did one practice parachute jump. The evening of the following day they were dropped in two groups into two different areas of resistance in the Karen Hills to the north-east of Shwegyin.

Actually, two “Special Groups” of Force 136 were dropped in the Karen Hills. Bowen’s group consisted of two British Officers, a Chin wireless operator of Burma Signals named Hav Chin Lian (and later joined by two British operators of Force 136), three Assam Rifles N.C.O.s—Havildar Bombahadur Gurung (later awarded the I.D.S.M.), Lance/Naik Rabe Thapa, and Lance/Naik Man Bahadur Chhettri (later awarded the M.M.)—and about twenty Gorkhas of the Assam Rifles. Bowen describes the latter as “regular soldiers (*sic*) who had volunteered for the operation, but they had not previously received training in explosives and did not speak Burmese. Nevertheless, with the natural *bonhomie* of the Gurkha . . . they were soon fraternising with the Karens in a weird language of signs and garbled Karen and Burmese words.”

At that time the Japanese were present in the Karen Hills only in small numbers and moved about in parties of not more than 20 to 30. (This was many months before the main Japanese force trapped in the Irrawaddy valley and the Pegu Yomas looked like breaking through to the Karen Hills.) The job of the Special Groups was to help the local Karens protect their villages from foraging Japanese soldiery, to lay ambushes and, when possible, to capture prisoners for identification and further information—which they did successfully

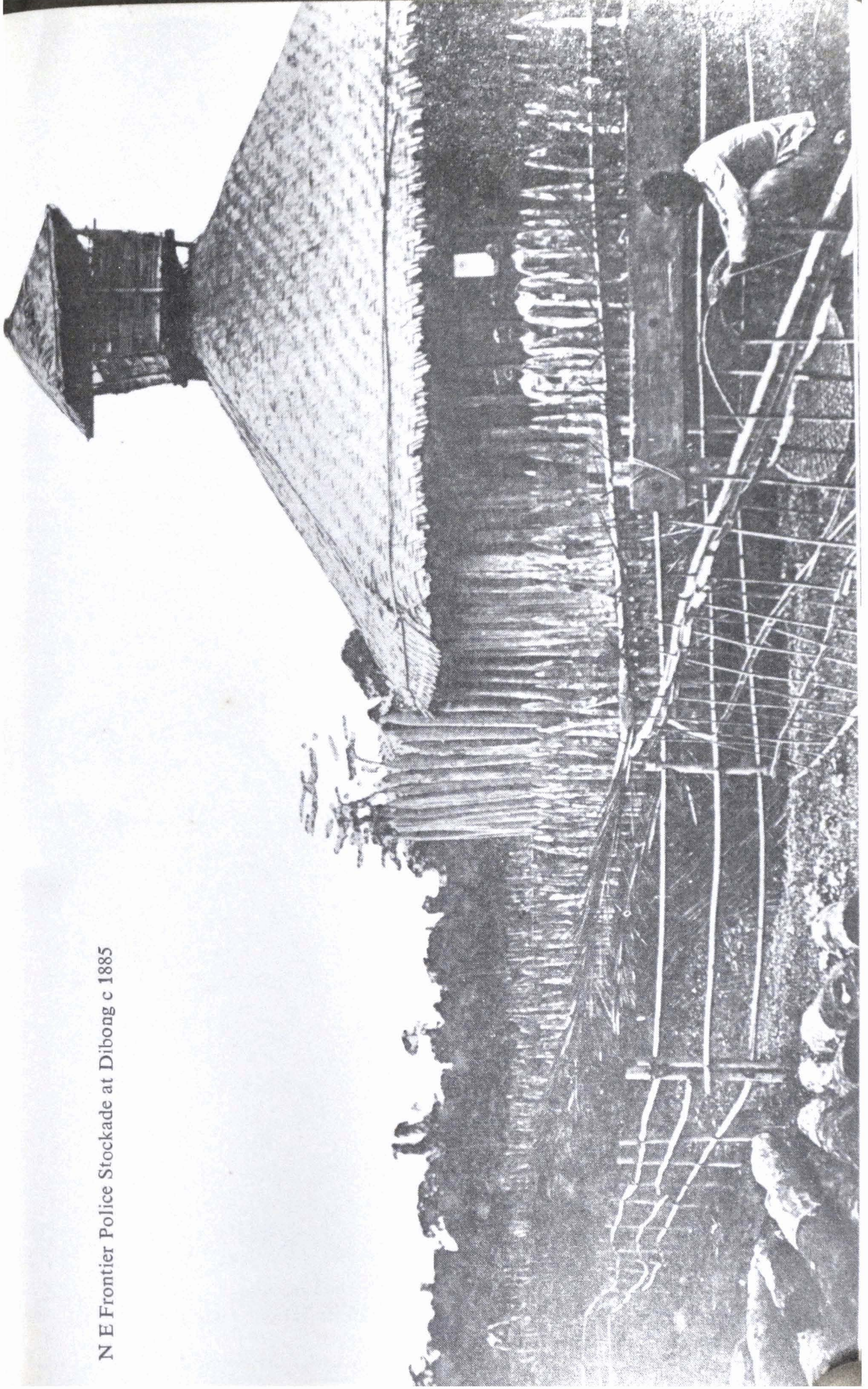
on more than one occasion, the Japanese by then being in very low morale.

The full story of Force 136's operations is narrated in Bowen's book *Undercover in the Jungle* and need not be recorded here in detail. Suffice it to say that the Gorkhas of the Assam Rifles played an important role, acting as group leaders for the "static" and "mobile" levies of Karens. (The former were meant for the close defence of villages, the latter for guerilla operations, laying ambushes and conducting demolitions.) The area of operations was roughly the shape of a square of territory between the Sittang and Salween rivers, the latter forming the border with Siam. The square was about 1,000 square kilometres in extent; its western side was formed by the line Toungoo-Shwegyin.

The operations were supported by the R.A.F., both by para-drops as well as by Lysander aircraft, for which a fair-weather make-shift landing ground had been constructed by local labour in the Lipeykhi area, roughly in the centre of the square. Although air-drops were minimal during the monsoons, the Special Groups were kept supplied with explosives, ammunition and occasional consignments of "goodies" to supplement their locally procured Karen-type rations. In this connection Bowen recalls that it was the Gorkhas who were the worst off, because though they had sufficient rice (a common staple for all, British, Indian and Burmese) there was very little else to vary the diet. The British-controlled Force 136 being the provenance, Bowen felt that: ". . . there were far too many men at the supply end with only European experience. Excellent though they may have been at devising suitable ration scales for the French or Greek resistance movements, they were totally unaware of the requirements of Gurkhas. I repeatedly asked for . . . *dhal*, a kind of lentil without which the Gurkhas' means are unappetising . . . it was never sent. As it was their store was full of bully beef which their religion forbade them from eating."

In late June, after the monsoons had broken and movement even by foot became slow and restricted, it was hoped that there would be a respite from Japanese infiltration. Instead, parties of Japanese began to get larger, better armed

N E Frontier Police Stockade at Dibong c 1885





Capt (later Lt Col) G H Loch of the North Lushai Battalion c 1896



Major J Shakespear with various Officers of the Force c' 1890



Aka Hills Group.

Aka Hills Expedition 1885-86. In civilian clothes on left is Sir Charles Elliott, Chief Commissioner of Assam

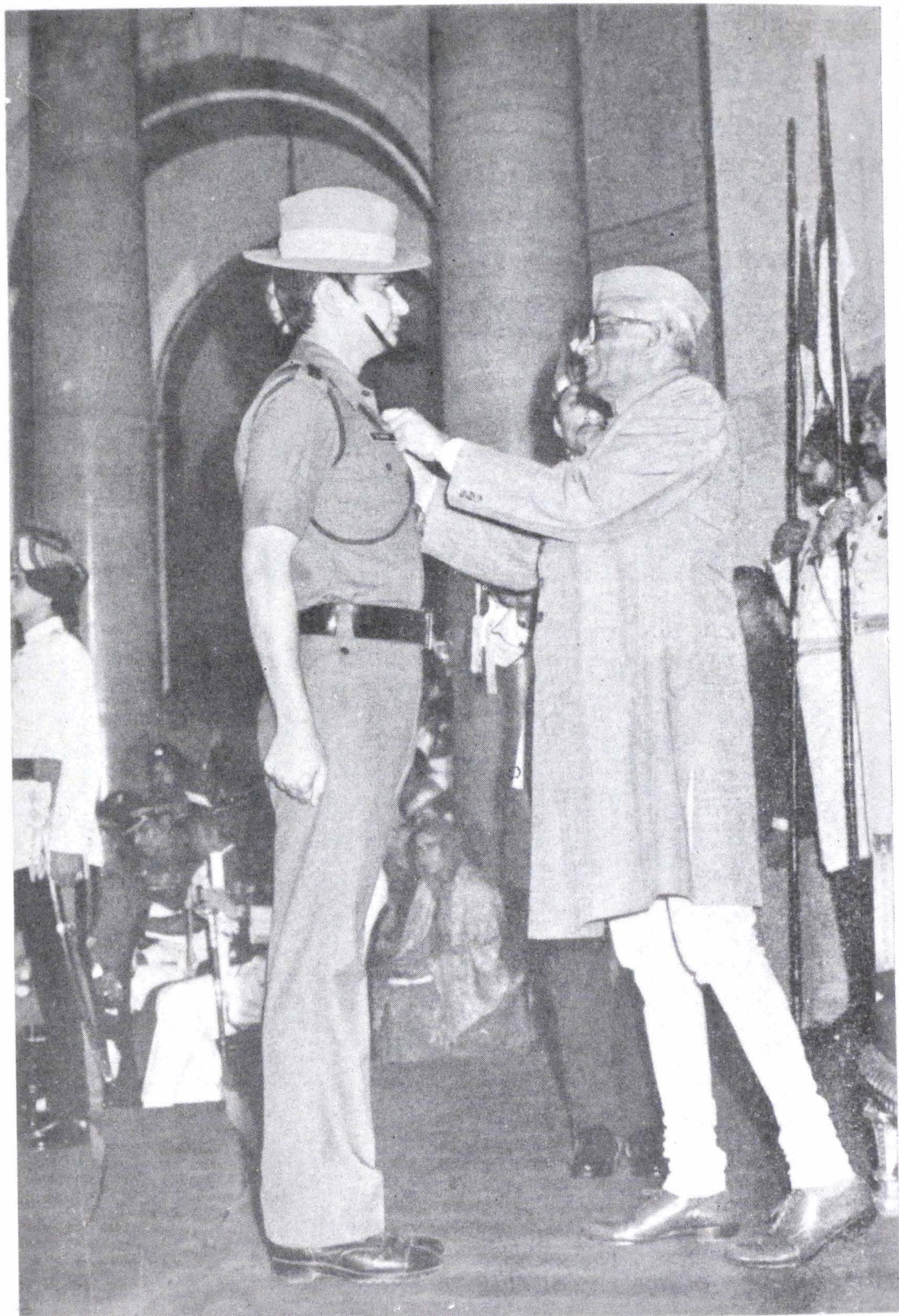




A typical Mizo village



Aizawl today



President Reddy presenting the Shaurya Chakra to Capt. Raghuvindar Kapur



Nb Sub Nyiler Rengma SC
(Naga)



Rfn Tasok Gusar SC
(Abor)



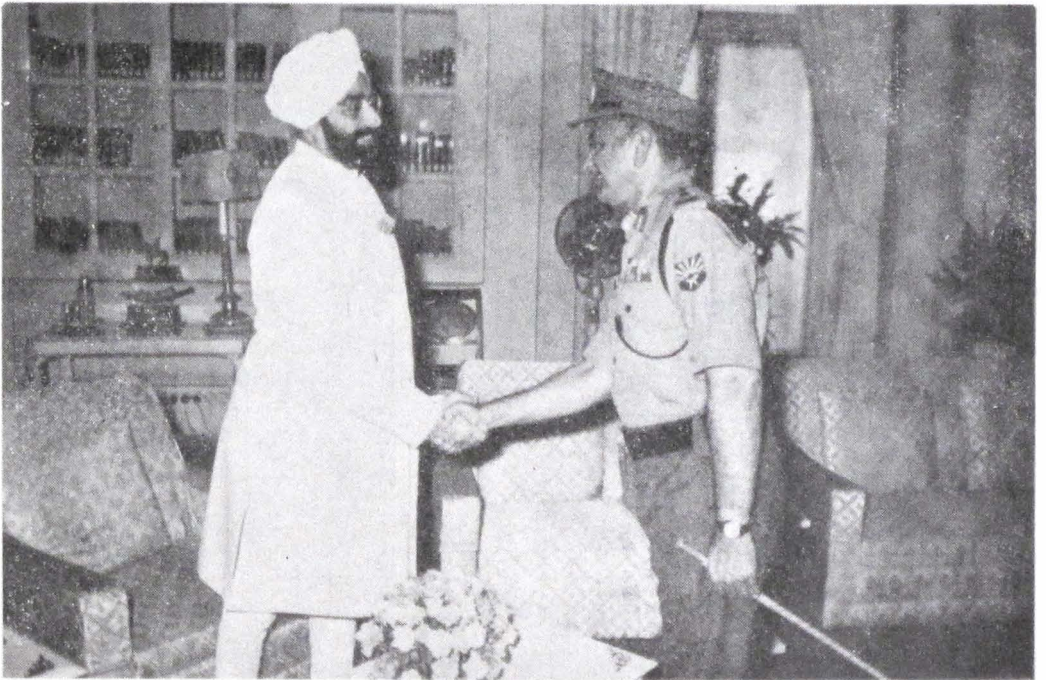
L/Nk Bevela Lushai SC
(Mizo)



SM and Hony Lt
Chhabilal Rai SM VSM
(Gorkha)



Major Jasram Singh AC 6 AR



Lt Gen J K Puri calls on the President of India Giani Zail Singh



Hav (later Sub) Bom Bdr Gurung
IDSM 1946



Sub Maj Kharka Bdr Limbu AC MC
8 AR



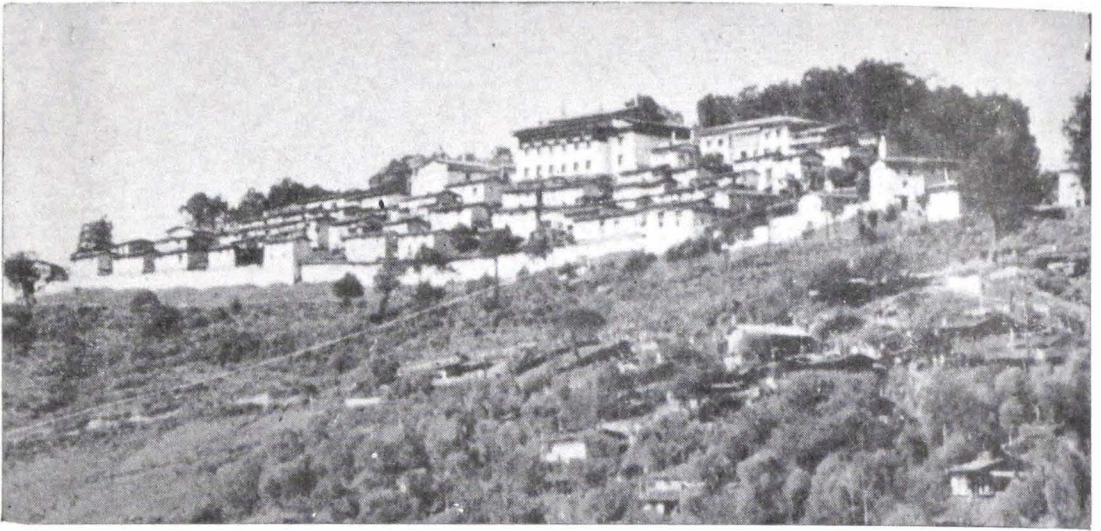
Tangkhul Naga girls in front of a traditional Naga dwelling



Hav A B Limbu (late BHM of 4 AR)
in "V" Force uniform
(later SM and Hony Capt)



Visit of Prime Minister Nehru to 5th Battalion at Lokhra, 1952; Mrs Gandhi, Governor Daulat Ram, Lt Col Bharucha



Towang Monastery



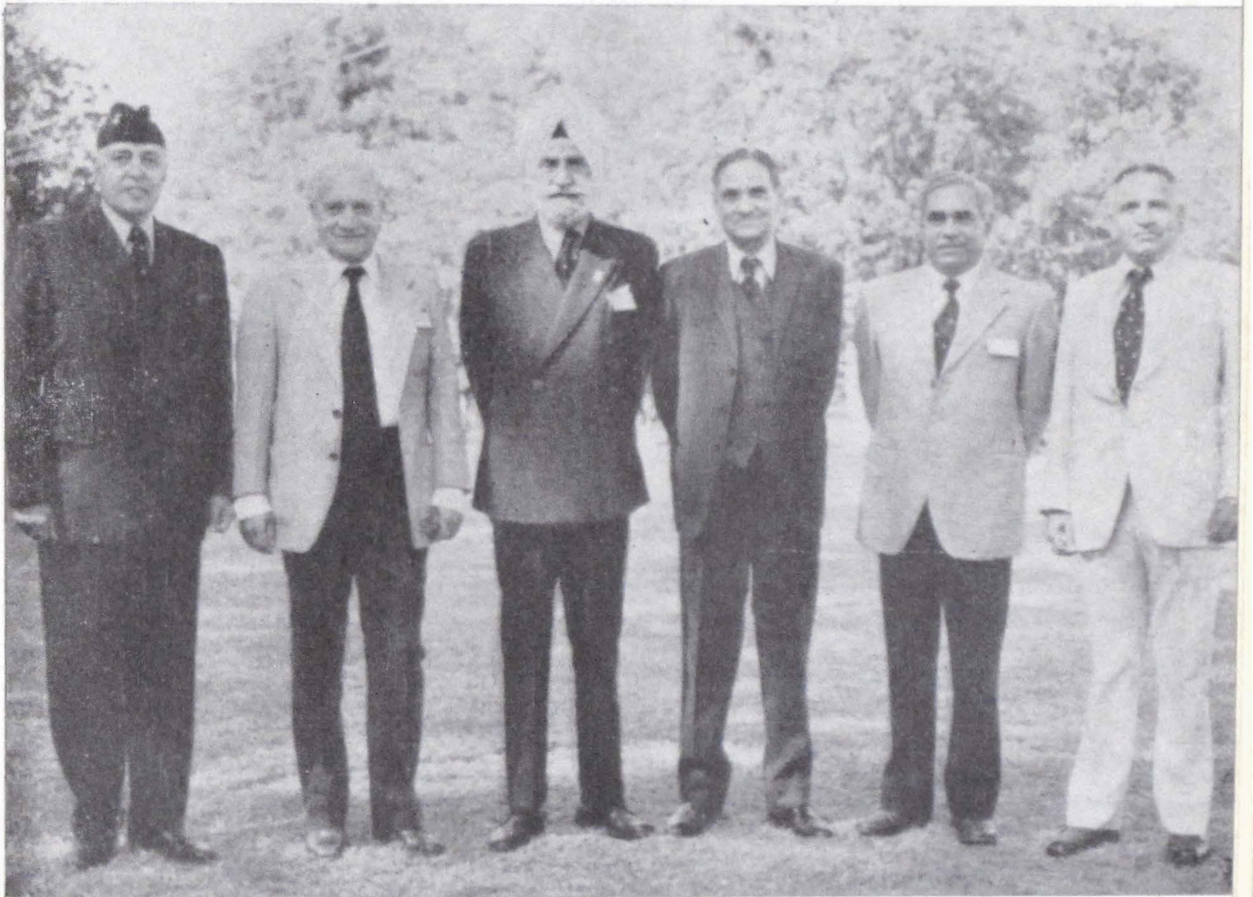
5th Battalion Guard of Honour to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Towang 1959



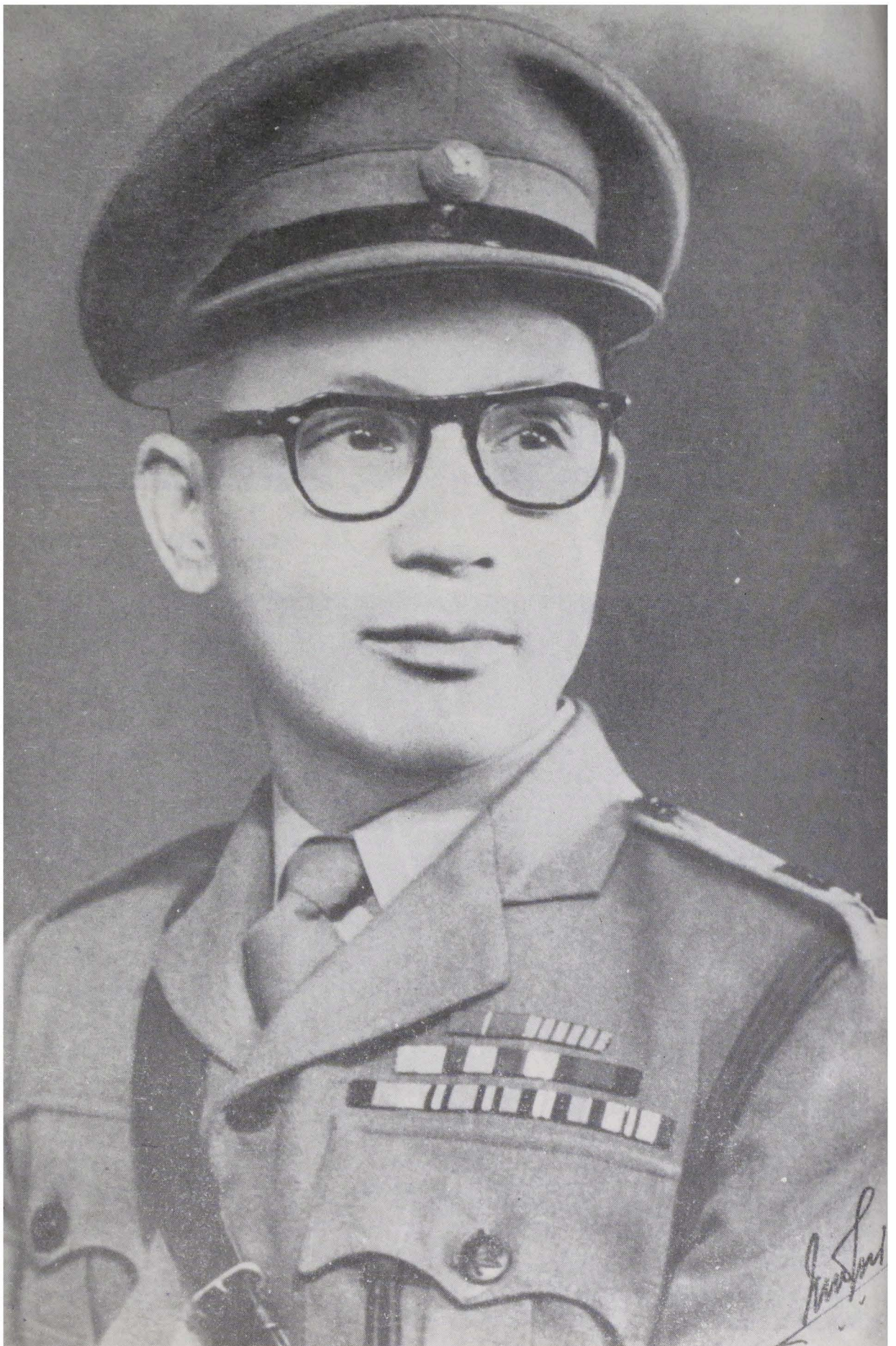
Mr H C Bartley CIE IP
First IGAR 1947



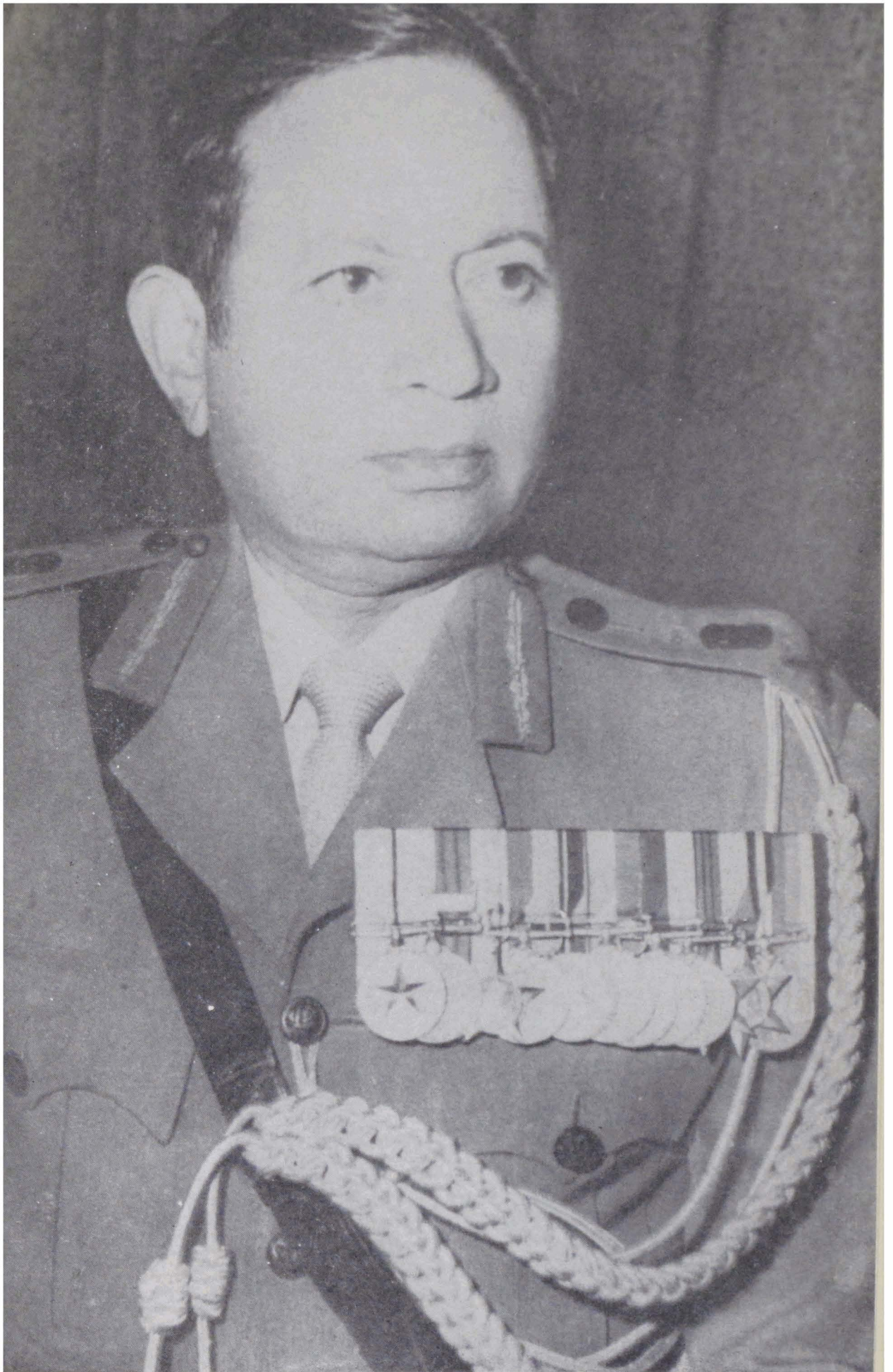
Colonel Sidhiman Rai MC
First Indian IGAR 1947

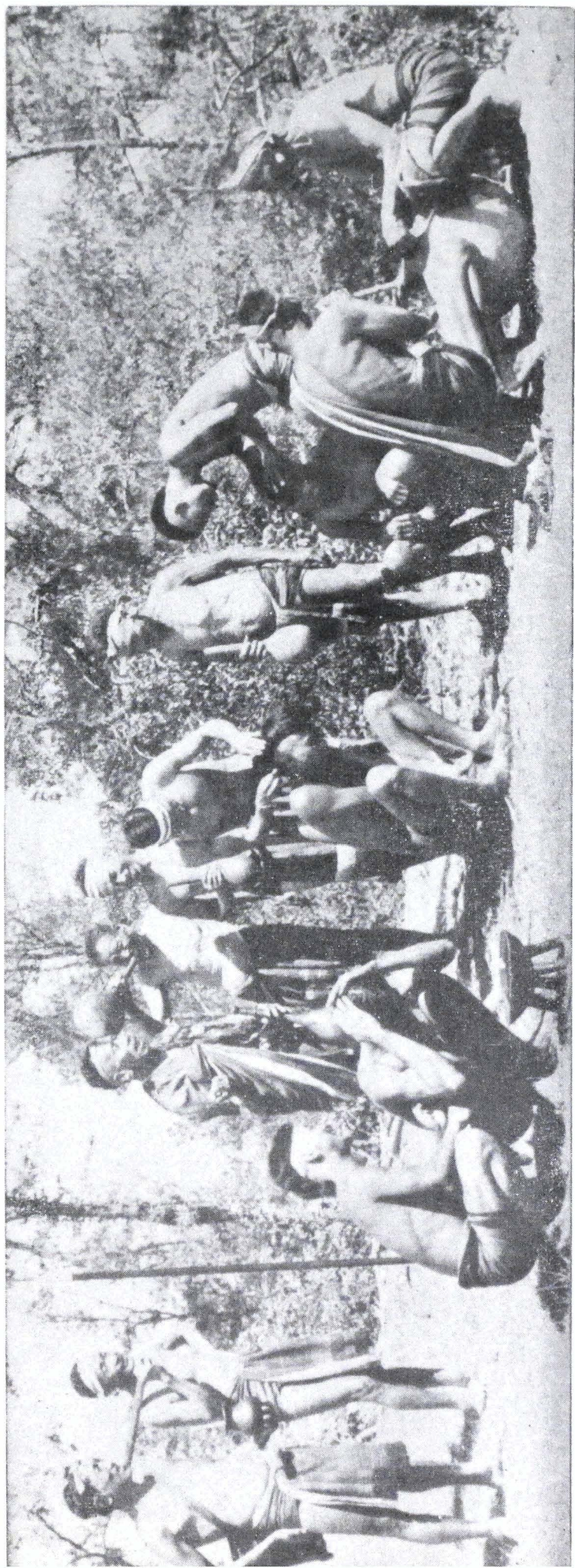


A chance meeting of former IGARs at the IMA, 1982: Bhagwati Singh, K S Katoch, Harbhajan Singh, A S Guraya, M G Hazari and Chiman Singh



Major M B Rai AC, MC, IDSM





Haircuts—Tangkhul Naga style

and therefore more aggressive. This was obviously a prelude to the expected break-out from the Pegu Yomas and the leaders of the Special Groups were understandably concerned, because though Fourteenth Army had made arrangements for the "kill" along the Sittang and was eagerly looking forward to the massive ambushade on the river line, it was a different proposition altogether as far as the small bands of guerillas in Karenni were concerned. The Karen levies and "V" Force had been neither trained nor equipped for positional defence; they would be at the mercy of any large Japanese forces that managed to slip through the "kill" line and crossed into the Karen Hills. Bowen therefore consulted his Gorkha and Karen leaders and decided that if any large Japanese party did succeed in breaking through, he would collect his village levies, carry away whatever stocks of rice they could from the villages in the valley (for safe keeping) and take to the hills. "The Japanese in the Pegu Yomas had been living for months on what they could forage from the hills", he records, "and the majority of them would by then be crazed with hunger . . . and their frame of mind once they crossed to the east bank would probably be very savage."

Bowen also records, not without some amusement, that Lance/Naik Man Bahadur Chhettri disagreed with the decision and was all for staying on in the villages, ambushing and killing as many Japanese as they could. Indeed on one occasion he deliberately stayed behind when Bowen had ordered an evasive move and, together with a few Karens, successfully ambushed a party of Japanese. However, when a large party of 600 enemy, part of the Japanese 72 Independent Mixed Brigade, were sighted a few days later, Bowen insisted on "passive" measures to avoid being overwhelmed. It was only when the main body of the Japanese Brigade moved towards the Salween that aggressive action was resumed.

There was a lull in the operations during most of the second half of June and in early July. During this period very few Japanese left their hide-outs in the Pegu Yomas to move into Karenni. It was about this time that Colonel Stanley's 2 "V" Ops began operating in the Pegu Yomas from bases held by regular troops along the Toungoo-Shwegyin railway line, attempting to find out the exact strength of the

Japanese in the area and what routes they were likely to take when they eventually tried to break out across the Sittang. The official theories varied from day to day as to when and where they would break out. Then an enemy operation order was captured in a skirmish in the foothills west of Pegu. This gave the date of the break-out as "the first day of the full moon early in August". The plan was for the main Japanese body to cross the road somewhere south of Pegu, by moonlight; and it was anticipated that the whole force would be across the Sittang by dawn.

All 3 "V" Ops could do was to sit and wait—and hope that no great concentration of the enemy would slip through the "kill" line and enter the Karenni area. Plans were again made to ambush smaller parties wherever they were found but to melt away in front of any large enemy force.

In the event the Japanese adhered to their operation order. Bowen gives a graphic account of the break-out:

When we reached Mount Plakho the following day we learned that the Japanese had indeed started their long awaited break-out from the Pegu Yomas. About 17,000 of them had been skulking in those low malarious hills since the beginning of the monsoon under conditions which would have caused any other army on earth to surrender. When the time came they followed the instructions contained in the captured operation order to the letter. No attempt was made to fight. Each Japanese soldier was carrying two short bamboo poles to get him across the Sittang River, and very little else. A great many of them were almost naked and without arms. Thus equipped they started to cross the tarmac Toungoo-Pegu road in a steady stream and make straight for the river bank as fast as they could.

The slaughter was terrific. British, Indian and Gurkha troops were strongly entrenched along the road and railway line and patrols of tanks and armoured cars moved in between the various posts. Heavy concentrations of artillery were firing almost continually day and night. On the river bank fighter aircraft kept up an almost continuous daylight patrol. Personally I dislike the Japanese so intensely that I cannot stand within a dozen yards of one of them without a cold chill running down my spine. But I cannot but admire them in the break-out. They may be cruel and brutal, arrogant in victory and treacherous in defeat. But when their time came, they certainly knew how to die. Out of the 17,000 that set out for the Sittang River bank from the Pegu Yomas only 4,000 ever reached the east bank. There were over four hundred prisoners taken, probably more than had ever been taken previously in the whole of the Burma campaign. And the remainder

died on the way. As an example of military stupidity it must rival the Charge of the Light Brigade; and in the same way it has an epic quality.

About 3,000 Japanese managed to escape the slaughter and move into the Karenni area. 3 "V" Ops scouts saw more than a thousand pass down the track through Lipeykhi moving south-eastwards, probably making for a Salween crossing near Papun. "A few stragglers had fallen beside the track as the Force moved, and these were despatched by the levies during the next few days. All the time we could hear the guns rumb-ling away in the Sittang Valley . . ." A much larger group, about two thousand Japanese troops with mules and horses, took the track from Kyakkyi to Shwegyin, probably making for Moulmein and the Salween crossings in that area. Reports also came in of large numbers crossing the Salween at Kempayu, having come south from Mawchi. At this stage a suggestion was put forward that certain guerilla parties be moved across the Salween into the Karen areas of Siam to continue the "kill"; and for this purpose two officer reinforcements, who had had experience of the resistance movement in Greece, were flown in by Lysander. However, there was much still to be done in Karenni because soon the whole area was swarming with Japanese trickling in from the west, hiding in the nearby hills and foraging into the Karen villages. In the north a party of several hundred Japanese break-out troops under General Koba had crossed the Sittang and they were also expected to move south through Karenni. The trans-Salween operation was therefore called off.

The atom bombs had by then been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, though the news had not reached the guerillas. When it did filter through on the wireless, Bowen at first disbelieved it—and the fact that the Japanese were suing for peace. "V" Force then received instructions that there would be no further fighting except in dire emergency and that troops would open fire only in self-defence. "However, the Japanese on the east bank of the Sittang in no way moderated their tactics and during the next few days seemed to run completely amok in an orgy of looting, killing and burning."

Major Bowen's narrative continues:

Organising the surrender of the Japanese army is not quite as simple as it would seem. A Japanese soldier will only take orders from his own immediate superiors. During the following days we listened anxiously to the wireless. These were reports that various Colonel-Princes from the Imperial House were proceeding to all the more distant fronts to order a cease fire. Allied envoys had landed in Japan. But always as a footnote to the news came the communique 'Heavy fighting continues all along the Burma front'. One resented intensely the prospect of getting killed after the armistice.

Fortunately, there was no further fighting after the "surrender process" gained momentum and Major Bowen was evacuated from Karenni about a fortnight later, while "V" Force was pulled back to Pegu. The last we hear of this gallant band of Assam Riflemen, a thousand miles from where they were meant to serve, was that they were destined to move even further afield. But, alas, of that episode, if in fact it did come to pass, no information is available. The last we hear from Major Bowen is:

The remains of "V" Force were going up to Kengtung on the Chinese border and I lived with them in Pegu until they left.

POST-WAR ADJUSTMENTS AND INDEPENDENCE

THE war had afforded an opportunity to the military policemen of the Assam Rifles to prove their worth as a full-fledged fighting force—both in a guerilla role, in which they excelled, as well as in the role of front-line sub-units fighting a modern war, a role in which by all accounts they more than held their own. The list of gallantry awards won by the officers, V.C.O.s and men of this small Force was disproportionately high, by any reckoning; and stands testimony to the Assam Rifles' contribution to the defence of India and the eventual defeat of the Japanese on the Burma front. In these circumstances, alas, it was almost inevitable that return to peace-time duties at the end of the war would bring to the men and their officers nothing but disappointment, despair and a sense of being abandoned. That the correct decisions were eventually taken, the future development of the Force would amply prove; but who can blame them for their immediate sense of let-down after all they had been through and achieved in the war?

There had been much discussion about the future of the Assam Rifles even while the war was being fought—during 1944 and 1945; and alternative suggestions offered by the various agencies concerned ranged over a wide spectrum of options, from the possibility that the Assam Rifles might “follow the road taken in earlier days by the Piffers and become members of the Regular Army” (Sir Olaf Caroe); or the “Linking” of the Force with the Assam Regiment; or reversion to a purely police force officered by police officers. Each proposal reflected the interests of the agency concerned and consequently there was much discussion between them—the Foreign and Political Department of the Central Govern-

ment; General Headquarters. Delhi; the Secretariat of the Governor of Assam; and the Inspector General of Police, Shillong.

Perhaps the most galling (and quite uncalled for) reaction came from the Army. In August 1944 GHQ expressed the opinion that "quasi-military forces of the nature of the Assam Rifles should in future be classified as Police, and it would follow that officers for the force would no longer be forthcoming from the Army." A graceless assessment if ever there was one—and probably caused by ignorance of front-line actualities among the gilded Staff. It is likely that on the maps of GHQ Ops Room a forward post on the Chindwin was merely flagged as "2 Op Comd V-Force"; and that Delhi-based staff officers had little knowledge of the composition of those remote forward posts. It was unlikely that many of them would have visited the front or heard much about the platoons from the Assam Rifles that propped up "V" Force. Be that as it may, their attitude towards the Assam Rifles was certainly typical of staff officers, and almost hostile. At one stage of discussions in Delhi, the I.G. Assam Police pointed out to the D.M.O.: "I felt that it was a slur on the officers and men of the Assam Rifles to continue to repeat the old argument that their standard of training did not allow of their being used in any role other than the purely local one for which they were destined. The experience of the last two years and the list of awards obtained during that time by the Assam Rifles must be more than sufficient to answer this statement. General Maltby (Director of Military Operations) was good enough to admit this . . ."

Sir Olaf Caroe, on behalf of the Foreign and Political Department, was naturally concerned with the fact that the Assam Rifles was, by an Act of the Legislature, a Central Force to which the Assam Government made budgetary contribution. He therefore recommended that that part of the Force for which the Centre paid, should become a Frontier Constabulary on the lines of the N.W.F.P. Scouts, carrying out "frontier duties" among the border tribes, including functions "mainly of a guerilla and intelligence character", which would in the post-war future constitute a "strategic role" of even greater importance than in the past. That part of the

Force paid for by the Assam Government could assume the role of Provincial Armed Police—that is, employed on predominantly Internal Security roles.

Officering the Force

It is interesting to note that though the Foreign and Political Department recommended the officering of the Force by regular Army Officers, it warned that there might be difficulties once “Indianisation” began in earnest, obviously referring to the myth propagated by the British for over a hundred years—that the Government of Nepal had stipulated that Indian officers should not be placed in command of Nepali troops. A minute recorded in its files stated:

The Assam Rifles consist mostly of Gurkhas and, as is known, the Nepal Government do not agree to Indian Officers of Commissioned rank holding commissions in Gurkha Regiments. It is possible that Nepal Government may equally object to Indian Officers holding command over the Assam Rifles.

The myth of barring Indian officers from command over Gorkhas was exposed when Independent India re-negotiated the treaty with Nepal in 1947. Singha Durbar emphatically denied that any such stipulation had ever been made. Indeed, it is unlikely that the subject could ever have come up for discussion because at the time of starting Gorkha recruitment for service in the Indian Army, in the early 1800s, there were no Indian commissioned officers. What may have informally been agreed—though not recorded—was that Gorkha troops would furnish their own Nepali V.C.O.s and not serve under Indian jemadars and subedars, referred to in those days as “Indian Officers”. If so, the British made a political convenience out of this when Indianisation of the Army became inevitable after 1920: they kept Indian officers out of the Gorkha Regiments.

The views of the Inspector General of Police, Assam, about the future organisation of the Assam Rifles were influenced by the fact that “during the war two further functions have been acquired by the Assam Rifles. They are: they have been used as a fighting force in various ways, and particularly in

guerilla warfare: and they have been an essential factor in carrying out the forward policy on the northern frontier. Of these, the latter, particularly, will remain and grow, until it merges into an extension of the original functions. Further it is almost inevitable that if trouble again arose . . . the Assam Rifles would be called upon to provide a useful supplement to any other forces employed." This assessment is most interesting to record in view of the role given to the Assam Rifles nearly two decades later, at the time of the confrontation with the Chinese.

The I.G.P. recommended the "linking" of the Assam Rifles with the Assam Regiment as a sort of "Light Regiment . . . constituted for mixed military and civil duties." This new Regiment of the regular Army might consist of 6 or 7 battalions, of which a certain number would be placed, but not for too long periods at a time, at the full disposal of the Governor (of Assam).

By November 1944, when still no decision had been taken regarding the future of the Assam Rifles, the I.G.P. approached the Governor of Assam to hasten the recall of 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions from Army Service. This was readily agreed to because Assam Government was much concerned at that stage about a possible Kuki uprising in Manipur on the lines of the 1917-19 rebellion. Many of the Kukis had, unlike the Nagas, collaborated with the Japanese, come into contact with elements of the Indian National Army and, above all, now had access to large numbers of modern arms—both of British and Japanese origin—in jungle caches and hide-outs.

The whole question of the future of the Assam Rifles, however, was kept pending. The Central Government appointed a committee to study the problem of the future lay-out of regular troops and constabulary in the N.W.F.P. "Foreign Secretary is of the opinion", a minute in a Foreign Office file recorded, "that it would be of great assistance if this committee should, in due course, turn its attention to the North-east Frontier as well . . ."

So the matter rested until it was taken out of the hands of the British Indian Government following the momentous political developments in the immediate post-war period and the eventual Independence and Partition of the Sub-continent.

Post-Independence Set-backs

In the period immediately following the advent of Independence, battalions of the Force reverted to their former para-police status. Old rates of pay and reduction in rank for many individuals who had earned accelerated promotion in the field added to the sense of insecurity and frustration. Furthermore, the strength of the battalions, which had been increased to 16 platoons, was again brought down to 14. At the same time, as the post-war demobilisation programme was set in motion in the Army, there was a general paucity of officers, so that it became increasingly difficult to complete the officer establishment of the Force. In fact, due to leave, sickness, tours of duty and other commitments outside the battalions most of the time only one officer was available at Battalion headquarters to carry out the administrative chores. To ease this officer shortage a new scheme of engaging "contract officers" was introduced. Under this scheme, released Emergency Commissioned Officers and officers promoted from V.C.O. rank were posted to the battalions on a three-year contract basis.

Among some of the advantages of Assam Rifles participating in the war was that of their acquiring wireless sets from the Army. After the war all the battalions had retained the sets that had been issued to them for operation. The 2nd and the 5th Battalions had received the American SCR 284 sets while the 3rd and the 4th had received the British FS 19 sets. Both these types proved satisfactory during trials in long range communications. It was, therefore, at this stage that the idea of having every Assam Rifles post connected with its headquarters by wireless, and every battalion headquarters linked with a control station at Shillong, was mooted. The only hitch in the implementation of this scheme was that the 1st Battalion had acquired wireless sets that were not suitable for long range communications. This was, however, overcome by issue of the right type of wireless sets to the 1st Battalion from the other battalions.

The Assam Rifles went back to the system of supplying rations to the men through ration contractors, a system that did not work well in the interior areas where road communi-

cations were poor and rations had to be sent by porters. In this respect 1st Battalion was perhaps the worst off as there was only the one motorable road in the Lushai Hills, from Silchar to Aizawl, and even that was difficult to negotiate under bad weather conditions.

Meanwhile, maintenance of the permanent posts that had been established on the northern frontier began to create difficulties. Air-dropping in unknown and unmapped country, in indifferent weather conditions and with no well-defined dropping zones, was not only hazardous but also wasteful because of the large percentage of losses due to air-dropped loads rolling down the mountainous slopes or free-drop bags busting on landing. Great efforts were made to reduce such losses. Captain Binnie of 4th Battalion went to Imphal to accompany all the sorties maintaining his posts and personally guide the pilots. The most difficult posts were those of 2nd Battalion, particularly in the Siang and Lohit valleys where the ground and weather conditions were at their worst. However, as the R.A.F. (No 31 Squadron) gained experience, losses began to come down. After the pull-out of the R.A.F. in August 1947 air dropping once again suffered a set-back—albeit temporarily—because the Indian Air Force at first had neither the transport aircraft nor suitably trained transport pilots to undertake this task. (Their war-time squadrons had been constituted only of fighter and reconnaissance aircraft.)

In December 1946 two platoons of 2nd Battalion escorted the Assistant Political Officer, Mr James, to the McMahon Line up the Siang Valley. The aim of the expedition was to discourage Tibetan officials from intruding into British-Indian territory. The mission was successful in that many such officials were induced to go back to Tibet without resort to force. The column returned in February 1947.

It was fortunate for the Assam Rifles that the first Indian Governor of the State, Sir Akbar Hydari, an experienced administrator, took a personal interest in the affairs of the Force. In the midst of all the controversy that was raging between Delhi and Shillong regarding the future status of the Assam Rifles, it was Sir Akbar's farsightedness that helped greatly in arriving at a balanced and appropriate compromise. In this connection his exchange of signals with Delhi in June

1947 is significant:

Telegram grade 'C' No 4597 dated 14 June 47 from F.A. and C.R. department New Delhi to Secga, Shillong.

Your telegram No 807/C May 30 Assam Rifles.

For Akbar Hydari from Jawaharlal Nehru.

2. I appreciate your apprehension and should like to help. Proposal has been examined at departmental level with defence department and before taking the case further I should be grateful for your comments on following observation.

3. General Staff consider it highly improbable that there will be any external threat to north east frontier during next 10 years. As regards internal security, military resources are being reduced and Army will not be able to assist civil power to the extent to which provincial Governments have hitherto been accustomed. General Staff therefore favour increase in strength of civil forces available to provincial Government and would be prepared to assist in arming them. But there could be no question of such forces forming part of regular Army.

4. There seems to be two alternatives: (a) to expand Assam Rifles as you suggest, maintaining in tribal areas such proportion as is necessary and stationing remainder in province, allocation of cost between central and provincial Governments to be determined on basis of use to which units are put; or (b) to leave Assam Rifles exclusively under Central Government with primary role in tribal areas in which they would be stationed and to expand provincial armed police for internal security . . .

6. Grateful if your reply could include assessment of No of Assam Rifles units likely to be required permanently in tribal areas bearing in mind extended responsibilities which development plan will entail.

From Governor Assam, Shillong

To Foreign New Delhi

Your telegram No 4597 of Jun 14 Assam Rifles. For Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru from Hydari. I do not intend Assam Rifles forming part of regular Army but would like its officers being given military rank as present terminology Commandant and Asst Commandant is confusing. I have noted view of General Staff regarding improbability of external threat during next 10 years but consider never the less that it would be advantageous to the Central Government and the regular Army to have on its eastern frontier such trained auxiliaries possessing knowledge of country and its language.

The Assam Rifles would be exclusively under the Central Government with primary role in tribal areas and only if important occasion arises for the Governor at the request of provincial Government to call up units of this force in aid of the civil power.

The most immediate organisational change that Indepne-

dence of India brought to the Assam Rifles was the separation of the Force from the police, under its own Inspector General (an Army officer). Previously, the I.G. of Police, as Joint Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Home Department (later, in the Tribal Affairs Department), had been the head of the Assam Rifles and (since 1943) was permitted direct correspondence with the Government of India. In September 1947, an Inspector General Assam Rifles (I.G.A.R.) became head of the Assam Rifles, and under specific orders he was not only allowed to make direct correspondence with the Centre but was also given power of financial sanction within the Agency power of the Governor of Assam. The I.G.A.R. continued to exercise these powers till 1950, when both his financial authority and the right of direct correspondence with Delhi were withdrawn.

On 17 September Mr H.G. Bartley took over as the first I.G.A.R. At first his office, consisting of a superintendent and ten clerks, was located in the same building as the office of the I.G.P.; but in early 1948 it moved to La Bassee Lines near the Military Hospital. Mr Bartley retired from the service soon thereafter and Lieut-Colonel Sidhiman Rai, M.C., took over as the first Army Officer and the first Indian I.G.A.R., in the rank of Colonel. (Colonel Rai, originally an O.R. in 10 G.R., was granted an Emergency Commission in the Assam Regiment, serving in which he won the M.C. on the Burma front.) In the same year two staff officers were sanctioned for HQ I.G.A.R.

Since it was the Assam Police who had manned the Force's original wireless network, the Assam Rifles continued for some time to be dependent on the Police for signal communications. Later an officer of the Indian Signals, Major W.F. Applegate, was designated the Joint Signals Officer for both the forces.

The partition of Assam, together with the agitation mounted by the Muslim League, created disturbed conditions in the province. The situation was handled mainly by the Army and the Assam Police; and the Assam Rifles were involved only in a minor way. Three platoons of 3rd Battalion and four platoons of the 4th were requisitioned to assist the civil government in maintaining law and order during the referendum conducted at Sylhet. These platoons share the

credit for not allowing the events in the Punjab to repeat themselves in Assam.

Border Operations, 1947

Towards the end of 1947 the state of Tripura was threatened by Pakistani irregulars who had collected along the border in East Pakistan, their aim being to mount an offensive operation on the lines of their invasion of Kashmir. The operation started with large-scale infiltration of Muslims into Tripura. Consequently a special force of the Assam Rifles comprising ten platoons drawn from various battalions of the Assam Rifles, under command of Colonel Sidhiman Rai, was flown to Agartala. This special force carried out operations against the infiltrators and deterred the main body of Pakistani irregulars from making any further move and also dealt with communist elements who were trying to link up with their counterpart in East Pakistan. After about nine months of operations the platoons returned to their respective units. This was the first time that the Assam Rifles had provided a force under its own independent command to counter an external threat—normally the role of the regular army.

The creation of East Pakistan had added a new dimension to Assam's security problems. Faced with a live border with Pakistan and restless tribal elements within, the Assam Rifles now had to play an important role in both defence and internal security. The Force rose to the occasion, took vigorous and timely action at the slightest signs of trouble and prevented many minor incidents from developing into something more serious, as summarised in the following paragraphs.

In 1947, when the first administrative centre was established at Kore (now called Ziro), one platoon of the 5th Battalion provided the necessary protection to the first Political Officer of the Subansiri Frontier Division. In order further to strengthen the hands of N.E.F.A. administration, the Battalion, in the same year, established three posts of one platoon each at Rupa, Dirang and But. This put an end to the intrusions of Tibetan Dzongpens and other officials which had been going on for so many years. The Assam Rifles also thus gained the loyalty of the Monpas, who had been ruthlessly victimised by

the Tibetans. The Apatanis of Ziro area had, however, not taken kindly to the extension of administration into their area. In early June 1949 they burnt down the Inspection Bungalow at Dute and destroyed the cane bridge over Ranga river. Finally, on 13 June, about 1,500 Apatanis attacked the Base Superintendent's bungalow at Ziro itself. The small detachment of the Assam Rifles located there at once rushed to the rescue of the B.S. and although greatly outnumbered successfully repulsed the attack. On learning of these incidents an additional platoon was immediately sent from the Battalion Headquarters at Charduar to assist the Political Officer in restoring law and order.

In January 1948, three platoons of 3rd Battalion under Sardar Bahadur Subedar Major Bal Bahadur Gurung proceeded to the Naga Hills to quieten disorders in Chen village, some of whose inhabitants had begun to disturb the peace. The column returned to Battalion Headquarters after a tour of duty of about three weeks. Subsequently, in 1949, 3rd Battalion had to send out a number of columns to assist the civil authority in extending its control over villages in remote Naga areas.

At first it may seem surprising that it was the Nagas who gave so much trouble after the war, whereas it was the Kukis of Manipur State who had been expected to start an uprising following the defeat of the Japanese. It must be remembered, however, that the reason for tribal unrest following Partition and Independence arose from a different set of political circumstances than those prevailing in 1945.

Mr Nehru's Tribal Policy

Unlike the previous British-Indian government, which had been content to follow a *laissez-faire* policy on the north-eastern frontier—that is, unwilling to undertake the expensive process of extending the administration to vast, unrewarding tracts of primitive tribal territory—Mr Nehru's national government took a more responsible and humane view of the problem. The Prime Minister of India was adamant that all territory that lay within the claimed boundaries of the State must be protected and administered by the State, the same as for any

other territory in the heartland—however great the cost. As full-fledged Indians the tribals of the north-east had equal claims to the fruits of good government. At the same time, Mr Nehru was careful to point out that the tribal people must not be subjected to too sudden an exposure to the “so-called superior civilization” of the plains and the city bred Indian, because that would stifle their simple, unaffected and non-resistant culture. (In later years, this aspect of Mr Nehru’s policy for the tribal areas was developed and articulated by the famous anthropologist Dr Verrier Elwin who, working for the Government of Assam, enunciated it more fully as a “Philosophy for N.E.F.A.”)

Another significant political change after the end of the war was, of course, the independence of Burma and the subsequent internal turbulence in that country, necessitating a strict watch on border routes into India. In this respect also, the circumstances in Manipur were different from those in the Naga Hills territory. Much of Manipur had for years been administered by the Maharaja’s government, so that there was little resistance by the locals when posts were established by 4th Battalion at Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Thanlon and Tengnoupal—both for prevention of illegal entry and smuggling as well as for controlling the activities of communists and other subversive elements.

In Nagaland, on the other hand, there was strong resentment to government’s “encroachment” into previously unadministered territory—whatever the declared purpose. Thus, during the first two years, expeditions to a number of villages (Yong-hong, Momikshi, Poochu and Yongdak) were fiercely resisted. In one instance, a column of two platoons of 3rd Battalion, under Major H.R. Sharma (accompanied by the S.D.O.), was several times shot at, the Nagas sometimes putting in daring attacks at close quarters. It was only after using great tact and firmness that the villages were persuaded to submit to Government’s authority.

In 1949 the administration in Manipur anticipated an uprising to protest against the integration of the State in accordance with the all-India States policy. Troops were alerted and 4th Battalion, whose strength was augmented by two platoons each from 2nd and 3rd Battalions, carried out

intensive day and night patrolling in conjunction with a company of the Assam Regiment, all under the operational control of the Army. In the event, the integration of the State with the Centre passed off peacefully. During this period 4th Battalion was also required to maintain close watch on the Chin Hills border, where there was a threat from infiltrating Chins. For better security the temporary outpost at Thanlon was moved further west to Lungthulien. Immediately on arrival here the Assam Rifles intercepted a party of Chins who had intruded into Indian territory; they captured a home-made bullet discharger and some rifles from the Chins. This move had the desired effect on the encroachment of hostile elements in this area.

Administrative Measures

The main problem that confronted the Assam Rifles after Independence was that of properly equipping the Force to enable it to meet the new and varied commitments which resulted not only from the extension of administration in the tribal areas, but also from the disturbed political situation in Assam and in the neighbouring countries. The supply situation also remained unsatisfactory, due to several factors such as the acute transportation situation and the shortage of certain essential items within the country. Due to some civilian firms supplying inferior quality of clothing and equipment, more and more reliance was being placed on the Army's supply agencies. The state of motor transport being unsatisfactory, greater use of animal transport had to be made, for which purpose some additional mules were sanctioned for the battalions. To meet the new authorisation, mules were immediately purchased from Kalimpong, and Veterinary Field Assistants were appointed to look after the animals, while the pay and terms of service of mule drivers were improved.

The increasing operational commitments were readily accepted by the Force but this was done only at the cost of training and rest; for the commitments far exceeded the manpower resources of the battalions. Under a reorganisation scheme sanctioned in June 1943 all battalions, except the 5th which was then the Training Battalion, had been authorised a uni-

form strength of 967 all ranks. In 1949 a further increase in the strengths of the battalions was sanctioned. This time each battalion was authorised its own W.E. according to its commitment:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1st Battalion | 1,045 all ranks |
| 2nd Battalion | 1,475 all ranks |
| 3rd Battalion | 1,044 all ranks |
| 4th Battalion | 1,107 all ranks |
| 5th Battalion | 1,168 all ranks |

As regards shortage of officers (out of a total of 29 officers authorised only 23, including nine contract term officers, were posted) this was due to a general reluctance on the part of Indian Army Officers to volunteer for service with the Assam Rifles, about which they knew little or nothing. Services of suitable contract term officers had, therefore, to be extended.

Increased commitments also created the problem of wireless communications. With the establishment of so many new posts and the mounting of several columns, the wireless equipment of the Assam Rifles was subjected to great strain. Besides its own requirement thousands of civil government messages had to be transmitted on the Assam Rifles wireless network. Fortunately some more B II and No 19 sets were received in 1949 which saved the wireless network from virtual breakdown. Much help was also rendered by the Assam Police wireless organisation in running the wireless network. Such *ad hoc* arrangements could not, however, continue for long and the Assam Rifles wireless organisation had to be built up to be able to stand on its own feet. Fortunately, because of the useful role that the Assam Rifles was playing in the maintenance of border security, the Army had begun to take much more interest in its problems. Brigadier R.N. Batra, CSO Eastern Command, during his tour of Shillong in August 1949 went into the Signals Organisation of the Assam Rifles and submitted detailed proposals for its reorganisation. These were subsequently submitted to the Government of India by the Advisor to the Governor (appointed as an intervening agency between the Inspector General Assam Rifles and the Governor of Assam). Brigadier Batra's proposals formed the

basis of the subsequent reorganisation of Assam Rifles Signals set-up sanctioned by Government.

The need for improving the service conditions of the Assam Rifles was also long overdue. Having worked alongside the Army in World War II and proved their worth in active operations, disparity in the pay and ration scales of the Assam Rifles and the Army appeared unjustified. The great champion of the Assam Rifles cause was still Sir Akbar Hydari. His efforts, however, bore fruit only in 1949 when a new pay code for the Assam Rifles was sanctioned. Although the new pay code could still not compare favourably with that of the Army, it was a great improvement on the existing one. Along with the new pay code Army scales of rations, with some modifications, were also introduced. Unfortunately Sir Akbar Hydari did not live to see the result of his efforts. A few months earlier, in December 1948, he had died of heart failure at Waikhong (45 kms from Imphal) while on a tour of Manipur. In view of the great attachment that he had had for the Assam Rifles it was but appropriate that he should have been buried in the 4 Assam Rifles lines with full military honours provided by the Assam Rifles.

Till about 1949 little attention had been paid to the welfare of Assam Rifles personnel and their families. There was in fact no grant from the Government for this purpose. A scheme for men's welfare, on the lines of army welfare schemes, was first outlined at Headquarters I.G.A.R. and taken up by all the battalions. Since no Government help was forthcoming, the battalions husbanded their resources and also began to raise funds by way of variety performances by battalion school children and charity matches. The families welfare schemes included knitting, weaving, dispensing, tailoring, embroidery, children's education and establishment of maternity and child welfare centres.

The first Assam Rifles Sports Meet after the war was organised at Shillong in 1949. About 500 competitors from all the battalions took part in sports and professional competitions. 3rd Battalion won the championship "Agartala Shield". This Shield was made out of the donation of Rs 1,000 made by the Government of India as a reward for the services rendered by the Assam Rifles in Tripura State in 1948. The

Meet, witnessed by hundreds of civilian and military officials including the Governor and G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Command, did much to establish a presence for the Assam Rifles.

One of the urgent operational problems discussed by the battalion commandants (who held their first Commandants' Conference during this Meet) was the increasing commitment of the Force for the defence of the Indo-Pak border. The Partition Line drawn by Mr Radcliffe had left several anomalies in detailed topographical logic—in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills section, in Cachar and Sylhet and, particularly, in the Feni River salient in Tripura, to name a few of the more important localities. Whereas these could well be discussed between representatives of the two countries and a compromise achieved, Pakistan was in no mood for peaceable solutions and everywhere sought to gain advantage by intimidation and belligerence—and aimed at armed incursion to force the solution. In these circumstances, Assam Rifles platoons deployed along the border might be required to fight pitched battles against regular forces—a task for which they were neither organised nor equipped. Even in World War II Operations, the Assam Rifles had mainly been deployed to fight as platoons or in even smaller groups.

In 1949, G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Command, probably unaware of the ethos of the Force, ordered that a “composite battalion” of the Assam Rifles, organised on the lines of a regular Infantry battalion, be raised under the command of Lieut-Colonel H.R. Sharma. The resultant “unit” was tried out in collective training. Although the sub-units demonstrated their usual elan, it was realised that it takes more than just twelve rifle platoons to form a battalion of Infantry—a precept that should not have been countenanced to start with. The platoons were allowed to return to their parent battalions.

Fortunately, none of the border incidents developed into a pitched battle. For example, Capt D.B. Rana of 1 A.R. was despatched to Cachar District in January 1950 with several platoons from various battalions, with the task of protecting Karimganj and the Patharia hills from Pakistani incursions. Pakistan had massed quite a large force of East Pakistan Rifles, *Ansar Bahini* and Armed Police along the border near Karimganj. However, vigorous patrolling by the Assam Rifles

in conjunction with the local police had its effect, for the Pakistanis, despite initial menacings, refrained from actual aggression. The incident however was aggravated by large-scale communal disturbances in Karimganj and nearby border areas—the quelling of which became Capt Rana's new task. The situation was brought under control without developing into any widespread rioting. The Assam Rifles contingent was withdrawn, though it had had to open two new posts—at Halaikandi and Madimpur. Similarly, tension along the border between the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Mymensing (in Pakistan) subsided without any operational incident; and most of the temporary posts on this front were withdrawn. The overall threat, of course, remained—and, for the time being, the Assam Rifles had to continue to shoulder the responsibility.

The Earthquake and the Floods

The year 1950 was a fateful year in the history of Assam. In the midst of celebrations of the third anniversary of Independence on 15 August, 1950, Assam was rocked by one of the severest earthquakes in living memory. The epicentre of this great upheaval was located north of Rima, just across the Tibetan border. Thus, though severe shocks were felt all over Assam, they were of the highest intensity in the Mishmi and Abor hills of the Sadiya Frontier Tract.

The earthquake came shortly after dark on that fateful day, unleashing its fury and devastation for five long and vicious minutes. The effect on the mountains was cataclysmic. Huge rock formations rolled thunderously down the slopes while whole mountain-sides were stripped off their covering of forests. Virtually every tributary of the Lohit from the source of the river downwards became choked by rock avalanches and masses of flotsam timber, eventually forming innumerable lakes which swelled till they ultimately broke their rock barriers and caused devastating floods in the low-lying parts of the plains.

Lower down, the area in and around Sadiya was also severely shaken. The earth cracked and fissures opened up, damaging roads and bridges. The floods that followed immediately washed away the ferry ghats at Saikhowa and the

Sadiya bank. The national highway was submerged for miles on end and, with the railway line damaged at various places, Sadiya was completely cut off from the rest of India. The Assam Rifles lines at Sadiya also suffered major damage. Most of the barracks and family quarters either collapsed or became totally unsafe for occupation.

The Assam Rifles outposts up in the hills reported damage to buildings and property in varying degrees. At Riga and Kalon the camps had completely collapsed. At Denning all the buildings had either collapsed or had been severely damaged and a new stream now flowed through the camp dividing it into two. Fortunately no casualties among the men in the posts were reported.

Of even greater concern was the fate of three long-range patrols that were caught out in the mountains when the earthquake struck. One patrol under Subedar Kharka Bahadur Gurung of 2 A.R. had been escorting the A.P.O. on a visit to the McMahan Line in the upper reaches of the Lohit River, where he was to confer with Tibetan officials from across the border. The patrol was caught in an avalanche and lost three porters, its wireless equipment and all its rations buried under a mass of debris. Another patrol commanded by Havildar Pahal Singh Rana was on its way to Diphu La on a mission similar to that of the A.P.O. The resourceful N.C.O. hurriedly vacated the camp site when the first great tremors alerted them; and thus the men were saved, its former camp area buried under the avalanche of rocks. Like Kharka Bahadur's men, they also found themselves marooned when they discovered that all tracks and bridges had been obliterated. The third party was commanded by Major R. ("Bob") Khathing, M.B.E., M.C., of the Assam Rifles, and consisted of 16 Assam Riflemen, Major D.K. Roy of 6 Kumaon, Captain B. Gupta (also of the Indian Army) and five Army personnel. They found themselves trapped at Mirzong, about 14 kms from Changwinti.

Fortunately each of these patrols came out safely, but not before undergoing days of hardship, numerous attempts to force a way through the devastation, often short of rations and always out of wireless contact with Headquarters. Havildar Pahal Singh's party incidentally eventually made it to Rima,

where they found Mr Kingdon Ward, the famous botanist and explorer, and Mrs Ward. Both had been marooned for days and were weak from exhaustion. Eventually the patrol brought the two out with them to Walong and sent them on their way home to England.

The next immediate problem was the fate of the Rima post. This platoon had been stocked with rations only up to 10 October. All tracks had been obliterated and there appeared to be no hope of re-opening them in the near future. There being no other means of supplying the post, the platoon was ordered to make it as best as it could to Pasighat, leaving a few men at the post to look after the collapsed camp and the heavy kit. The memorable march of the platoon under Jemadar Desh Bahadur Limbu, without rations for seven days and negotiating numerous ridges and sensitive hill slides will always stand out as an example in endurance, determination and discipline. As in all the other cases, the cordial relations between the Assam Rifles and the tribals paid high dividends. In spite of their own difficulties, these simple and honest folk cheerfully came forward to help as much as they could and saved the platoon from starvation.

After the initial shock was over the Assam Rifles recovered quickly and thereafter every man gave of his best to meet this dire calamity. Wherever the Assam Rifles men were stationed in the affected areas they started immediate reconstruction of buildings, roads and tracks on their own initiative. At Sadiya they put up shelters for the homeless families within 24 hours of the earthquake. Similarly all outposts started repairs to their buildings and also work on tracks in a desperate effort to link up with each other. The result was that within a short time the Assam Rifles were able to open up all the important tracks in the Mishmi and Abor hills.

In the mountains, even as the men of the Force themselves struggled for existence under the impact of the devastation, they willingly rendered help in alleviating the sufferings of the civil population. In the tribal areas they extended immediate relief from out of their own resources, including rations, to the adjacent villages. In the plains, the work done by Assam Rifles flood rescue parties under Captain H.B. Limbu as part of the joint Military-Assam Rifles-Police rescue operations in

the flooded areas of North Lakhimpur will ever shine in the annals of Assam Rifles history as deeds of selflessness and courage. On one occasion Captain Limbu and two men volunteered to cross the swollen and furious Subansiri in a country boat in order to reach the marooned villages of Bali-gaon and had a providential escape, when the boat overturned in mid-river. Construction of hundreds of temporary houses and buildings for hospitals, dispensaries, schools, godowns for the flood-affected inhabitants of North Lakhimpur Sub-Division by a force of only 150 Assam Rifles under the inspiring leadership of Major H.R. Sharma, was another great achievement worthy of praise. The Assam Rifles again rose to the occasion when in October Sadiya suffered the worst-ever floods and rendered all possible help to the affected population. Due to the complete disruption of communications between Sadiya and the rest of Assam the ration position of the whole of town had become acute. The Assam Rifles cut down their own meagre rations to extend a loan to the Political Officer for his relief work.

One agency that remained unaffected by the earthquake was the Assam Rifles Signals organisation. Although hard pressed it functioned efficiently when all other means of communication in the State collapsed; and it was worthy of the praise it received from all quarters. The daily sitreps issued by the office of the Inspector General Assam Rifles remained for long the only reliable and important medium of information for the Governor and the Cabinet; and most relief operations were based on this information.

Perhaps the most touching gesture on the part of the Assam Rifles was their contribution of Rs 24,590 towards the Governor's Relief Fund, despite their own severe mauling during the earthquake and the floods. This was greatly appreciated by the Governor who, after keeping back a token sum of Rs 2000 for his fund, returned the rest for utilization in the welfare of the Assam Rifles personnel.

What the Assam Rifles achieved during this catastrophe was to a large measure due to the inspiration they received from the Governor, Shri Jairamdas Daulatram. He visited many affected areas where the Assam Rifles were located, braving physical hardships, at times even risking his life. On

one occasion, while he was on tour in flood-ravaged Sadiya, he became trapped in flood waters while on his way to Nizamghat and could extricate himself only after wading through chest deep water.

At the end of the relief operation the Assam Rifles had earned a great name for itself. In a statement on the havoc and damage caused by the earthquake and floods in Assam, the Chief Minister, Shri Bishnu Ram Medhi, paid rich tribute to the Assam Rifles. Making a special mention of the "splendid work done by the Assam Rifles during this emergency" he enumerated their work in detail and concluded by saying that "another glorious chapter in the heroic annals of the Assam Rifles has been written". The richest tributes were, of course, paid by the Governor himself. In the *Foreword* to a brochure recording the tasks performed by the Assam Rifles during the earthquake and the floods, he wrote: "Probably no event brought out the splendid qualities of the officers and men of the Assam Rifles more prominently before the outside world than did the great earthquake of 1950. The Assam Rifles are essentially a force for maintaining law and order in the frontier hill areas of the north-east corner of India. But they have transformed themselves more than once, and at short notice, into an efficient military force playing a notable role in the wars to which India has had to be a party. The great earthquake showed that the Assam Rifles were not only an armed force for civil purposes but they constituted a well disciplined volunteer corps for the service of the people at a time of great danger and dire distress. By their deeds of courage, sacrifice and devotion, when the people of Assam found their lives and property in peril of extinction, the Assam Rifles have won fresh laurels in a new field of service."

In recognition of the excellent work done by the 2nd and the 5th Battalions during the earthquake and the floods, the Governor of Assam awarded two Challenge Shields, costing Rs 1000 each, to the two battalions. The Governor also instituted the award of Commendation Cards and presented these to a large number of personnel by way of appreciation of individual acts of outstanding work.

Law and Order Problems

Apart from the natural calamity that it had to face in 1950, the Government of Assam also had to deal with large-scale disturbances created by the communists in the State in an all-out bid to paralyse the Government. The main burden of the anti-communist operations launched by the Government of course fell on the Assam Police; but in fact most of the anti-communist operations were combined affairs between the Assam Police and the Assam Rifles.

In early March a major operation was launched in Kamrup district in which eventually 11 platoons of the Force joined the police effort to stamp out communist outrages. The earthquake and subsequent floods interrupted the anti-communist drive, but by October it was in full swing again, this time under the direct command of the I.G. Police. Several prominent leaders were arrested and by the end of the year the situation had been brought under control and the platoons returned to their respective battalions.

It was now the turn of the hill areas—particularly Manipur and the Lushai Hills—to be affected by communist disturbances, instigated to no small extent by bands of Burmese communists operating in the Chindwin valley at Withok and in the area east of Moreh. 4th Battalion, placed at the disposal of the Chief Commissioner of Manipur, carried out numerous operations—patrolling, cordoning off, raids on hide-outs and searches for underground leaders. By October a large number of suspects had been rounded up and over 100 rifles (mostly Japanese) and other weapons recovered. The trouble in the Lushai Hills was less widespread, the most seriously affected areas being Tuipang and Lungleh, where the Assam Rifles posts had to be reinforced.

The communist uprising in Assam did not affect the Naga Hills but there were cases of breaches of the peace in 1950 which had to be dealt with by 3rd Battalion. In April there was a riot among the Phiro and Phensinyu villagers. During May-June a punitive expedition comprising two platoons under Captain M. Tamang and accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner was sent against the villages of Phomching, Yongching and Agching, which had combined together and

raided Urangkong. Another column of one platoon under Subedar Major Uttam Singh Chhettri M.C. and accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner visited the Sangtam and Sema areas on the Burma border in November 1950 to bring about a settlement of the eternal land feuds between these two tribes. The column was successful in its task and after establishing peace in these areas returned to Kohima by the end of the month.

Raising of 6th Battalion

Soon after Independence the Communist Party of India had begun to be active among disgruntled elements among the tribals of Tripura and to instigate small-scale insurgencies against the Maharaja's administration. Communist propaganda had obviously affected personnel of the Tripura Rifles (a State Force unit) because there were a number of cases of desertion with arms. When the Rajmata, acting on behalf of her minor son, signed the Merger Agreement in 1949 and responsibility for law and order passed to the Government of India, it was decided to raise a sixth battalion of Assam Rifles, to be based at Agartala, with which the Tripura Rifles would be merged.

Lieut-Colonel M.M. Hazarika, C.O. of 1st Battalion, was sent to Agartala in November 1950 to raise the new Battalion and to disband the Tripura State Forces. The composition of the Battalion was to be 64 per cent Gorkhas and 34 per cent Assam tribals, the initial draft of manpower and equipment to be taken from the Tripura S.F. After screening, three J.C.O.s (as V.C.O.s were now designated) and 170 O.R.s were taken from the Tripura Rifles; a large number of the remainder were then sent for attachment with 1st, 2nd and 5th A.R. for training, further screening and, if found suitable on all counts, for service with Assam Rifles.

At that time, there were two platoons of the A.R. already located in Agartala for guarding the airfield. Four more platoons were flown in in December and these six platoons together with the nucleus from the State Forces began to function as 6th Battalion, the Assam Rifles. In early 1951 five more platoons were despatched from the other battalions, bringing 6th Battalion's strength up to 13 platoons.

It was about this time that a number of reform measures were introduced for the Assam Rifles and these facilitated the new Battalion during its teething period. New equipment tables were approved by Army Headquarters, including an increase in the practice scales of small arms ammunition; internal transport problems were largely met by the sanction of a Transport J.C.O. and the authorisation of mules for 2nd, 5th and 6th Battalions, for the first time; snow clothing was sanctioned for high altitudes. Perhaps the most important reorganisation was that of Signals cover. It was decided that the Force must establish its own Signals agency, independent of Police Signals. Crash courses for advanced training in wireless operation were organised at Shillong. At the same time, the Assam Rifles acquired the Duplex type equipment for better speech and Morse communication as well as a number of more up-to-date receiver sets including light Hallicraft sets.

The new Battalion had its first taste of field operations in the following year when a fresh outburst of communist insurgency took a serious turn in Tripura. The Battalion established 11 field camps all over the State, two officers and 450 men being so deployed for nearly eight months. About 20 encounters with armed bands were recorded, most ending in exchanges of fire. The civil police were the main target of the insurgents, the aim being to raid and burn down police stations and loot arms and ammunition in the process. By the end of the year, however, 6th Battalion succeeded in restoring a degree of order in the State.

4th Battalion was deployed on similar operations because the communists were active in Manipur also during this period. Two noteworthy actions were: the counter-ambush successes of the Moirang Kampur post (Sub Durga Bahadur Rai) in which three notorious communists were killed and Rfn Tilbahadur Gurung earned the Ashok Chakra III (now known as Shaurya Chakra); and the recovery of a cache of small arms in the Lairok Hill area by the same platoon and the capture of Chourojit Singh, a much wanted communist leader.

The year 1951 was a trying one for 2nd Battalion because of the recurrence of floods. The great earthquake had changed the courses of the rivers and in the process raised the level of the river beds—so that they overflowed their banks after even a

minor spell of rain. Sadiya was flooded several times in the rainy season of 1951, placing the usual burden of rescue and rehabilitation work on the Battalion. Eventually it was decided that Sadiya had become so unsafe that the HQ of the Battalion be moved 45 miles to the north-east, near Denning, an area that was still a tropical forest. In 1952 Battalion HQ shifted to this area, subsequently named Lohitpur.

THE NORTHERN BORDER

IN the autumn of 1950, while Assam and N.E.F.A. were still reeling from blows struck by nature, a greater, man-made calamity befell the people of Tibet. On 7 October Communist China's forces invaded Tibet from their bases in Szechwan and Kansu and shattered the tranquillity of a peaceable people who had lived secure and free from major external interference for centuries. The Tibetans made a valiant but vain attempt to withstand the Chinese hordes, and the unequal fight was soon over. Chamdo fell on the 13th; there was little organised resistance thereafter other than harassment of the invading forces by bands of resolute Khampa warriors.

The occupation of Tibet by Communist China suddenly exposed the northern frontier of India to potential threat. The age-old friendship between the two countries notwithstanding, the threat arose from the fact that while India claimed the McMahon Line as its boundary with Tibet, China had not officially accepted this Line, not having ratified the Simla Convention (the agreement with British India in 1914). Furthermore, the British Government itself had kept the whole matter of the Simla Convention secret till many years after the end of the First World War—thus providing the excuse for China's later "cartographical aggression" against our claims. And now the P.L.A. of China and not the *lamas* and *dzongpens* of Tibet were to face us in these mutually claimed regions.

The Himmatsinhji Committee

In order to survey the whole problem of defence and security of the north-east, Government of India hastily appointed a Committee on 1 December, 1950, under the chairmanship of

the Deputy Defence Minister, Major General Himmatsinhji, with the Chief of the General Staff, Major-General Kulwant Singh, as one of the members. The Committee, considering the broader aspects of the role of the Assam Rifles, its place in the Assam administration, force levels and internal communications, made some very pertinent observations and recommendations:

The role of the Assam Rifles was recently defined as follows:

- (a) defence of the international border;
- (b) maintenance of law and order in the tribal area;
- (c) internal defence of the other areas only in an emergency in which police is unable to cope with the situation.

In our opinion, the Assam Rifles are not in a position to defend the frontier against mass aggression and the word "Security" instead of "Defence" would better define their duty. We consider also that the "international border" should not include the border with Pakistan as far as the Assam Rifles are concerned . . .

It will be seen that the whole of the northern borderland is looked after by only two battalions, the 2nd and the 5th. The 2nd alone is responsible for the Siang, Dihang and Lohit valleys and the Tirap Frontier Tract, including the Ledo road. The 3rd battalion has the care of Naga areas both in Assam State and the N.E.F. Agency. The 1st is in the Lushai Hills and the 4th in Manipur. Five platoons, three in the Garo-Khasi hills, are serving outside their normal areas. In Manipur, besides the Assam Rifles battalion, there are the Manipur Rifles, a force of about 400 strong directly under the Chief Commissioner, who also has a police force. For the time being, a detachment from a regular battalion provides guards for the petrol pump, jail, etc. In Tripura State, the Old Tripura Rifles are now being reorganised as the 6th Battalion of the Assam Rifles. The enormous area to be covered in comparison with the limited size of the force has resulted in wide dispersion in weak detachments. There are no fewer than 70 posts and in many cases platoons have been split to a quarter of their original size to man posts.

It is our opinion that both an expansion and a concentration and re-deployment of the Assam Rifles are necessary for more effective occupation of the border area. The Force has built up a reputation among the tribesmen and is acceptable to them; and we consider that it should enlarge its contacts with the people by constant and extensive patrolling and support the civil administration by its presence. For these purposes its strength is inadequate. As a first step we recommend an immediate net increase of strength by one battalion of nineteen platoons. Ultimately, we consider that two additional battalions are necessary, one to take over the Abor Hills area and the other the Tirap Frontier Tract, leaving the present 2nd Battalion the care of the

Sadiya Frontier Tract, which in itself is large enough for a single battalion.

The Committee expressed concern about the existing dispositions of Assam Rifles detachments, particularly their dispersal. In order to achieve concentration of force while covering a wide area of operation, it made certain recommendations:

The Force is now widely scattered in small detachments, commanded by Junior Commissioned Officers owing to the weakness of the sanctioned officers strength, most of the officers being tied down to administrative work at Battalion Headquarters. This dispersal has also created serious administrative, training, medical and welfare problems. We consider that it would be far better to have in each battalion area two or three well-defended bases, sited at strategic places on the main lines of approach to Assam rather than to have a large number of weakly-held posts scattered all over. Each defended base should be sufficient to accommodate a garrison consisting of a Wing Headquarters and troops varying from three to six platoons, commanded by an officer. From each Wing, patrols should be sent out regularly for ten or fifteen days at a time by rotation, each patrol being given a definite area to reconnoitre.

The exact location of the defended bases should be determined after careful reconnaissance on the spot; but, as far as possible, a Battalion Commander and a Political Officer should be put together. The Wing Headquarters should be at or near the Administrative Centres. If that is not possible, a detachment of the Wing should always be available for static duties at the Administrative Centre . . .

In order to ensure that the I.G.A.R.'s advice carried more weight at higher levels and that more frequent tours of outposts be undertaken from his HQ, the Committee recommended that the rank of the appointment should be raised to Brigadier and that the appointment of an Assistant I.G. together with increased staff at HQ be sanctioned. As for unit organisation, the Committee felt that in order to achieve greater mobility and greater efficiency Assam Rifles battalions should be reorganised into a Headquarter Wing and Rifle Wings of three platoons each—the number of wings varying according to the number of platoons authorised in that particular battalion. For increased defensive potential, battalions were to be authorised a 3-in mortar and a medium machine gun platoon each.

The Committee observed that four different agencies were

involved as far as the command and control of the Assam Rifles was concerned. These were: the Governor, representing the Government of India; the Assam Government; and the Commissioners of Manipur and Tripura who came under the Ministry of States. The Inspector General was responsible to these authorities separately for the areas respectively under them. The Committee felt that there should be greater co-ordination in this arrangement and recommended that the Governor, as the Agent of the Government of India, should review the problem of frontier security as a whole and that all proposals about the Assam Rifles which required the orders of the Government of India should be channelled through his secretariat.

Lastly, the Committee recommended an increase in the proportion of recruitment of local tribals to 40 per cent of the total strength of a battalion, leaving a quota of 60 per cent for Gorkhas.

Most of these recommendations were accepted by the Government and implemented; some immediately and some over the years upto 1962 (when the Chinese invasion upset the entire basis of these recommendations and compelled the Government to do some rethinking).

The Towang Salient

In early 1951 it became clear that Chinese activity in Tibet was on the increase. In order to reinforce security measures along a border that had so far had not posed any major threat, a number of steps were taken to resite and reorganise frontier posts to meet tactical requirements. Walong and Hayuliang were reinforced with one platoon each and placed under the command of an officer. Two check-posts were established by the Assam Rifles along the McMahon Line in the upper reaches of Siang Valley. The greatest leap forward in security measures, however, was taken in the most threatened sector, where Indian, Bhutanese and Tibetan marches ran together—in the Towang salient.

It will be remembered that the British government's pusillanimous reaction to Tibetan (and Chinese) claims in this salient had resulted in Lhasa's forcible occupation of the area

in 1942—right down almost to the plains near Udalguri. Throughout the war the British and American governments preferred to follow a policy of appeasement of the Chinese, with the result that border security in north Assam was downgraded in priority. A certain amount of road-building had been started in Lohit, Subansiri and Mon-yul divisions of the Frontier Tract during the war years; and an attempt had at last been made to administer the Agency right up to the claimed border in the extreme north-east. But Towang had been left strictly alone.

As the war drew to a close an effort had been made by the British to clarify the constitutional status of this frontier region. By the 1919 Act part of it was described as “excluded and partially excluded areas”—that is, not under the jurisdiction of the Government of Assam; so a proposal was made to make the “North-eastern Protectorate” a “Non-regulated” area. Tibet, meanwhile, officially continued to affirm its acceptance of the Simla Convention. Incidentally, in October 1944 the Kashag had officially written that it “did not wish to dispute the validity of the McMahon Line” but had requested postponement of the extension of British administration to Towang because, they said, settlement talks with the Chinese (Chiang Kai-Shek) government were going on. In 1947, Lhasa accepted the transfer of power in Delhi without any declared reservations.

In December 1950 Pandit Nehru at last decided that the time had come when the *dzongpens* and their henchmen must be eased out of Indian territory in Towang, not only to forestall any future untoward move by the Communist conquerors of Tibet but also to initiate the first definite steps to open up the North-eastern region and to draw the tribal people into the mainstream of India’s national development—responsibilities which the British had consciously and persistently refused to shoulder.

Major “Bob” Khathing, formerly of the Assam Rifles but currently serving as A.P.O. in Pasighat, was summoned to Shillong at the end of December 1950 and ordered to take a column of Assam Rifles up to Towang to establish an Assistant Political Officer’s administration there. With an escort of three platoons from 5th Battalion at Lokhra (under Captain

H.B. Limbu's command) Khathing reached Dhirang on 1st February, 1951, where he was joined by one or two other civilian functionaries. The party crossed the 14,300 ft Se La pass under difficult, wintry conditions, established an Assam Rifles check post at Jang and, on the 6th, reached Towang—to be received by representatives of the Tsona *dzongpen*, the latter being away on tour. The local Monpas, mindful of the vengeance of the *dzongpen* after the British let down during Lightfoot's visit in 1938, held aloof from the Indian officials.

The *dzongpen* met with Khathing on 9 February, after the Tibetan New Year holidays. At this first meeting, the A.P.O. formally announced that from that day, "the 3rd day of the Iron-Hare Year, corresponding with 9th February, 1951, the administration of Towang and its monastery would be the responsibility of the Government of India"; and that the Tsona *dzongpen* or any other officials of the Tibetan government could no longer exercise authority over the villages south of Bum La (that is, south of the McMahon Line). They were to cease the collection of taxes and tributes forthwith.

The announcement came as great shock to the Tibetan officials, who stated that they had never been told that the area had been "ceded" to India. Unsatisfied with Khathing's explanations, they referred the matter to Lhasa and asked that they be allowed to continue to exercise authority until a reply was received from Lhasa. This Khathing refused to countenance and set about establishing Indian administration—by promulgating orders to the village chiefs; touring the whole salient; selecting building sites for an Assam Rifles post and starting *basha* construction; visiting the monastery with assurances to the *Lamas*; and trying to win over the confidence of the Monpas till their last lingering doubts were dispelled. Interestingly, Khathing was forced to levy a house tax of Rs 5 per house per annum, because the Monpas said that they could not be sure that the Indians meant business until their government began to impose its own taxes!

The long awaited reply from Lhasa came on 25 April, instructing the *dzongpens* to continue to exercise authority as before and not to leave their posts. The *dzongpens* at once reacted—and sent out messages summoning all village chiefs to a meeting on 2nd May, ignoring Khathing's protestations.

At this stage a *contretemps* caused by bureaucratic faint-heartedness in Shillong nearly wrecked the whole scheme. Both Khathing and Geoffrey Allen, his P.O. in Charduar, had referred the matter to the Assam government, who now surprisingly gave all the indications of a cave-in. Khathing was instructed to take it easy, and "not to arrest the (Tibetan) officials and thus make an undue fuss over the matter which may only result in an incident". Khathing was told: "No repeat No orders should be issued to the Tibetan Officials without consulting us first."

This had all the makings of a let-down such as Lightfoot had experienced. However, Khathing was made of sterner stuff. While obeying the letter of Shillong's instructions he felt he could ignore its spirit for the time being. He organised a display of force by sending 50 men of the Assam Rifles, decked out in full battle dress and with bayonets fixed, to march and counter-march through Towang, particularly in the vicinity of the proposed meeting of village chiefs. The villagers were delighted—and they kept away. The *dzongpens* were duly impressed. They stayed on for a few weeks more but, seeing that they were virtually under armed surveillance and could get no forced labour from the locals (the normal custom in Tibet) they left Towang for Tsona *Dzong*. Khathing let it be known that if they ever attempted to return they would be arrested at the check post.

Thus, willy-nilly, was Delhi's writ established in this remote Buddhist belt of Indian territory. Bob Khathing has recorded his appreciation of the help and support he received from the Assam Rifles contingent in carrying out this task: "The establishment and consolidation of Indian Administration in the Towang area could be smoothly and successfully carried out only because of the Assam Rifles. As a matter of fact, except for the Assistant Tibetan Agent, I had no other civil officer, not even an Office Assistant to run the office. An Office Assistant joined me only after four months of our occupation. All the welfare activities for the local people were carried out by the Assam Rifles, and thus we won the confidence of the people."

It did not take the powers-that-be long to realise that social integration of the tribals residing near the border would cons-

titute an important aspect of border security, particularly after they came to be subjected to subversive propaganda from across the border. Officials working in the tribal areas would have a special role to play in this process—and more so the Assam Rifles, for whom these remote regions had become a home-from-home. In the years to come, the Assam Government would rely more and more on officers and men of the Force to fulfil this aim. Accordingly, the Governor of Assam issued a directive to the Assam Rifles in which he stressed the need for them to be of greater help to the tribals in bringing about their economic and social uplift. Following upon this, the I.G.A.R. issued specific instructions indicating ways and means whereby the Assam Rifles would identify more closely with local inhabitants.

Pioneers in Tribal Territory

In this connection it is interesting to read what Mr K.L. Mehta, I.C.S., Advisor for N.E.F.A. from 1954-57, has recorded about the crucial role played by the Assam Rifles in this process of establishment of Indian administration and the assimilation of the tribal peoples:

It is sometimes not appreciated why it was considered necessary for Assam Rifles (A.R.) to remain part and parcel of the Administration instead of being placed under the Army's command. In fact, some of the Inspectors General themselves, in varying degrees, were not happy over this concept. I think this was because of the failure to assess correctly the historic evolution of this Force and the role it had always played in the setting up and expansion of the Administration beyond the Inner Line into the interior of N.E.F.A. (and other tribal regions and autonomous districts of the state of Assam). At times, they did not like the idea of setting up A.R. outposts in "penny-pockets", as they were apt to describe them. They would have preferred to deploy A.R. only at Central points and as a rule, in strength of not less than a Company.

It may be recalled that the Tribal Areas beyond the Inner Line never had a police force, which was fortunate. A.R. fulfilled this role with tact and honesty in conjunction with tribal functionaries like *Gaon Burras* with whom they got on admirably. They were mostly Gorkhas, well-known for their highly developed sense of discipline and by and large for their exemplary behaviour under a sort of quasi-military control from their Battalion HQs.

The Government at the Centre was unable to give adequate atten-

tion to the important task of pushing civil Administration right up to our North-Eastern International borders in the years which followed our Independence. There were several reasons—such as preoccupation with the many problems created by Partition, defence matters and, of course, paucity of funds. There was also no great urgency, because Tibet was still free and acted as a buffer state between India and China. However, when I took over in Shillong in January 1954, I was convinced that this task could brook no further delay. We therefore proceeded to set up new Administration centres, supported by air-drops of food and other necessities of life for which a fair number of dropping zones had to be cleared and marked-out on the ground. Construction of roads was a hazardous, expensive and a time-consuming process; so that was postponed for the time being. (This was one of the very few—perhaps the only—example in history where the setting up of an Administration preceded the building of roads!)

The composition of recce parties, requiring careful selection of personnel, was extremely important for accomplishing the task of choosing suitable sites for setting up Administration Centres, to begin with under the charge of a Base Superintendent (equivalent to a *tahsildar* in a plains district). Political Officers or their Assistants would, as a rule, earmark such sites while on their winter tours and, if possible, in the same winter or in the next, follow-up parties would proceed to these sites, clearing and widening foot-paths as they went. Among the hazards they would come across would sometimes be groups of angry tribals, not used to such “trespass” in their midst. They could well oppose the “intrusion”, either out of animosity or due to sheer confusion of mind coupled with the ever-present suspicion that strangers come only to grab their land. Who could provide better security arrangements, and in a friendly way, than the men of A.R.—often in the strength of no more than one and four? These men had already established their virtually unblemished reputation as “pioneers of every advance into the interior” and “friends of the hill people”. Apart from other reasons, it would have been impracticable to put these men under the same regulations which govern the *jawans* of our Army. It would have meant following what, in the circumstances prevailing in the region, would have been a cumbersome procedure of calling them in legally on each occasion “in aid of civil power”. The A.R. Boys were everywhere (unobtrusive in their presence, but on the spot) disciplined, willing and fully cooperative members, which in sum, amounted to a unique role for these men.

Not that the process was always a smooth and happy one. After centuries of isolation and neglect, it was only to be expected that “intrusion by the plainsmen” would be resented and often resisted with arms. The Achingmori tragedy of 1953 is an example of the types of serious hazard that had to

be faced by the Administration and how they needed to be overcome by a judicious mixture of firmness and understanding.

North of Daporijo in Siang Frontier Division and astride the river Subansiri, there was a large pocket of territory some thousand kilometres square, consisting of high mountains, deep valleys and mainly virgin forests, into which the Administration had never penetrated. It was largely an unsurveyed region located south of the McMahon Line. To its south an administrative centre had been opened at Mechuka, supported by two Assam Rifles posts, with the northern limit of the Administration represented by the line Daporijo-Gusar. The area was inhabited by a fierce and primitive tribe called the Thagins who had in the past resisted all attempts by Assam Rifles patrols to penetrate their valleys and establish contact, often inflicting injury to A.R. personnel. Information had subsequently been received that a number of "foreigners" (Chinese or Tibetans) had infiltrated into the Thagin area, distributed presents among the villagers and instigated them to resist Indian administrative control.

It was decided to send a strong column into the area to investigate these reports and also to try and allay Thagin hostility. The Battalion responsible for Siang F.D. was 7th Assam Rifles, raised only a year previously near Ledo (at a location since renamed Jairampur, after the then Governor of Assam). The column was therefore formed from 7th Battalion, with Major R.D. Singh (Dogra Regiment) of that Battalion as column commander, accompanied by one havildar and 22 men, a political detachment consisting of an Area Superintendent, a Political Jemadar and 143 tribal headmen, interpreters and porters.

On the afternoon of 22 October, 1953, the column reached Achingmori camp, erected by the local Thagins. Sentries were duly posted; and then the rest of the column set about their chores unloading and settling in. Meanwhile, a large number of Thagins had collected around the camp, seeking salt and other presents the politicals normally brought with them as goodwill tokens. Gradually, as those in the camp were unconcernedly engrossed in their various tasks, the tribals began to infiltrate into the camp area in ones and twos. When

a sufficient number had collected inside, suddenly on a given signal they attacked the sentries and, after hacking them down, fell on the rest of the party. In the ensuing massacre Major Singh, Shri Barua, a number of political personnel and most of the riflemen were done to death. A few of the civilians and riflemen were then trussed up and taken away as hostages, while three riflemen managed to escape—making for Gusar post. All government property including arms and ammunition was carted away by the Thagins.

Operation “Mop”

Information of the massacre reached Post Gusar on the morning of 23 October and was at once flashed to HQ I.G.A.R., raising great concern in Shillong not only because of the tragedy itself but also because it would lead to a serious threat of further disturbances in the Thagin area since the Galong tribe, many of whose men had been among the porters killed or abducted, would seek revenge. The N.E.F.A. Administration swung into action at once and ordered the I.G.A.R. to raise a strong force and send it into the affected area to maintain the peace, to recover the hostages and to take corrective measures against the culprits.

Brigadier K. Bhagwati Singh, the I.G.A.R., went to Along and, after meeting with political and A.R. representatives, decided that a strong three-column Assam Rifles force would have to be sent in, accompanied by Political officials, to recover the hostages and looted stores with the least possible delay—before the Thagins could force the captives to give them instruction in the use of the fire-arms captured by them.

A coordinating conference was held at Jorhat on 4 November under the chairmanship of the Governor of Assam and was attended by the I.G.A.R., the Advisor to the Governor, O.C. 6 Wing I.A.F., Political Officers of Subansiri and Siang Frontier Divisions, Commandant 7 Assam Rifles and Officer Commanding No 3 Company the Parachute Regiment. The I.G.A.R.'s tentative plan was discussed and approved. Under this plan the operations into the lower Thagin area—code-named *Operation Mop*—were to be commanded by a combined headquarters of the Assam Rifles and

No 6 Wing Indian Air Force at Jorhat. The general outline of the plan was:

- (a) Three columns, each of 7 or 8 platoon strength from the Assam Rifles with attached troops from the Army and accompanied by officials of the Political Department, were to converge on Achingmori from their three respective bases at Mechuka, Gusar and Daporijo, being air maintained throughout the operation. Direct offensive air support was to be given by the I.A.F. on call when necessary. The columns were then to concentrate at Achingmori where further orders would follow.
- (b) Additional troops and tribal porters to be made available for these operations were:
 - (i) Indian Army—three companies from the Parachute Regiment, the mortar platoon of 1 Garhwal Rifles and 22 wireless operators from the Corps of Signals.
 - (ii) Indian Air Force—six Harvards from No 17 Squadron, six Spitfires from No 14 Squadron and five Dakotas from No 11 Squadron.
 - (iii) Assam Rifles—200 riflemen and 420 pioneers would act as fighting porters with the column.
 - (iv) Agency Service Corps—430 tribal porters from various political divisions.

Mindful of former attitudes of “punishing the tribes” by burning of villages and other depredations, Government of India made it clear to all concerned that this operation was not to be regarded as being primarily punitive—so that large-scale destruction was prohibited; and troops would open fire only in self-defence. Air cover was being provided but it was to be used only for the demoralisation of the tribesmen and not for destruction of villages; and, of course, for air dropping of supplies. The column commanders were also warned that Galong tribesmen accompanying the columns as porters must be restrained from acts of personal revenge against the Thagins. If it became necessary to take hostages, only male members of the tribe should be taken into custody—and no

force was to be applied on women and children to coerce the surrender of males.

To make sure that the Centre's directive in this regard was meticulously followed, the Assam Government imposed further rules and restrictions so that no loophole was left open for any high-handedness on the part of troops. Governor Daulatram remained in Jorhat to ensure personally that this aspect of his orders was strictly obeyed.

Troops started concentrating at their respective bases by scheduled dates. Jorhat airfield was the main transit point for all troops other than 7 Assam Rifles and those located in Subansiri Frontier Division. Pasighat landing ground and Mohanbari airfield were the transit points for 7 Assam Rifles, whilst those located in Subansiri Frontier Division marched to Daporijo. Along and Daporijo were to become the forward airfields for Jorhat and Pasighat-Mohanbari contingents respectively. There being no landing ground at Daporijo, work on it was started immediately by the personnel of the 5th Battalion. By the time Major U.K. Gupta, Lieut Bhatia and 128 other rank of No 3 Company the Parachute Regiment were dropped over Daporijo on 4 November to assist in further construction work, the small detachment of the Assam Rifles and post at Daporijo had not only cleared the jungle at the site but also made good progress on the actual construction of the airfield. Thereafter the Para and the Assam Rifles went flat out in the construction work and in a superb joint effort they were able to make the ground fit for landing of a Dakota by 12 November. On that day a test landing of a Dakota was made by Squadron Leader H.S. Gill and ferrying in of troops started the next morning. Base HQ and a landing ground control organisation were established; thereafter *Bahadur* column commander, Lieut-Colonel K.S. Rai, M.C., arrived to coordinate the concentration of the whole column, which was completed by 25 November.

Troops of *Sher* Column concentrated at Gusar after marching from Daporijo and Along forward landing grounds to which they were first flown. The column commander, Lieut-Colonel Kaman Singh, M.V.C., reached Gusar via Daporijo on 14 November and the entire column including the civilian element had concentrated there by 30 November.

The troops of *Khukri* Column were first flown to Along and from there they marched to Mechuka in nine stages following the west bank of Syom river, through the Galong area up to Kityak, from where a new route running north-west across a 3,000 metre high mountain ridge was taken to reach Yapuik. Concentration of the Column, including the civilian element, was completed by 27 November.

The three columns were to march from their bases to the Achingmori area by about 12 December. Since the time-and-space factor, as well as possible *contretemps* on the way, was different for each column, their starting dates were staggered to ensure more or less simultaneous arrival at the objective. These and numerous other details such as signals links and supply drops kept the I.G.A.R. busy during the waiting period.

Operation Mop was another feather in the cap for the Assam Rifles. For the first time a combined military operation was mounted with the Air Force, the Army and the Assam Rifles as the various components, all under the overall supervision of the I.G.A.R., a far cry from police actions of olden days. However, an even more unique feature of *Operation Mop* was that for the first time a large-scale joint operation was given a mainly socio-political and not a military win-the-war aim. The government's intention, while planning to recover hostages and looted property and to bring malefactors to book, was to draw the Thagin people into India's socio-cultural pattern—in other words, to extend the "Philosophy of N.E.F.A." to Thagin territory.

The impressive array of arms gathered within the three columns were to be used not primarily to destroy or kill but to threaten, deter and, finally, coerce the more belligerent among the tribals. Before and during the approach march, troops gave demonstrations of firepower to tribal audiences, so that the recalcitrant among them would be duly impressed and the friendly elements reassured. For the same purpose demonstrations of air power were stage-managed at specially selected places; targets chosen were not the hostile villages but hill tops and other prominent natural features near them.

Not that these measures always had the desired, logical effect. It was brought to the Force Commander's attention,

for instance, that local witch-doctors were cashing in on these "near misses" by the Air Force to prove that it was the efficacy of *their* charms that kept the rain of bombs away from the villages. It was decided to go easy on the demonstrations!

A fairly large-scale leaflet offensive was also set in motion. The Harvards scattered these messages on hostile and friendly villages alike—pointing out the help that government could bring to the villages and providing outlines of proposed welfare schemes. This tactic, though on the whole effective, could also on occasion backfire. Information brought by escaped hostages indicated that in some villages the hostiles had torn the messages to bits and were persuaded that the *Sirkar's* might was restricted to dropping leaflets.

There was a degree of opposition offered by hostile villagers during the march; but this was more than compensated by the friendly assistance other villages gave to our marching columns by way of tracing hostages and stolen weapons and even identifying culprits of the Achingmori massacre.

After closing in on their respective objectives, the three columns started on the task of rounding up the culprits, recovering hostages and weapons, liaising with the friendly tribals and establishing two administrative centres in the Mara-Achingmori area with an Assam Rifles post at each centre.

When the patrols approached the culprits' villages they found them deserted and, in most cases, destroyed. It was found that many of the hostiles had taken to the deep jungle along with their families, which was their normal practice when attacked in strength. From their jungle hide-outs they made several attempts at ambushing and attacking the patrols on their way in and out of villages—resulting in some exchange of fire. The hostiles also made a determined bid to dislodge troops from their camp on the night of 15/16 December, when they launched a night attack on the main camp of *Sher* column and fired on them with rifles and sten guns (looted at Achingmori). The column returned the fire with mortars and light machine guns and soon broke up the hostile attack. Thereafter the patrols mounted pressure on the hostiles and soon had them on the run from one hide-out to another, till about 22 December, when they ceased to offer any further resis-

tance. By this time moral pressure was also exerted on them by their distressed families and the village elders to make them surrender. Thus did many of them finally agree to reconciliations and negotiations with the Political officers. The culprits were arrested, tried and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. The fact that the original massacre had been carried out because the Thagins had been led to believe that their enemies the Galongs had brought the column along to subjugate the Thagins was taken into account in the eventual doling out of sentences, because that was the kind of elemental reaction that, however incredible it may sound, affects tribal behaviour.

One or two of the ringleaders of the Achingmori massacre refused to surrender and remained at large, even though the Thagins had agreed to release all the surviving hostages and surrender looted arms and equipment. Wisely it was decided not to press the operation to the bitter end.

Mr Nehru's Tribal Policy

Prime Minister Nehru's policy had always been to lay more stress on establishing Administration and thus winning over the tribals than on reprisals and punitive measures. For had he not always stressed his understanding of the tribals' way of life in his many speeches?

I am alarmed when I see—not only in this country but in other great countries too—how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living. We are welcome to our way of living, but why impose it on others? This applies equally to national and international fields. In fact, there would be more peace in the world, if people were to desist from imposing their way of living on other people and countries.

I am not at all sure which is the better way of living, the tribal or our own. In some respects I am quite certain their's is better. Therefore, it is grossly presumptuous on our part to approach them with an air of superiority, to tell them how to behave or what to do and what not to do. There is no point in trying to make of them a second-rate copy of ourselves . . .

These avenues of development should, however, be pursued within the broad framework of the following five fundamental principles:

(1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage, in every way, their own traditional arts and culture.

(2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.

(3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

(4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

(5) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

These sentiments from a great humanitarian formed the basis of India's tribal policy; and the ethos of the Assam Rifles was inevitably moulded by them. During the war the Assam Rifles had proved themselves to be the equal of the best fighting troops—and they were to maintain that reputation in future battlefields also. But later the "Single Line Administration" for N.E.F.A., in which the Assam Rifles attitudes blended with their political counterparts, was to shape their military-humanistic traditions in spreading Pandit Nehru's message among the primitive peoples along the northern borders. The process could not be better described than in the words of Mr K.L. Mehta:

The term "Single Line Administration" was in the meantime improved upon with the substitution of the term "Single Chain Administration", implying interlocking of personnel of different Departments. The Assam Rifles fitted into this picture fully and with distinction.

It was my privilege to visit several of the newly opened Centres. Some of them in fact started as Assam Rifles posts. Quite a few of them remained as such with changes in strength, as necessary. Many of them were perched at considerable altitudes—to mention only two amongst those which I visited, the one at Eagle's Nest on way to Bomdila and the other at Se La, also in the Kameng Frontier Division. Yet other such posts were converted into Administrative Centres (as and when suitably trained Civilian Officials were found) and put in the charge of a Base Superintendent or an Assistant Political Officer. Once in position he would construct his own *basha*-type hutments, as close as possible to the Assam Rifles O.P.s, which were, of course, sited with due regard for security.

To live in such centres was truly a challenge. The climate severe, extremely cold, with high humidity at lower altitudes, insects like leeches and mosquitoes, coupled with great loneliness and desolation—

all cheerfully borne. Science had not yet come to the aid of the *jawans* living in such surroundings, as it has done since . . . Often these centres consisted of no more than 8 or 10 men and equally often there were no other human settlements for kilometres and kilometres.

At other places, depending on the proximity of tribal settlements or villages, the centres developed with the posting of a compounder (later a doctor), an agricultural Inspector, a schoolteacher and so on. Our men in remoter outposts, whether consisting of A.R. personnel only or along with civilians, remained completely cut off from the rest of the world for almost eight months in the year—their only link with HQs being their wireless sets . . . This was hazardous-living in the true sense of the word. I do not think the country has yet realized what these brave men accomplished for India and how much of this is due to the discipline and almost totally unblemished performance of the *jawans* of the Assam Rifles.

High praise indeed—and well merited. In those inaccessible reaches of India's north-eastern borderland, the burden of administrative activity fell mostly on the uniformed men of the Assam Rifles, who alone were trained and equipped to endure the rigours of mountain journeys and hard living, especially during the early years when the N.E.F.A. Administrative Service was still in its infancy.

It is unfortunate that this enlightened approach to the tribals—the essence of Pandit Nehru's and Mr Elwin's "Philosophy for N.E.F.A."—could not be applied to all the areas where the Government faced tribal unrest and rebellion. As explained in the next chapter, the circumstances in Nagaland were different, so that eventually the military-humanistic approach proved insufficient and had to be backed by military confrontation. Nevertheless, even at the height of the insurgency, the "soft approach" always remained a preferred alternative. As Mr Y.D. Gundevia, Foreign Secretary under Pandit Nehru, has written: "It is interesting to see how and to what extent independent India translated into practice Pandit Nehru's ideas of gradual development of these hills (Naga Hills) in economic, social and educational fields—hostilities or no hostilities."

NAGA INSURGENCY

THE early years of the sixth decade passed peacefully among the Naga tribes. Only in Tuensang (which was then a Frontier Division of N.E.F.A.) was there any requirement for intervention by platoons of 3rd Battalion (in 1951); and even there the troubles remained confined to inter-village blood feuds among the Konyak Nagas—in some cases leading to old head-hunting practices, particularly in villages near the Burma border. To prevent trans-border raids by tribesmen from the Burmese Naga villages of Ponya and Twethe, a new outpost was established at Noklak.

It was not until late in 1953 that the first signs of “political” unrest were noticed in Tuensang. The tribals of Aghuneto launched a movement to incite the Sema Nagas to refuse to pay their taxes (a house tax had been imposed on the Naga people since the British days). The A.P.O. had to take out Assam Rifles columns and establish one or two temporary outposts near the border. When it was discovered that Nagas from both sides of the Indo-Burma border were involved in this anti-Government agitation, joint action was taken by the P.O. of Tuensang and the D.C. of Burma (Naga Hills District) to send out columns and organise flag marches till a measure of calm was restored among the border villages.

Early in 1954, in an incident near the Burma border of Tuensang, a group of hostile villagers from Pangsha raided the village of Yengpang and massacred over 50 men, women and children, including the government teacher and his family. The victims were beheaded, some while still alive, others after being shot and their heads taken back to Pangsha. (This was one of the last recorded cases of head-hunting.) Punitive action was, of course, promptly taken and the culprits dealt with according to tribal custom and

usage, but it was evident that matters were getting out of control.

It was not until the latter part of 1954 that the unrest among the Tuensang Nagas began to take the form of a general revolt. As the disturbances spread, it became obvious that 3rd Battalion at Kohima, which supplied the platoons for duty in Tuensang, would not be able to cope with the situation without reinforcements. Five platoons from 1st, 4th, 5th and 6th Battalions were therefore despatched to reinforce the Wing of 3rd Battalion located in Tuensang F.D. (It was at this time that Government of India decided to raise three Range Headquarters under the I.G.A.R. to exercise immediate control over the battalions—Naga Range in Kohima for the Naga Hills and Tuensang; N.E.F.A. Range in Jorhat for 2nd and 5th Battalions; and the States Range in Silchar for 1st, 4th and 6th Battalions.)

In 1955 the situation took an even more ugly turn, with anti-government elements inciting the tribals of Tuensang to violence against government agencies and also against liberal Nagas who had supported the government. On 24 March a small party of Assam Rifles forming an escort to a survey party was attacked at Huchirr and three riflemen killed. Two other riflemen were killed at other places in the Division, and there were several cases of attacks upon and murder of civilians in the villages.

Early Operations

Strong measures had to be taken to check the spreading revolt. 3rd Battalion columns were despatched to the worst affected areas, pitched battles took place and there were many casualties among the hostiles; in the process two villages were burned. This phase, however, was quickly followed by pacification measures. The Commandant and the P.O. took out columns along the ranges in the southern part of Tuensang F.D. visiting all villages and explaining to the people the true position regarding their political status and privileges and the futility of armed insurrection. The results were encouraging. Several miscreants gave themselves up and others were apprehended by the villagers themselves and handed over to the

authorities. About a hundred fire-arms of all types were recovered in the process.

These operations lasted till the end of May 1955. Thereafter, having brought the more important villages under control, the Assam Rifles diverted their attention to locating and eliminating armed gangs of hostiles who had taken to the jungles with stocks of rations and money forcibly extracted from the villagers. Patrols were sent out to the main infested areas of the south Tuensang hills from an *ad hoc* Assam Rifles Wing HQ established at Aghuneto for this purpose. The patrols operated ceaselessly by day and night in an all-out effort to flush out the hostiles from the area and nip the insurgency in the bud. Several encounters with armed hostiles took place, forcing the latter to split up in small groups and remain on the run. For a time these insurgent groups escaped to the plains and had to be pursued across the state border. Only timely action saved the vital Dikhu bridge from being destroyed by one such group; but when a picquet was placed at the bridge, about two hundred hostiles made a bid to dislodge the picquet and capture the bridge, withdrawing only after exchange of fire for an hour. Extensive patrolling kept the road Amguri-Tuensang open and subversive activities were checked in this area to a large extent.

By the middle of June the hostiles were back in Tuensang, rested and reorganised. A large concentration was reported at Khekiye. They were entrenched in a defensive position in the proper infantry fashion, with extensive use of obstacles. Commandant 3 A.R., who was at Vilho post, sent patrols towards Khekiye to get more information before launching an attack. The hostiles retaliated by attacking Vilho several times in strength in a bid to dislodge the Assam Rifles from there. During one such attack the Commandant was wounded and had to be evacuated. Intelligence revealed that the Khekiye force contained several ex-servicemen armed with rifles, stens and even some light machine guns. It was obvious that any attack on the position would have to be in strength, supported by 3-inch mortar fire.

By this time there were about 36 platoons of the Assam Rifles in the Tuensang area, but all heavily committed. Even the four platoons that were supposed to be held in reserve

were employed to keep open the L of C to Aghuneto. The Army had therefore to be called in and 17 Rajput was inducted for the operation. On 11 September the Rajputs, with seven platoons of Assam Rifles in support, drew a cordon round the hostile position and launched an attack. The concentration was broken up, the hostiles suffering many casualties. Thereafter 17 Rajput went into reserve at Aghuneto, while Assam Rifles platoons pursued the hostile Nagas who had broken up in small gangs. The hostiles, however, enjoyed all the advantages of defensive terrain, and resorted to guerilla tactics—hit and run methods, ambushes and assassinations.

As more and more troops and armed police poured into Tuensang the need arose of coordinating the activities of all these forces under a unified command. Consequently, a Joint Headquarters was set up in October 1955 with the Inspector General of Assam Rifles as its Chairman. The Army was represented at a suitable level, while the Political Officer himself was associated with this Headquarters. The northern part of the Tuensang Frontier Division, which was also becoming affected, was taken under the operational control of the Joint Headquarters. For ease of control the area was divided into the North and the South sectors.

Patrolling was intensified and the Assam Rifles made several successful raids on hostile hide-outs. On one occasion valuable documents, giving away hostile plans and a list of a large number of their followers, were captured. Based on this information a lightning raid was made on the main hide-out. In the fighting that ensued a prominent ringleader of the hostiles was killed. Another spectacular march by the Assam Rifles to strike at a rebel concentration at Kyutsukilong across the river Zunki was made on 2 November. Not only were the hostiles here armed like an army unit, but their defences also were laid and sited on a regular Army pattern. The position, however, could not stand the onslaught of Assam Rifles and gave way after a short engagement. Thereafter the insurgents avoided large concentrations in the Tuensang Frontier Division for quite some time to come.

It became evident from the decrease in tempo of their activities at this period that the insurgents were resting and reorganising somewhere. It was no surprise therefore to learn

that a rebel force under a few ringleaders had left Tuensang for a training camp somewhere in the Dyong Valley east of Kohima. It was confirmed that the hostiles were planning to reorganise, reorient and coordinate their activities to cover the entire Naga Hills. This information proved correct when, in February 1956, armed insurrections broke out in several areas in the Naga Hills District. To counter this 3 Bihar was sent to Kohima, with a company at Wokha. With the spread of insurgency to areas beyond Tuensang the scope of Joint Headquarters was enlarged territorially and the Deputy Inspector General of Police was also now included at the Headquarters.

It became increasingly apparent that the insurgents and their capabilities were being greatly under-estimated, if not by the local administration, certainly by the Central Government, who had not appreciated the fact that the strength of the insurgents lay not so much in the "cause" for which they were fighting, but in the arms and ammunition that they had picked up from World War II left-overs—and all the financial and other help they were receiving from foreign powers. What was more, they were fighting in a country ideally suited for guerilla warfare, so that a much larger number of the security forces would be required for these operations than were present at the time or even planned for induction in the future.

Having reorganised themselves the hostiles struck at the security forces with great vehemence; and the Assam Rifles bore the main brunt. Heavy fighting broke out between them and large bodies of armed Naga gangs at several places. At Sakhai two Assam Rifles platoons and a platoon of the Assam Armed Police fought a defensive battle with a large gang of hostiles for sixteen hours. The latter withdrew only at the sight of an Army column that was sent from Zunheboto to relieve the beleaguered garrison. The Kohima-Dimapur road had also been made unsafe due to insurgent activities. The situation seemed to be fast getting out of control.

At the end of March 1956 it was decided by the Government of India that the scale of the commitment in the Naga Hills merited the establishment of a unified command to replace the "Joint HQ". As more and more Army units were being inducted into the Naga Hills, the overall command of necessity had to be given to the Army. Accordingly, Major

General R.K. Kochar was appointed General Officer Commanding Assam and the operations in Naga Hills and Tuensang Frontier Division were placed under his direct control. The Assam Rifles, who were also to operate under G.O.C. Assam, were made exclusively responsible for the Tuensang Frontier Division. Although this arrangement was much better than the previous one it in no way helped to bring the situation under control. The hostiles appeared to be growing stronger at a faster rate than the arrangements of the Government to contain them.

Naga Politics

The Naga rebellion eventually developed into a full-scale insurgency which, if one counts the Assam Rifles and Armed Police battalions, at one time tied up nearly four divisions worth of infantry. For nearly thirty years now the insurgency has divided the people, even after Nagaland became a fully self-governing state of the Indian Union. It would not be out of place here to make a brief survey of the political and social developments in this region to try and understand how this situation came about—so different from the tribal unrest in N.E.F.A. or in the Khasi and Garo Hills.

By far the most important factor that distinguishes between conditions prevailing among the tribes of N.E.F.A. and those of the Naga and Tuensang Hills is the degree of political and social sophistication brought about not only by many years of contacts between the border Nagas and the markets, bazaars and tea gardens of the plains but also—and much more emphatically—by the rapid spread of Christianity among the Naga tribes during the first half of this century.

Although the first Ao Nagas were converted by American Baptist missionaries as early as in 1921, the spread of Christianity was at first very slow. With head-hunting rampant in the hills, and no British administrative authority established within the tribal areas, it was another 20 years before the first missionaries could come into really close contact with the tribal people.

A handful of Baptist missionaries could make only slow progress, but it was a persistent effort. At the same time,

though the missionaries were primarily evangelists they made it no less their business to impart education to the people of these jungle villages. Since none of the tribes had ever had a written language, the Church introduced the Roman script (which is now used by all the tribes; and, of course, today Nagaland is the only state of the Indian Union to have adopted English as its official language).

By 1926 it was claimed that every Ao village had a Christian community; but it was in the fourth and fifth decades that the religion spread rapidly. By 1951, 80 per cent of Aos were Christians; the figure later rising to 94 per cent. This is a spectacular story—this saga of proselytism in a primitive, animist culture. Perhaps the most spectacular was the mass conversions to Christianity of the Konyak villages of Tuensang district in the 1930s.

During those early years British administrators, though they themselves were no evangelists (government policy being to interfere as little as possible with the local culture and customs), may have welcomed the first American missionaries into the hills because of the remarkable work they were doing in the educational and medical fields. Subsequently, however, they felt that the missionaries were interfering too much in tribal life style, causing harmful side-effects—such as the widespread, surreptitious drinking of “country liquor” smuggled in from the plains after the missionaries had put a taboo on local rice beer. Not only was the “country liquor” potent and harmful but since it could be bought only for money, the Naga had to abandon his dignified, tribal life and seek demeaning, petty employment in the plains from time to time. Most British officers of the time would have agreed with Van Furer-Haimendorf, the famous anthropologist:

It is a pity that the American Baptist Mission had little sympathy with the aims of the Government and even less appreciation for the valuable elements of Naga culture. Many of its aspects conflict in no way with some of the old feasts, and ceremonies—certainly at the agricultural festival—could have been adapted to the new faith, given a new meaning and retained by the Christian community. Where the Ao prays to a supreme deity who sends him happiness and misfortune and watches over the doings of men, an appropriate Christian prayer might have been substituted and there seems to be no reason why at

the first sowing or at harvest the Ao Christian should not pray for the prosperity of his crops. No one will question the good faith and admirable enthusiasm of the missionaries. They were doing great work in the medical field and have made thousands of Naga children literate. But it may be that with a little more understanding and sympathy for Naga culture they might have brought more happiness to their flock and avoided many of the more unfortunate results of a sudden clash of culture.

J.P. Mills, C.I.E., I.C.S., who was Sir Charles Pawsey's predecessor as D.C., Naga Hills, just before the outbreak of the war, deplored the breakdown of the Naga psyche by the unequal terms of his contact with civilisation. The result, as he saw it, was a tendency among the tribesmen to imitate the outsider and his so-called "higher culture".

It was at this teetering stage of the Naga people's psychological adjustment that the whole region was pitchforked into the vortex of the Japanese war, with all the ensuing consequences; and it was this involvement that constitutes the second factor that distinguishes the N.E.F.A. tribal experience from the one in Nagaland, because in the latter case, the Government faced a well-armed underground movement with large reserves of arms abandoned by the Japanese in the jungles.

During the war the Nagas (unlike the Kukis in Manipur) had worked whole-heartedly for the British against the Japanese. At no stage had they collaborated with the enemy (with one notorious exception—Mr Phizo Angami, who helped the Japanese throughout the war as the ringleader of a handful of Khonoma Nagas!). The battle had surged over Naga tribal territory in 1944, bringing in its wake the destruction of Kohima, disruption of village economy and a host of attendant problems. Furthermore, after the end of the war the Nagas had retained some of the arms issued to them by the British and helped themselves to their hearts' content from dumps of arms and ammunition left behind in the jungle by the fleeing Japanese. In addition, as they became politically motivated, more arms were procured from across the border in Burma and—much later—from East Pakistan and Red China. It was no longer a question of villagers' spears versus the Army's firepower: given the political motivation, there

were all the makings of a guerilla insurgency on virtually equal terms in the jungle. Paradoxically, it was the same turncoat, Phizo, who provided the political incentive for the rebellion.

As early as in 1929 members of the "Naga Club" (an organisation consisting of local government officials and village headmen formed to foster welfare and social aspirations of the Nagas) had submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission, demanding that the Naga Hills be excluded from the proposed Reforms and be administered directly by the Centre—a not unreasonable request by a proud and exclusive people. In 1946 the Naga Club was succeeded by the Naga National Council which, in June 1946, submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission then in India for consultations, projecting their demands that all the Naga tribes in Tuensang, the Naga Hills and the unadministered areas be treated as one entity and be included in "an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas"; and that the Naga tribes should have a separate electorate. In subsequent negotiations with the Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari, the N.N.C. agreed to sign a nine-point memorandum of agreement incorporating the policy of the Naga people being allowed the maximum autonomy consistent with national integrity: and this was accepted by Prime Minister Nehru.

Phizo Angami, who had attended the N.N.C. meeting, later voiced his claim that the Naga Hills and Tuensang District had never been part of British India: and what Phizo's terrorist party has been fighting for ever since is "recognition" of Nagaland's sovereignty as a separate nation. Because it has caused so much bloodshed and disorder over the years, it would be worthwhile to make a brief survey of the constitutional realities of the case.

Long before the Second World War, all the hill areas of Assam along the Tibet and Burma borders had become part and parcel of British India, whether by conquest or "annexation" or whatever. In Naga territory this process of annexation can be divided into four phases: first, the period of "control from without" (1839-47) when the British tried unsuccessfully to control the raiding Naga tribes by sending periodic expeditions into the hills (referred to as "prome-

nades"); second, the period of "control from within" (1847-50) when the experiment of establishing outposts or stockades in the Naga Hills (Samguting, Khonoma) was tried out and abandoned because of its high cost; third, from 1851 to 1865 the Government pulled back and tried out a policy of "non-interference", again with results that were far from satisfactory.

It was the fourth phase, starting in 1866, that began the process of extending the administration into the hills. The present Mokokchung and Kohima areas became a separate district under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, with its HQ at Samguting. In 1878 the D.C. took up his quarters in the heart of Angami country at Kohima, whence the extension of British rule steadily continued. Thereafter, while Assam and Bengal parted and joined with East Bengal and parted again, this district was in turn included either in the Chief Commissionership of Assam or the Lieutenant-Governorship. When the Government of India Act of 1919 came into force, Assam was reconstituted into a Governorship and the Naga Hills district was declared a "backward" tract within Assam. After the Government of India Act of 1935 was passed, the Naga Hills district was declared an "excluded area" within Assam.

As for the area formerly known as "Naga Tribal Area", there is no dispute about this region being British-Indian territory either. It lay between the regular Naga Hills district of Assam and the Burma border—and was divided into "controlled" and "uncontrolled" areas, both of which were the responsibility of the Central Government, though the latter acted through the Governor of Assam as its agent. The area of control continued to be extended from time to time, as we have seen in Chapter 2, gradually including villages like Pangsha and others right up to the Burma border. This area admittedly enjoyed a less settled form of administration but any claim that it enjoyed any semblance of "sovereignty"—as claimed by Phizo—is without foundation in fact or law.

When India became a Dominion by virtue of the Indian Independence Act of 1947 passed by the British Parliament, all of the territories under the sovereignty of His Britannic Majesty (except the territory of Pakistan) became the territory

of independent India. It is true that certain British administrators did advocate, during the Pethick-Lawrence visit of 1946, that some of the tribal areas should be formed into a separate state and be held by the British as a Crown Colony, but Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, firmly rejected the idea. Lord Pethick-Lawrence fully accepted the Viceroy's views that the responsibility for the tribal people of Assam could not be transferred to an outside authority.

When independent India's Constituent Assembly was in the process of drafting India's Constitution, it appointed a special committee of important tribal representatives under the Chief Minister of Assam. It was the recommendation of this committee that formed the basis of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which laid down a series of "provisions for the administration of Tribal Areas in Assam". Anyone who takes the trouble to wade through the legal jargon of this Schedule will agree that it takes good care of the nine points that were agreed to by the Prime Minister to safeguard the autonomy and the special interests of the Nagas directly by the Centre, through the Governor acting as the Centre's agent in this respect.

The Sixth Schedule became law in November 1949. In order to offer further assurances to the Nagas, Pandit Nehru undertook a tour of Kohima in 1953 and in his talks with Naga leaders declared that his Government would consistently follow a liberal policy towards the tribals; and that if they wished further to modify the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to give the Nagas even greater autonomy, he would consider the proposals with sympathy.

As a result of the various steps taken to reassure the Naga people, many educated Nagas came to acknowledge that the future of their tribal interests and culture had been adequately safeguarded. They decided to join government service and work for their people from within the new administration. Some of them were the very leaders who, as members of the N.N.C., had been exercising a moderating influence in jungle politics. It was a good sign that they were now joining government service but, unfortunately, it also meant that they had to leave the N.N.C. because as government servants they could no longer take an active part in politics. This is what

gave Phizo his chance. He gathered the more fanatical elements of the N.N.C. around him and began a propaganda campaign in the jungle villages that led to the majority of the Nagas boycotting the 1951 elections (for District Councils) and, in 1952, even the general elections. Phizo then launched a "civil disobedience" movement that in the jungles soon took a violent turn. By 1954 Phizo had organised large armed bands throughout Naga territory and, as we have seen, launched a campaign of armed violence leading to murder, kidnappings, arson and looting on a widespread scale.

Many prominent Nagas resigned from the N.N.C. after the disturbances took a violent turn, among them Mr T. Sakhrie, its General Secretary, who was later kidnapped by Phizo's henchmen, tortured and brutally done to death. (Charges of Sakhrie's abduction and murder are still outstanding against Phizo.) Another liberal leader who was assassinated was Dr Imkongmeren Ao, who had headed a nine-man delegation to a meeting with Mr Nehru in Delhi.

The Insurgency Intensifies

In March 1956 the hostile Nagas established a "Naga Federal Government", hoisted their flag at Phensiyu village in the Rengma area and adopted a "constitution" complete with its own "parliament", "cabinet", "governors" and "magistrates", duplicating the official administration. The "Naga Home Guards" went on to form their own "army", adopting designations, uniforms and badges of rank of the Indian Army. By then they had built up a guerilla force of 3,000 men and set in motion a reign of terror in the villages, forcing the villagers to cooperate with them and extracting money and supplies on pain of severe reprisals. As a result, the Government was forced to take emergency measures and bring in the Army in greater strength. Strict instructions were, however, issued to ensure that the Army would operate solely "in aid of civil power", use minimum force and provide maximum protection to the villagers. Even though such instructions greatly handicapped the security forces and operated to the advantage of the hostiles, they were never relaxed.

Hostile activity increased considerably after March 1956.

In June there was a daring attack on Kohima itself. The hostiles blocked the road between Kohima and Mao and looted a civilian convoy. Two platoons of 4 A.R. cleared the road-blocks after hand-to-hand fighting in which one of the platoon commanders was killed. There followed several incidents of attacks on A.R. and Army patrols. It was then decided that the security forces would have to take to the offensive instead of remaining mainly on the defensive, a policy that straight-away paid dividends. A number of important hostile leaders, notably Mr Vitsoni, chairman of the N.F.S., were captured.

Meanwhile, the hostiles had widened their area of operations, mounting raids against tea gardens and villages in the foothills of Sibsagar district (Plains Sector). A particularly daring raid in April 1956 resulted in the capture of the staff quarters and booking office of Naginimara railway station, leading to panic. All trains had thereafter to be escorted, which cut down their frequency. It was at this stage that two new battalions of Assam Rifles arrived from their raising stations in Dehra Dun and Meerut and helped relieve the strain on troop commitments. 9th Assam Rifles Battalion was sent to the Plains Sector and at once set about setting up a chain of posts along the railway and in key locations.

New Raisings

It had been decided in 1956, when it became apparent that the insurgency was likely to continue for a considerable period and probably increase in intensity, that the security forces would have to be greatly reinforced. It would be difficult to obtain all the necessary reinforcements from an Army already overcommitted in Kashmir and elsewhere; nor was an internal insurgency the best employment for fully equipped regular forces. In the end the Government had taken a decision to raise a number of additional Assam Rifles battalions on a permanent basis—at the rate of two new battalions every year.

A chain of new raisings was started the same year, under arrangements of Army HQ, at Dehra Dun and Meerut (near the Gorkha Centres of the Army). The initial training and equipment were also the responsibility of the Army, as was

the provision of ex-servicemen to fill the ranks initially.

8th Battalion was ready in mid-1956 and moved to Imphal, where it was deployed along the northern border of Manipur to ensure that the insurgents did not carry the hostilities across the border. Early in 1957 the Battalion was sent to Tuensang F.D. to relieve 3rd Battalion. 9th Battalion, as we have seen, was sent to the Plains Sector.

The next to be raised were 10th and 11th battalions, on the 15th and 30th of November 1956 respectively, again at Meerut. On completion of training 10th Battalion was despatched to Mokokchung in the Naga Hills in September 1957; 11th Battalion was diverted to Dinjan for deployment in the Siang Frontier Division of N.E.F.A., where new posts near the Tibet border were being opened.

Three battalions were sanctioned for raising in 1959 but while 12th and 13th Battalions were raised on 15 February 1958, at Gaya and Meerut respectively, the raising of 14th Battalion was deferred to 1 January 1959. 12th Battalion moved to its final destination, Wokha in the Naga hills, on 10 March 1959. 13th Battalion moved to Ghaspani in the first week of March that year. After completion of training at Meerut 14th Battalion moved to Bible Hill in the Naga Hills.

The chain continued. Even before the raising of 14th Battalion was complete, the raising of 15th and 16th battalions was sanctioned. These battalions were raised at the Garhwal and Rajput Regimental Centres at Lansdowne and Fatehgarh respectively, on 15 October and 1 December 1959, respectively.

In order to enable battalions of the Assam Rifles to take on additional commitments, an increase in the strength of the battalions was sanctioned, each battalion being authorised its own establishment and strength, as justified by its commitments. Accordingly, 29 new platoons had to be raised; this raising was completed only by the end of 1959. The strength of each battalion now ranged between the minimum of 1,096 for 6th Battalion to the maximum of 1,780 for the 7th (both figures including non-combatants enrolled).

Recruits in the Assam Rifles were, till then, enrolled and trained by the battalions themselves. With their increased

commitments it was becoming increasingly difficult for battalions to discharge this responsibility, especially as the intake of recruits greatly increased after the Naga Hills commitment. To overcome this difficulty, a proposal for authorising a Training Centre for the Assam Rifles had been put up as early as in 1956. This was sanctioned in 1958 and with effect from 1 January 1959, the Assam Rifles Training Centre started functioning at a temporary location at Missamari (north of Charduar). The Centre was designed to cater for the training of 600 recruits. A Signal Wing under an Officer on deputation from the Corps of Signals was also set up within the Centre for the training of Signal recruits. Subsequently in June 1960 the Boys wing at Shillong was also moved to the Training Centre.

In the Plains Sector 9th Battalion had done well to check infiltration of hostiles; they had also secured the rail and other L of C. In early 1957 this battation was also sent to reinforce Tuensang F.D. (Aghuneto).

As was expected, hostile activities continued unabated throughout 1957 and 1958. The Assam Rifles, as in previous years, had numerous skirmishes with rebel bands and were of great assistance to the Army, now engaged in these operations in a big way. On 9 January 1957, two platoons from Tuensang made a lightning attack on a rebel camp below Kuthurr village and took the hostiles by surprise, killing two and wounding three; two rifles were captured. Another very successful attack on a hostile concentration of about 100 near village Thoutwure was carried out by an understrength platoon of about 30 men under Subedar Hari Lal Sharma on night 7/8 June 1957. Thirteen hostiles including a self-styled Major were killed and 17 wounded, while six grenades, some documents, clothing and rations were captured. The hostiles struck back at the Assam Rifles when they attacked an animal transport convoy of 16 mules escorted by nine other ranks of the Assam Rifles while it was halted at mile 15 on the Kohima-Imphal road. The escort put up a gallant fight against heavy odds and repulsed the attack after an exchange of fire for nearly an hour. During this action one rifleman was killed and another wounded.

By 1958, two new battalions having joined the Nagaland

orbat, there was a total of 59 A.R. platoons in Tuensang F.D. —the largest numbers being seconded from 3rd, 8th and 9th Battalions (fifteen, eleven and eleven platoons respectively).

Even as the Government was pouring in more and more troops into the Naga Hills, hostile activities continued to escalate rapidly. By 1959 the situation was grave indeed; and Assam Rifles deployments continued to expand. Besides the five battalions of the Assam Rifles located in these areas, 27 platoons from the battalions outside these areas were deployed in the counter-insurgency role in the Naga Hills and Tuensang F.D. As four more newly raised battalions of the Assam Rifles arrived by the end of 1960, the bulk of the extra platoons from outside battalions was withdrawn and only six platoons of 6th Battalion and one each from 1st and 7th Battalions remained. Some of the major operations conducted by the Assam Rifles and their encounters with the hostiles are narrated in succeeding paragraphs.

In 1959, two operations, *Houpu I* and *Houpu II*, were conducted by Major D.B. Bura of 8 A.R. in Longtokur and Houpu areas, with the aim of locating and destroying hostile camps reported in these areas. Two camps were destroyed after heavy fighting in which ten hostiles were killed and two rifles captured. The column suffered one killed and six wounded. Two other operations in the same Battalion's area were conducted during the end of 1959 by the Commandant himself, Lieut-Colonel R.J. Solomon, with ten Assam Rifles platoons, with the aim of combing the jungles and driving out hostiles who were still reported to be lurking in the area after the first operations. The area was thoroughly searched in cooperation with 4/8 Gorkha Rifles. In the short skirmishes that followed the hostiles used 2-inch mortars. One hostile was killed and seven wounded and some arms and ammunition were captured. The Assam Rifles suffered two killed and nine wounded.

On receiving information that the hostiles had ambushed a civil jeep on the Longkhim-Tuensang road on 17 June 1959, killing two of its occupants, a platoon of 9 Assam Rifles was sent from Chessor post to Sotokurr and Houpu area, attacked a hostile group and killed four. Two of the dead were later identified as self-styled Captains Chinki and Yantuba of

Huchurr village.

Two mixed columns of Assam Rifles and Village Guards were sent out from Aghuneto and Sirohoto on 26 June 1959, for long range patrolling. One of the columns hit an administrative base of the hostiles on 2 July and destroyed it after some heavy fighting. Another mixed patrol raided a hostile camp in Sakaly area on 2 July 1959 and captured five hostiles with four .303 rifles and some ammunition.

The new 12th Battalion got off to a good start by capturing Angh Tsatheo Lotha, self-styled Governor of the hostiles, on 9/10 November 1959 and made a total haul of about 114 hostiles and 25 weapons within a year of operations in the Naga Hills.

A patrol from Aghuneto post under Major J.B. Singh was sent out to Lhoshyepu village on 2 February 1960 on receipt of information of a large concentration of hostiles in the area. The patrol contacted the large group of hostiles led by the self-styled Brigadier Yikuho Sema and in the clash that followed captured ten hostiles, including the self-styled Brigadier. Four rifles, one sten gun and some ammunition were also captured.

On 7 May 1960, two columns were again sent out from Aghuneto and Siroboto. The column encountered hostiles and captured one Veho Sema, a self-styled area commander of the hostiles. In a series of raids and operations conducted by the 10th Battalion during 1960-61, another self-styled area commander, one Sujhi, their publicity officer by name Izhekhu Sema and four other hostiles were captured. This new Battalion also accounted for five hostiles killed including one hostile later identified as the self-styled Lieut-Colonel Suhoi Sema. A rifle, pistol and some ammunition were also recovered during these operations. In another encounter, three hostiles were killed when a patrol of the 6th Battalion clashed with a gang at Aisapore village on 28 September 1960.

During 1960-61, 12th Battalion also saw much operational service. A column from the Battalion raided and destroyed "Western Command and Training Centre" of the hostiles; several self-styled officers including one Lieut-Colonel, two Majors, three Captains and five other hostiles were killed. One Lieut-Colonel, Opinimo Lotha, one Captain, Khoson Lotha, and 162 other hostiles were captured.

Perhaps the most heroic action of the Assam Rifles was the one fought by the Purr post of the new 14th Battalion. On the night of 24/25 August 1960, the small post was besieged by about 600 hostiles and subjected to repeated attacks. Each attack was repulsed with heavy losses to the hostiles, but the enemy pressed home further assaults throughout the next day, by when the post began to run out of ammunition and water. Reinforcements could not reach the post as the hostiles had destroyed all the bridges along the bridle paths leading to it and all the other approaches were being covered by accurate and effective fire. On 26 August an attempt was made by two aircraft of the Indian Air Force to drop water and ammunition on the post but the drops fell into hostile hands. Both the aircrafts were hit by small arms fire; while one was able to make its way back to the base, the other was forced to land in a field and the pilot and the crew captured by the hostiles. By 27 August the post had exhausted all its ammunition and water and appeared to be doomed. Early on 28 August, however, five I.A.F. fighters came to the rescue of the post, strafing the hostiles' positions and inflicting heavy casualties on them, forcing them to lift the siege.

The Purr offensive was a major operation and an indication of the scale on which the Nagas were waging war. As a matter of interest, the commander of the hostiles that besieged the Purr post subsequently surrendered to the Government and, as part of the rehabilitation policy for ex-hostiles, he was absorbed in the Border Security Force and was later decorated for conspicuous gallantry and leadership in anti-Naga operations.

3rd Battalion conducted an operation in the Injoana road and Mauglong road area in February 1961. In this operation 26 hostiles were killed and an equal number wounded. One light machine gun, one sten gun, six .303 rifles and two Japanese rifles were also captured.

Meanwhile, despite all attempts to contain the extent of the insurgency, hostilities had spread to the Nagas of Manipur State. By the end of 1958, 4th Battalion was fully occupied in operations against hostiles and so continued to be throughout the next two years.

On 12 February 1959, about twenty hostiles attacked the

Assam Rifles post at mile 28 on the Kohima-Imphal road, but were repulsed after an hour's fighting. The hostiles fled leaving behind one .38 pistol. Another group of hostiles, numbering about fifty, opened fire on a 4 Assam Rifles patrol in Ukhrul area on 24 September. In the clash that took place the patrol captured one sten gun. About the same time, on receiving information that hostiles were looting Mao bazaar, a patrol was rushed to the spot and dispersed the looters, an encounter in which one hostile was killed and a Japanese rifle captured.

In similar actions during this period and well into 1961, 4th Battalion inflicted a number of casualties on the insurgents and captured an appreciable amount of arms and ammunition. In a big raid on a hostile camp in the Oinam area on 22 January 1960, three hostiles including two of their prominent leaders, Kaikho and K.H. Mani Singh, were killed. One sten gun, two Japanese rifles and large quantities of ammunition, stores and clothing were captured. Another patrol attacked a hostile camp in Chingmei Khunon on 25 January 1960. In the heavy fighting that followed, five hostiles were killed while three rifles, one sten gun and some ammunition were captured. In yet another raid on a hostile hide-out in Satvdai-Khumpum Khulien area, ten hostiles were killed and three captured. Six rifles were also captured. Another hostile was killed and one rifle captured when a patrol raided Mongjrong Khullen in March 1960.

The depredations of the Naga hostiles included arson, loot and murder. Ambushes were laid along Manipur's life-line—the Imphal-Kohima road, which was a major target of hostile strategy. On 4 February 1960, two jeeps of the Assam Rifles were ambushed while proceeding from Ukhrul to Kharasom. Two riflemen were killed in this ambush. In the counter-ambush carried out by the occupants of the jeeps, three hostiles were killed and one .303 rifle captured. Later, on 31 May, about 200 hostiles armed with rifles and sten gun surrounded Mao Police Station. An Assam Rifles patrol was rushed to the spot and the hostiles engaged. In the encounter that followed one rifleman was killed and another seriously injured but the hostiles were dispersed.

In April 1961, in a memorable action against a strong

hostile force, a very gallant officer of the Assam Rifles lost his life but was awarded the country's highest decoration for peace-time gallantry. Sub Maj Kharka Bahadur Limbu of 8th A.R. Battalion (who had already won a Military Cross at the Battle of Kohima in 1944) was posthumously awarded the Ashoka Chakra Class I. The citation reads as follows:

On the 26th April 1961 Subedar Major Kharka Bahadur Limbu, M.C. of the 8th Bn Assam Rifles took over the command of a platoon which had the task of taking a position held strongly by Naga hostiles. This position situated in a jungle ravine and difficult of access was barricaded by a long palisade covered by bamboo stakes, well dug in. A notorious hostile leader was in charge of the camp. Due to the impregnable defences and accurate fire from within, it was extremely perilous to attack it. At 0400 hours on the 26th April Subedar Major Kharka Bahadur Limbu, in complete disregard of his own personal safety, ran through hostile fire to the stockade, beat down a portion of it and with a handful of men stormed the nearest bunker. He himself rushed through the defenders counter-attacking him, shot down two of them and captured two rifles before being wounded mortally. With a rifle bullet inside him, he dragged himself forward undaunted, threw two grenades into a bunker and shot down three more hostiles. With his dying breath he cheered and encouraged his men to break the defences and destroy the hostiles. He made the supreme sacrifice but the stronghold was stormed leading to the eventual collapse of hostiles in this area.

Subedar Major Limbu's outstanding courage, fearlessness and gallantry were in the highest traditions of the Assam Rifles.

By the end of 1961 the total casualties among the security forces had risen to more than 200 officers and men killed and 400 wounded. These figures do not, of course, include civilian casualties. Kidnapping, torture and gruesome murder of the latter were frequent practices among the hostiles. In the last two years before the cease-fire 387 reported cases of kidnapping and murder were recorded.

The number of hostile casualties during 1954-61 was 200 estimated killed and another 400 wounded. These comparatively low figures are an indication not only of the tactical disadvantages the security forces faced while operating in the hostiles' home terrain (including the difficulty of obtaining timely Intelligence) but also of the restraint with which most of the offensive operations were carried out.

Government of India, meanwhile, had taken several measures that gradually conceded most of the demands of the liberal Nagas. The first such step was taken in 1957 when, under the terms of the "Naga Hills and Tuensang (N.H.T.A.) Regulation, 1957", it created a single administrative area out of these two regions and placed it directly under the Centre. When this step was rejected by the hostiles' organisation (the Naga Federal Government) the liberal elements went ahead with the next step, which was to form an Interim Body to act as an advisory board on N.H.T.A. administration, pending the grant of full statehood.

During this period Naga affairs remained virtually the personal preserve of Prime Minister Nehru himself. It was he who, at the end of 1963, finally forced the Cabinet decision on the grant of statehood to Nagaland, which came into effect in December 1963 under the "State of Nagaland Act, 1963". This Act, besides granting full statehood to Nagaland, also provided for a number of safeguards for the tribals in regard to their religious, legal and social practices, thus according them the maximum possible autonomy in their internal affairs. None of these steps, however, evoked any response from the extremist hostile elements, who continued with their depredations and violence, causing untold hardship and suffering to the Naga people in general.

The Cease Fire

After the inauguration of the new state of Nagaland by President Radhakrishnan on 1 December 1963, fresh efforts were made by the Government of India to effect a political understanding with the underground leaders. By then the help the hostiles were getting from both Pakistan and China had begun to cause some concern in Delhi. The Prime Minister deputed his Foreign Secretary, Y.D. Gundevia, to take a personal hand in Naga affairs. During one of Gundevia's visits to Kohima in March 1964, Naga church leaders proposed a "peace offensive", a proposal that eventually led to the formation of a "Peace Council" consisting of Mr Chaliba, the Assam Chief Minister (much trusted by the Nagas despite their customary antipathy to the Assamese); Mr

Jaiprakash Narayan, the Sarvodaya leader; and the Reverend Mr Michael Scott, a British padre who had previously done some sterling work in South Africa on behalf of the Indian community, supporting them in their resistance movement against the Asiatic Land Tenure Act.

The Peace Council, individually and in a body, held numerous meetings with leaders of the underground; and after weeks of hard bargaining a Cease-Fire agreement was arrived at between the hostile leaders and the government. Alas, before it could actually come into effect Jawaharlal Nehru had died.

Broadly, the terms of the 'Cease Fire were: all operations against the hostiles would be held over; and there was to be no patrolling by the security forces too far from their various stations and posts. The hostiles, on their part, undertook to stop all ambushes and sniping, fines and other reprisals on villages, and all sabotage. Special provisions permitted the patrolling of the Indo-Burma border but limited to a depth of three miles inside the border.

There followed many months of open negotiations between the underground and the government delegation led by Gundevia—always under the auspices of the Peace Council. However, although the Cease Fire was meticulously observed (barring a few isolated incidents) no common ground could be found in political matters because the hostile leaders would not relinquish their claim to an independent Naga land.

It must, however, be recorded to the credit and honour of the Naga underground that they did not “at any time, and in any way, take advantage of India’s strategic preoccupations during the spring, summer or early autumn of 1965 . . .” (Gundevia). After the confrontation with Pakistan in Kutch, most of the army units were withdrawn from Nagaland by late August and “there was not a man in uniform left in Dimapur”; the Nagas did not take advantage of India’s discomfiture.

The Assam Rifles had also, during these years of counter-insurgency operations in N.H.T.A., to contend with East Pakistani offensive military activity. In Tripura the 6th Battalion moved out to establish posts along the border at Sonamura, Lathitilla, Bonagar, Lakshmipur and other places where there had been incidents of firing by Pakistani border forces

and attempts at encroachment into Indian territory. In the Cachar area and in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills nine platoons (from 1st, 2nd, 7th and 11th battalions) were despatched to the border to function under the command of HQ 181 Infantry Brigade and remained so committed for a whole year.

These widespread operational commitments and the sudden rise in the strength of the Force had put a considerable strain on its administrative resources, which was never designed to take so great a load. However, the Army had by then acquired a vested interest in the functioning of the Force and accorded it liberal facilities to meet the growing administrative demands. In 1955, an Ordnance Base Organisation was sanctioned specifically for the Assam Rifles, who were also given entitlement to draw from the Army Ordnance Depot at Shillong. At HQ I.G.A.R. the technical staff was expanded to make the Force self-sufficient for inspection of arms and ammunition, and a transport platoon was authorised as its second line transport. At the same time, replacements of first line transport and wireless equipment in the battalions were authorised, as well as the provision of a Signal Platoon for each battalion as part of an independent Signal Unit at HQ I.G.A.R.

Nor was welfare of the Force overlooked. By the end of 1960, it was obvious that the end of insurgency in Nagaland was nowhere in sight and that counter-insurgency operations would form a part of Assam Rifles' responsibility for many years to come. The strain of these operations on the men of the Force had been great, because their organisation did not cater for routine reliefs for rest and reorganisation as in the units of the Army. It goes to the credit of the Assam Rifles that at no stage did they allow fatigue or lack of interest or complacency, which are normally associated with prolonged operations of this nature, to get the better of themselves. It had, however, become necessary that the maximum be done to look after the welfare of the men so that they could continue to give of their best.

The greatest inequity affecting the morale of the Assam Rifles personnel operating alongside the Army on similar duties was the disparity in the rations and the pay-scales of

the two. This had in fact been a sore point throughout the history of the Assam Rifles, whenever they operated in parallel with the regular Army. Somehow the authorities had never been able to disabuse themselves of the convenient notion of treating the Assam Rifles as a "cheap Army", the idea which had first prompted them to raise the Cachar Levy in 1834. Although basically a para-military force, the Assam Rifles had since become—as this history amply indicates—more "military" than "para". It was, therefore, invidious to expect them to accept these disparities, particularly the difference in rations. The Assam Rifles authorities had long waged a relentless war against this discrimination; at last, in June 1958, they were granted Army scales of rations while operating under the operational control of the Army. A proposal for improving the pay-scales, which were the lowest even among para-military forces, was also taken up. Protracted correspondence with higher authorities on the subject ultimately bore fruit when the pay-scales of Assam Rifles were revised in June 1960.

THE CHINESE AGGRESSION 1962 AND THE INDO-PAK WAR OF 1965

IN the wake of the Communist Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, the occupation forces established a military government in the form of the "Tibet Military District", in violation of Peking's earlier pledge that it would allow the Tibetan people "the right of exercising national regional sovereignty". Thereafter, tension among the people, particularly in Eastern Tibet, began steadily mounting. In 1955 the Kham tribes started organised armed resistance against the Chinese, which gradually took the form of a full-fledged insurgency spreading from Chamdo to the Indo-Tibet border. It was an unequal fight at the best of times, because the Khams received little or no support from the outside world, whereas the Chinese built up their forces in Tibet to more than 100,000 troops, so that eventually they were able to crush the major centres of the insurgency, though pockets of resistance continued to hold out and harass for some years to come.

These developments, combined with the fact that Peking had never recognised the McMahon Line, foretold a potential threat to our borders, especially in view of the fact that the Chinese also stepped up their cartographical aggression by claiming almost the whole of N.E.F.A. as well as parts of the Brahmaputra valley and Bhutan as Chinese territory in their officially published maps. The Government of India's reaction was to take firm measures to ensure that its administration extended right up to the international border, as indeed the Himmatsinhji Committee had recommended. It also instituted a series of talks on the border issue with the Chinese, both at the summit and at officials' levels, in order to contain the potential crisis.

Posts Along the Himalayan Watershed

It was the Assam Rifles that formed the military vanguard of the process to take the administration up to the border. New posts were ordered to be set up all along the watershed—at Gemchram (4,200 metres), Taksing (3,200 metres), Domla (5,200 metres), Karbo (3,600 metres), Dembuen (3,600 metres), Malinye (3,000 metres), Mipidon (1,700 metres) and Jachap (2,800 metres). Despite the fact that some of these posts were on or near the snowline and, in winter, cut off for months at a time, most of them were established by the end of 1958. The hardships cheerfully faced by the men of the Force, who had to undertake the task without the benefit of snow clothing and many other essential items of high-altitude equipment, form a saga in themselves.

Following the revolt in Tibet and its ruthless suppression, a large number of Tibetan refugees began to pour into Indian territory over the various passes, often through the newly established Assam Rifles posts. These refugees could not be denied asylum by the Indian Government, if only on humanitarian grounds. After the March 1959 disturbances in Lhasa, as a climax to this refugee migration the Dalai Lama himself, along with other members of his family, escaped from Lhasa and made for the Assam Rifles post at Chuthangmu, giving the slip to pursuing Chinese soldiery. 5th Battalion had the honour of escorting His Holiness from the frontier to Tezpur, via Towang and Bomdila. At Tezpur the Lama entrained for his onward journey to Mussoorie. As a token of appreciation of the services rendered by the Assam Rifles he very graciously presented his personal weapons to the Assam Rifles. These weapons are to this day proudly displayed in the Training Centre, as mementos in honour of the association of the Assam Rifles with the Dalai Lama.

The Chinese thereafter predictably accused the Indian Government of harbouring the Dalai Lama and other refugees for political purposes. Inevitably, they displayed their displeasure in military terms—the first two serious border clashes in N.E.F.A., in August 1959. The first incident took place on 7 August when about 200 Chinese soldiers violated the Indian border at Khenzeman, north of Chuthangmu in Kameng

Frontier Division, which had been the Dalai Lama's point of entry. They intimidated and pushed back a small Assam Rifles patrol of twelve men, though after the Chinese had withdrawn, the patrol returned to Khenzeman, re-established their post and again ran up the Indian flag. Subsequent demands by the Chinese for the withdrawal of the picket from the area and the striking of the Indian tricolour were ignored—and the Indian will prevailed. The second incident took place on 25 August when a strong Chinese detachment intruded into Indian territory at Longju in the Subansiri Frontier Division and ambushed an Assam Rifles border patrol of a N.C.O. and 11 men. This time the Chinese opened fire and three Assam Rifles personnel were killed in this ambush. Next day about 200 Chinese came down to Longju, surrounded the Assam Rifles post and again opened fire. This time our men returned fire; the intensity of the exchange built up on both sides and continued till late in the evening. When the post ran short of ammunition an effort was made at resupply by an air drop, but it proved unsuccessful; the post was reluctantly forced to withdraw a few miles to their rear base at Maja.

These two incidents, while reaffirming the necessity for physically occupying the Indo-Tibetan border by a chain of Assam Rifles posts, were sufficient indication of the Chinese intention of evicting the posts from territory disputed by them, if necessary, by force. It was evident, therefore, that the Assam Rifles would have to have effective backing of the regular Indian Army if they were to hold on to their posts against Chinese attacks. Consequently HQ 4 Infantry Division with two brigades was moved into N.E.F.A. and all Assam Rifles posts located in N.E.F.A. were placed under the operational control of this Division.

After 4 Infantry Division took over operational control of the defence of the N.E.F.A. border, Government of India launched what later came to be known as the "Forward Policy". Under this policy new Assam Rifles and Army posts were established all along the McMahon Line. The Army and Assam Rifles also undertook extensive patrolling of the border areas. The so-called Forward Policy was based on the Intelligence Bureau's assessment that the Chinese would not

go to war with India on the issue of the McMahon Line, so that the international border would ultimately stabilise along a "line of actual control" established by actual presence of troops. By then platoons of five battalions of the Assam Rifles—2nd, 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th—were deployed in N.E.F.A., many of them in posts right up on the border.

The Assam Rifles having proved their worth in border security duties, the Government decided to raise an extra battalion, 17th Battalion, to take over the border in North Sikkim (to relieve elements of the third brigade of 4 Division located there). The Battalion was raised at the Garhwal Centre at Lansdowne on 1 October 1960. This was the first time that the Force was allotted a permanent role outside the state of Assam; and, considering the independent role which the Battalion would have to play in Sikkim, so far away from the Shillong Headquarters, 17th Battalion was authorised an enhanced organisation in order to make the Battalion self-reliant. Consequently, besides other measures, the Battalion was authorised a Signals Officer from the Corps of Signals and an additional Major as the Training Officer. On completion of training the Battalion first moved to Diphu in January 1962, where it took part in counter-insurgency operations; it was not until June 1963 that the Battalion was finally despatched to Sikkim.

The Chaukan Pass Expedition

The threat from the Chinese was not confined to the border with Tibet. Ever since the communist regime had been established in Peking, Chinese troops had been active in north Burma, inciting the local tribes to set up a "Kachin Peoples' Democratic Republic"; and area had gradually come under Chinese influence. In 1956 they were seen within 15 kms of Putao (Fort Hertz). Furthermore, Chinese survey parties had on several occasions transgressed into the Dichu valley. These activities had been viewed as a potential threat to our north-eastern border, but it was not until 1959, when the confrontation in the north assumed serious proportions that it was decided to establish Assam Rifles posts at Jachap and Hot-spring. However, there was one obvious route of likely ingress

that had been left unprotected—the Chaukan Pass over the Patkoi range just west of Putao.

Attempts to reconnoitre land routes to Chaukan Pass had been made as early as in February 1953 when the Assistant P.O. of Tirap F.D. took out a column, marched up the valley of the Nao Dihing and reached Lawai camp after 16 days. He could not, however, proceed beyond that because of heavy rainfall and the porters' refusal to accompany him any further; and the expedition had to be abandoned. A second attempt was made in June 1960 when a column under Jemadar Dam Bahadur Limbu of 7 Assam Rifles led a column up the Namphuk river. This attempt also had to be abandoned due to bad weather. The same bad luck dogged a fresh column under Major Sumer Singh in October 1960. The column reached Korvai but again had to be withdrawn due to heavy rains and a high rate of sickness among the men. Major Sumer Singh made yet another attempt to reach Chaukan Pass in February 1961. This time he took the route along Nao Dihing and the column was supported by accurate air-drops by the Kalinga Airlines. It reached a point just 22 kms north-east of the Chaukan Pass. Here he found a village named Sidi which he renamed Gandhigram and he set about clearing a Dakota landing strip. This column had also to be withdrawn due to the early onset of the monsoons.

The Assam Rifles were, however, not to be so easily put off. In October 1961 the Inspector General of Assam Rifles, Major General Ajit Singh Guraya, decided to lead an expedition to the Chaukan Pass himself. Accordingly, an expedition nicknamed *Srijitga II* was organised to reconnoitre land routes to the Chaukan and Hpungan passes, with a view to establishing our administration by opening an Assam Rifles post at a suitable place from where foreign intrusion into our territory could be checked. During the planning stage General Guraya himself carried out air reconnaissances of the Patkoi region with the help of both the Kalinga Airlines and the I.A.F., for pre-selecting suitable camp sites and dropping zones.

The I.G.A.R.'s expedition included the A.P.O. and civil staff, seven officers, six J.C.O.s and 111 other ranks. The transport element consisted of 365 porters, ten elephants and

three ponies. The party left Jairampur and concentrated at Miao, the Main Base, on 26 October, whence it moved up to the Firm Base, 55 kms ahead of the Main Base, on 31 October. Here the force was divided into two columns—the Chaukan column and the Hpungan column.

The Hpungan column, commanded by Major Shishupal and consisting of 54 all ranks and 125 porters, left Firm Base for the Hpungan pass on 12 November. The column after enduring many hardships reached Hpungan on 17 December and hoisted the National Flag atop the pass.

The I.G. accompanied the Chaukan Column, which was in fact the main column and was commanded by Sumer Singh. It consisted of 91 all ranks and civilians, 252 porters, ponies and elephants. The column left Firm Base on 5 November. The going was extremely difficult, through thick jungle and shaly, unstable rock formation. A mule track had to be cut through the hills; and the construction of dropping zones further held up progress. In the end ten intermediary camp sites had to be constructed *en route*, so that the first “assault party” did not reach the pass till 27 November. The last camp before Chaukan pass was thereafter built up into a base with an Otter strip and named Vijayanagar.

A platoon post of 7th Battalion was established at Vijayanagar and the whole region was reconnoitred. A hitherto unexplored area of great strategic importance had thus been brought under our administration by the Assam Rifles, fully justifying their claim of being “pioneers of every advance into the interior” (Verrier Elwin). Incidentally, for the first time an Assam Rifles’ expedition had been filmed by the Government.

In his recommendations to the Government the I.G.A.R. brought out the strategic importance of this area and the need for populating it by encouraging settlements, preferably of ex-servicemen. He felt that the region possessed great economic potential, with its fertile soil, abundant growths of good quality cane, bamboo and timber, and traces of bitumen, coal and sulphur that had been noticed during the expedition. His recommendations with regard to the colonisation of Vijayanagar area were accepted by the Government and under a scheme prepared by HQ I.G.A.R., 20 acres of land each

were to have been allotted to about a thousand volunteers of the Assam Rifles, to encourage them to settle there. Under this scheme Assam Rifles serving personnel with less than two years to go for retirement could volunteer. The personnel would be permitted to settle down in Vijayanagar during the last two years of service, which period was to be treated as vocational training period with full pay. Within this colony of about ten thousand acres an area was earmarked for a market and some centrally controlled projects such as a saw mill, poultry farming, piggeries and dairy farms—the whole colony to be set up as a welfare project for the Force. The initial construction work for the project was taken on by the Assam Rifles themselves and Assam Rifles Pioneers were extensively used for this purpose. After the process of colonisation had got started, the entire project was handed over to the civil administration, but, alas, the vision of the I.G.A.R., General Guraya, has not been fulfilled. Whether it is bureaucratic foot-dragging or sheer lack of interest in the scheme, Vijayanagar is yet to become a flourishing community.

Invasion from the North

The fateful year 1962 dawned as the Army continued with its hectic activity to implement *Operation Onkar*, the code-name for the deployment of forward posts in the Indo-Tibet frontier. It will be remembered that HQ 33 Corps had been established to coordinate operations in N.E.F.A. and Nagaland. Meanwhile, 11 Infantry Brigade of 4 Division had been sent to reinforce 23 Infantry Division, the new designation for the forces in Nagaland.

It is necessary to recount briefly the policy that had been formulated for the defence of the Tibet border. The Assam Rifles posts were in the forefront of the deployment, strung out on or near the border in self-contained posts, often on inaccessible heights, unsupportable tactically, and unmaintainable operationally except by air-drops—which of course depended on the vagaries of the weather and on the availability of aircraft from an over-extended transport wing of the I.A.F. Behind these posts the Army deployed its troops, in greater strength, along an arbitrary “defence line” extending

from Towang to Bomdila, Daporijo and Walong. The Border Roads Organisation was still in the process of connecting the plains with the Army's forward positions. In Kameng F.D. the road links were nearing completion; but in Siang, Subansiri and Lohit F.D. the process was far from complete. Walong, for instance, had to be air-maintained because after the great earthquake of 1950 it was virtually out of reach even by mule tracks.

The Assam Rifles had been allotted 34 new posts in *Operation Onkar*, to be manned by 24 platoons squeezed from the Assam Rifles battalions deployed in N.E.F.A. Their forward move continued throughout the monsoons, under extreme handicaps of weather, non-availability of porters, lack of accommodation at posts and other administrative problems that arose due to the short notice at which the posts had to be established. There was heavy snow on and *en route* to many of the posts; and the porters, who saw snow for the first time, sometimes refused to work under snow conditions. In such cases the men of the Force had to carry double loads at high altitudes. The Singals resources having been stretched beyond limit, there were frequent wireless breakdowns and many posts remained out of contact with their headquarters for days on end. Also, the sudden climb to heights above 3,000 metres often caused high altitude sickness among the men.

Despite these difficulties, at no stage did the Assam Rifles let down the Army. By October 1962 they had occupied virtually all the posts allotted to them. However, as each post was occupied, it created additional problems of maintenance. Resort had to be made to free dropping of supplies, even though losses were high due to inaccuracy of drops at high altitudes and the lack of suitable dropping zones. In fact, owing to the rapid expansion and the extended deployment of the Force, logistics in general was not able to keep pace with events and the men had to endure much suffering and hardship. Quite understandably, construction of permanent accommodation was not undertaken along the N.E.F.A. border or in tactically sited posts in Nagaland, but even accommodation for units whose key location plans had been approved appeared to be progressing painfully slowly. Also

affecting operational efficiency of the Force were the deficiencies in many items of controlled and un-controlled stores and equipment. Nevertheless, the Force continued to grow and to fulfil its many roles. Four more battalions, one independent wing for Tripura, one additional sub-wing for Manipur and four defence platoons (one each for the four Range headquarters) were sanctioned; and, for better command and control, two new sector headquarters.

Every effort was made to keep pace with the increased size and the increasing commitments of the Assam Rifles. The implementation of the new PE/PET was now in full swing. Under the new PE all battalions of the Assam Rifles from the 1st to the 16th were standardised. The PE/PET of the Assam Rifles Training Centre had also been approved and was being implemented. A central Pay and Records office was established at Shillong and it took over all records work of all Assam Rifles units. At the same time, the Army system of payments, the Individual Running Ledger Account system, was introduced in the Assam Rifles.

Pakistan chose this period, when the Indian Army was preoccupied with its herculean task in the north, to hot up the Tripura border, particularly the Feny river sector where mutually claimed islands and shifting patches of sand gave them sufficient excuse to mount a series of border incidents involving the use of fire-arms. When the situation deteriorated HQ Eastern Command placed all security forces in Tripura under HQ 181 Infantry Brigade. 6 Assam Rifles was ordered to open five posts on the southern bulge of Tripura's border with East Pakistan. In September 1962 patrols from the East Pakistan Rifles violated the disputed territory, where previously a *status quo* had been accepted by the two countries. Thereupon two platoons from Jalaya post established a patrol base in the disputed territory to forestall further Pakistani encroachments. The E.P.R., backed by elements of their regular army, launched an immediate attack to dislodge the Assam Rifles from the area. In spite of heavy 3-inch mortar shelling by the Pakistanis and their repeated attacks the Assam Rifles, who had not even had time to complete their defences, held on to their hastily prepared positions for six days before the position could be reinforced by a company of

3 Guards on 2 October. Spasmodic fire continued till about the 18th of October when a cease-fire was arranged and both sides withdrew from the disputed area.

The Kameng Sector

Meanwhile the stage had been set for the enactment of a major tragedy in Kameng F.D. The Assam Rifles had recently established a platoon post on the south bank of the Nam Ka Chu, a stream that flows through a desolate, uninhabited valley south of the disputed Thag la ridge near the Bhutan-Tibet-India tri-junction, about seven days march west of Towang. It was an area without any paths or tracks in the accepted sense of these terms; movement over the steep slopes was possible only because of the existence of natural goat-tracks made by herds of goats brought up to these uninviting heights by a few enterprising Monpa herdsmen each year, seeking fresh pastures.

The Chinese reacted strongly to the establishment of this post. They despatched a force two to three hundred strong to surround the Assam Rifle position. "Op Immediate" signals flashed across the country and the situation thereafter escalated rapidly. 4 Infantry Division was first ordered to send a battalion to the area from Towang; and then a brigade—7 Brigade from Towang (a move that left Towang temporarily undefended). The Chinese did not lag behind: it was easy for them to send strong reinforcements and soon two brigade-size forces faced each other across the narrow stream, fingers on triggers; but whereas the Chinese were only two days from their road-head in Le (north of Thag la) and reachable by mules, 7 Infantry Brigade was seven days away from their base in Towang and 300 kms from the plains; it could be resupplied only by porters. The logistical disadvantage was crippling.

By mid-October both sides had resorted to sporadic firing and there were some casualties. The Chinese decided to exploit the Indian forces' logistical (and tactical) weakness in a decisive manner. On the morning of 20 October they mounted a massive attack; about two Chinese brigades rolled down the Thag la slopes, supported by field artillery and mortars, and easily overwhelmed 7 Infantry Brigade, strung out as they

were along the Nam Ka Chu and armed with only small arms, and ammunition confined to 50 rounds per man.

The Chinese forces crossed the McMahon Line in other sectors also, always in superior numbers, and mounted a general offensive against the Indian defensive posts and localities in the high Himalayas (as they also did in Ladakh, Kashmir). In N.E.F.A. the Assam Rifles faced the brunt of the first onslaught along all the invasion routes.

Because of the almost total lack of logistical capability forward of road-heads, few of the Assam Rifles posts near the border had been supplied with even such basic defensive requirements as barbed wire or, in some cases (as in Dhola), entrenching tools. This had been permitted because the Intelligence appreciation at Delhi had been that the Chinese would not attack the Indian positions. When that futile prophecy proved wrong and the Chinese attacked in strength, the posts were quickly overrun—as much because of the lack of defensive measures as to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the attacking forces.

5 Assam Rifles had been allotted a key role in 4 Division's plans. On the 7 Brigade front, it was their responsibility to hold the post at Khenzeman, which lies in the valley of the Namjang Chu where it enters Indian territory from Tibet (between Thag la and Bum la ranges). Three platoons of C Wing had been deployed for this role: No 5 platoon in front, Nos 3 and 2 in depth. As this valley was served by a mule-track from Towang, these posts at least had received some defence stores such as barbed wire and entrenching tools, which had been effectively put to use.

The families of C Wing had been allowed up as far as Lumla (two days journey to the rear), where they had settled down in hastily built *bashas*. Unfortunately, only a few days prior to the September crisis, a massive landslide had carried away the family lines, resulting in the death of 20 women and children. It was this disaster that had brought the Commandant, Lieut-Colonel Rattan Singh, to Lumla.

As soon as the Dhola incident started, the posts at Khenzeman reported unusual activity on the heights overlooking the Assam Rifles positions. The Commandant sent the Wing Commander, Major H.P. Singh, forward to Khenzeman.

In late September, when the Chinese build-up assumed serious proportions, Major General Niranjan Prasad, G.O.C. 4 Infantry Division (located just south of Khenzeman) arranged for a company of 4 Grenadiers to be located in depth at Drokung Samba bridge, as a back-up force. Finally, he appointed Colonel Rattan Singh as the central sector commander (Valley sector).

On 19 October the G.O.C. and Colonel Rattan Singh visited Khenzeman: the former returned to his Tac HQ but the Commandant and sector commander stayed on at the post. Sporadic firing went on throughout the night, with all the troops standing to. At 0400 hrs the enemy fired a number of star shells over Khenzeman, illuminating the whole area of the three posts. At the same time, an intense preliminary bombardment by field guns and mortars was directed into the valley, though not with any great accuracy. However, the bridge was destroyed immediately, leaving the three posts totally cut off.

The attack on the forward post, No 5 platoon's, came in at 0430. The men fought valiantly for nearly two hours, repelling several assault waves and causing heavy casualties. Their own losses, however, were also heavy—the platoon commander Havildar Som Bahadur and 20 riflemen killed, a like number wounded. Ammunition began to run out; and the post was overrun shortly after first light. The enemy thereafter switched targets to Nos 3 and 2 platoons who also fought tenaciously, repelling three successive assaults by massed Chinese soldiery, inflicting casualties. By 0930 hrs, however, the battle was over. Both post commanders, Subedar Hem Lal and Naib Subedar Shamsheer Bahadur Thapa, had been killed together with 36 other ranks. Lieut-Colonel Rattan Singh had been wounded; both he and the Wing Commander were taken prisoner, together with 23 other survivors. A tragic episode, but a proud record of a hard-fought battle against overwhelming odds; nowhere else in N.E.F.A. did the Chinese have to pay so heavily for the price of a small piece of Indian real estate.

Stragglers from Chutangmu and other posts behind Khenzeman made for Zimithang, two hours march to the south, where Tac HQ of the Division had been established. The

G.O.C. was present at Tac HQ and his remarks about the survivors are worth repeating (*The Fall of Towang*, by Major General Niranjana Prasad):

Stragglers and walking wounded from Khenzemane and Drokung Samba bridge began to arrive, followed a little later by escapees from Khenzemane . . . I was glad to see that there was no evidence of panic . . . All those who escaped, including the walking wounded, brought their weapons back with them—an indication of their good discipline and morale.

On the Nam Ka Chu front, 7 Brigade also was unable to hold the Chinese hordes. With only pouch ammunition with the men, the resistance offered lasted only an hour or so wherever frontal battles were fought. The Brigade was either overrun or in retreat by mid-morning.

It is now time to move to the Towang sector on the right. The Towang feature is a high sloping plateau starting at the Bum la (5,200 metres) pass and ending at Towang (3,000 metres) 25 kms to the south. At the southern extremity was located the township, the P.O.'s HQ and the famous monastery.

After the despatch of 7 Brigade to the Nam Ka Chu front in September, two fresh infantry battalions had been sent up from the plains to hold Towang and they were just settling in. 1st Sikhs, the battalion sent forward to hold the main defensive position on the Bum la-Towang track, had located a platoon just south of Bum la, to support the Assam Rifles platoon on the pass itself. The Chinese build-up on the Tibetan plateau north of Bum la could be clearly observed by our forces: in this sector, at any rate, no one entertained any doubts about the Chinaman's intentions.

The attack started at dawn on 23 October, supported by mortars and anti-tank rockets, the latter directed at the Assam Rifles' bunkers. (This post had also been well entrenched, with bunkers, wire obstacles and overhead cover.) About 500-600 Chinese led the first assault. The Assam Riflemen fought back with grim determination, supported by mountain artillery and mortar fire from the Sikhs' main defences. The odds were too great, however, and the post was overwhelmed before mid-day. Only a few of the men managed to escape,

the rest being either killed or taken prisoner. The Sikhs thereafter put up a strong fight but they also were forced to pull back: and eventually all stragglers got back to Towang and thence, along the jeep track back over the Se la pass to Bomdila and Charduar—a more orderly withdrawal than in any other sector.

All over N.E.F.A. the suddenness and the massive scale of the Chinese offensive had the effect of disintegrating the cohesion of the whole front with shattering effect. Groups lost contact with rear links; and, as the chaos spread, intermediate posts began their rearward moves, so that command and control became ineffective and remained paralysed for days—leading to demoralising rumours in the rear. No plans for withdrawal had been previously prepared, so that troops—both the Army and the Assam Rifles—fell back in disorganised fashion, splitting up into smaller groups for easier movement, walking for days over these bleak heights without rations or any medical aid for the wounded and the sick.

The worst sufferers were the families of Assam Rifles personnel, who had been allowed forward because a massive invasion on the scale of the October attack had never been envisaged. They suffered untold hardships and harrowing anxiety. They had to make it on their own—and the fate of many household members were not known for a number of days following the attack. Only the womenfolk of the hardy warriors of the Assam Rifles, used to sharing the hardships of their men, could have survived the ordeal.

The Central Sector

In the central sector of N.E.F.A., in Subansiri and Siang Frontier Divisions, platoons from 2, 7 and 11 Assam Rifles were deployed under 5 Infantry Brigade of 4 Division, manning the high passes and ridges in isolated posts. In addition, two wings of 11 A.R., located at Mechuka and Tuting, had been placed under command of 2/8 G.R. and 2 Madras respectively. HQ 11 Assam Rifles was located at Along, centre of Siang administration, and it had under command a sub-wing at Pasighat. In Subansiri F.D., platoons of 7th Battalion manned posts at Limeking and Maja (the latter only a

short distance from Longju, on the McMahon Line), the scene of the incident of August 1959.

After the confrontation in the Thag la sector started in mid-September, orders were issued to these three battalions to reinforce the forward posts by 10 October, but the constraints in logistical capability prevented them from being implemented in any significant measure. On 25 October the Chinese attacked a number of border posts, which were forced to withdraw after offering initial resistance. The Chinese had deployed smaller forces in this sector, not more than an estimated two battalions, but our posts were not in a position to offer any but token resistance. HQ 5 Brigade very rightly ordered them to fall back to Taliha and Along. These moves were still being carried out when hostilities were called off in the third week of November.

The Walong Sector

Platoons of the Assam Rifles deployed for the defence of the Lohit valley in the extreme north-east played a significant role in the battle of Walong. As in the Khenzeman sector of the Towang salient, here also the approach from Tibet lay along a comparatively low-altitude valley—the valley of the Lohit where it enters Indian territory at the border village of Kibithoo, south of Rima; after that it flows down to Walong, thence curving westwards to Sadiya. The difference, however, lay in the fact that unlike Khenzeman, which was served by a mule-track from Towang, Walong and Kibithoo lay 170 and 190 kilometres from road-head, forward of which it was served only by a precarious foot-track through the earthquake-ravaged valley of the Lohit. In fact this track was not used at all; troop inductions and maintenance had been done entirely by air-lifts, a small Otter strip having been constructed at Walong.

The main defensive position, where eventually HQ 11 Infantry Brigade would be established, was at Walong. A wing of 2nd Battalion A.R. was in the forward locality of Kibithoo, with posts up on the heights above the valley, some as high as 3,300 metres. When the Chinese build-up started, posts were also set up in the Dichu valley to the east (which

flows into the Lohit from the watershed between Burma and India at Diphu la pass, 5,300 metres). These posts were at Jachap, Hotsprings and other localities; to man them, two platoons of 7 Assam Rifles had been sent up from Jairampur as reinforcement for the 2 A.R. Wing at Kibithoo.

The build-up of Chinese forces at Rima was so alarming that 6 Kumaon was sent forward from Walong to take over responsibility for the defence of Kibithoo from 2nd Battalion's Wing HQ located there. The "McMahon Ridge" above Kibithoo, the crucial tactical position, was thereafter held by a company of 6 Kumaon and a platoon of 2 A.R. further to the right.

The enemy attacked the Kumaoni and Assam Rifles posts simultaneously just after mid-night of 21/22 October, supported by mortars and heavy machine-guns. The Kumaonis fought back tenaciously and inflicted heavy casualties—estimated 100 Chinese killed—for the loss of three killed and six wounded (including the Company Commander) before ammunition shortage forced them to pull back to Kibithoo. The Assam Rifles platoon did not have the resources to withstand an assault on such a scale and was soon overrun. Those who survived and escaped were led by Subedar Ao and took to the hills, having been cut off along the west bank of the Lohit. They marched over a succession of lateral ranges for nearly a month before reaching Hayuliang at the southern end of the Walong salient. Other Assam Rifles platoons also made their way back as best as they could; about four platoons were able to cross the Lohit before the bamboo bridge at Kibithoo was destroyed and they were able to report to Walong in time to be allotted tasks for its defence.

Unlike the Chinese in Kameng F.D., where there was a three-week lull in operations between the first and second offensives, the enemy in Walong sector never broke contact. As our forces withdrew from Kibithoo and made rearwards across the grain of the country, the Chinese kept pressing hard all the way. By the 1st of November they were probing at the 4 Sikh position on the heights to the north-west of Walong which included a platoon of the Assam Rifles. The enemy had made a wide outflanking move via the left, in conjunction with their forces moving directly southwards from Kibithoo.

Walong itself, with its landing strip and dropping zone, was the main target. About six platoons of 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles formed part of the defences at Walong. HQ 11 Infantry Brigade, recently arrived from Nagaland, was firmly in command and gave the Assam Rifles the task of aggressive patrolling in order to prevent the enemy from reconnoitring the Brigade's forward defences; and also to protect the left flank as best as they could. This task was carried out vigorously and with great determination; on more than one occasion an Assam Rifles patrol position had to face full-scale assaults by the Chinese.

The patrols were called back in time to man the inner perimeter at Walong for the main battle. Assam Rifles platoons beat back many attacks on their positions on 15 and 16 November, before the decision was taken by 11 Brigade to withdraw southward as best as the situation and the state of the track permitted. The troops began to pull back on the night of the 16th/17th, hard pressed by the enemy. On 21 November came the news of a unilateral Cease Fire by the Chinese.

The contribution made by the Assam Rifles to the overall war effort in N.E.F.A. and the gallantry of individual officers and men once again proved the military value of the Force. Some of the most determined resistance offered during the border battles was by the men of Assam Rifles, as at Khenzeman and in the Walong sector. In proportion to the number of personnel deployed under the Army, both the casualty rate and the awards for gallantry were among the highest. And if it is remembered that the Assam Rifles fought under less favourable circumstances—that is, without the cohesiveness and mutual support of Army units and formations—their performance becomes truly remarkable.

A list of the achievements of the Assam Rifles during the 1962 operations would not be complete without mention of the responsibility that devolved on the I.G.A.R. and the Force in Nagaland. In the process of finding units and formations to bolster IV Corps (which had taken over from 33 Corps in N.E.F.A.) Army Headquarters decided to move 23 Infantry Division and most of the army element in Nagaland to IV Corps area north of the Brahmaputra. The void created in

Nagaland was filled by the Assam Rifles. Tactical HQ I.G.A.R. was thereafter established at Kohima; and the Force took over the entire responsibility for the counter-insurgency operations in the Naga Hills and Manipur. The I.G.A.R. divided the area into five sectors—Tuensang, Kohima, Mokokchung, Diphu and Imphal. It is to the credit of the Force that despite the sudden shortage of troops, it kept the insurgency under control till it could hand the responsibility back to the Army (8 Mountain Division) in 1963.

Operational Commitments, 1963-65

In January 1964, the first elections were held in Nagaland for the State Legislative Assembly. A surprising 77 per cent of the electorate cast its vote, so that the victory of the Liberals (the Naga National Organisation) was an unequivocal rejection of the insurgency. It was a great rebuff to the so-called Naga Federal Government, who thereupon bent their energies with renewed vigour to disturb the newly found tranquillity and euphoria that the formation of the first Naga Government under Chief Minister Shilu Ao had brought to the State. Although "peace parleys" had been initiated by Mr Nehru and a Peace Mission, with Mr Jaiprakash Narayan, the Rev Michael Scott and the Assam Chief Minister, Mr Chaliha, as members, had begun to function from Kohima, sending out feelers to the hostiles, the N.F.G. continued to intensify its activities.

Ambushes and sniping of Army convoys and attacks on Army and Assam Rifles detachments multiplied. Loyal citizens were kidnapped and held to ransom and collective fines were exacted from villages that had supported the new Government. Once again eight battalions of the Assam Rifles were deployed for operations (3rd, 8th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th). They formed the major portion of the security forces and had to bear the main brunt of hostile actions.

Taking advantage of the relaxations in military operations that had been made from time to time to allow peace parleys, the hostiles had by then acquired much arms and ammunition and had become quite a force to be reckoned with. They had established rapport with Pakistan, which ensured a regular

flow of weapons besides providing a sanctuary and a training base to batches of hostiles. The security forces reacted energetically but in August 1964, just as they were beginning to get on top of the situation the hostiles agreed to hold talks with the Peace Mission; a cease-fire agreement was signed. The agreement took effect from 6 September 1964, when military operations were suspended.

Tribals in N.E.F.A. generally remained peaceful after the Chinese invasion. There was only one major incident in the 5th Battalion area. In May 1963 some loyal Daflas attacked a Central Reserve Police post at Chayangtajo and killed seven Central Reserve Police personnel and the Base Superintendent. Three platoons of the Assam Rifles from Khanewa and Dirang were lifted by helicopter to Chayangtajo, under command of Captain D.N. Kanwarpal. The situation was soon under control and the culprits were brought to book. In this action Captain Kanwarpal was awarded Ashok Chakra Class II while Subedars Dal Bahadur Gurung and Ran Bahadur Rai were awarded Swords of Honour. Three other ranks from the column were awarded the Governor's Gold Medals.

The Chinese successes in 1962 had provided an impetus to communist and secessionist movements all over Asia but what affected the security of our borders were Kachin activities in North Burma. These activities had been greatly intensified in 1963-64 and the Burmese Government had been unable to cope with them. The K.I.A. let loose a reign of terror in the region east of the Chaukan Pass. Consequently 7th Battalion was called upon to maintain greater vigilance along the Tirap border with Burma and prevent K.I.A. activities from spreading to our side of the border. Towards the end of April 1964 about three thousand refugees, victims of the K.I.A.'s looting and harassment, streamed into Tirap and sought Indian protection. Refugee camps were established at Nampong, Rang-hill and Changlang. One platoon from 7th Battalion was despatched to the bordering villages of Ranglum, Rang-hill and Hetbol to restore confidence among them. The platoon operated in this area for about three months. The rest of the Battalion was also engaged in intensive patrolling of various parts of the border. A similar situation arose again in December 1965 when about 600 Lisu refugees from Burma

arrived near Chaukan Pass with a request to be allowed to settle down in India. Evidently the Lisus had been the victims of harassment both by the K.I.A. as well as Burmese Government troops, being unpopular with both. In keeping with the policy of our Government the Lisus were handled tactfully by the Assam Rifles but persuaded to return to their homes, loaded with free issues of rations for their journey.

In July 1963, 17th Battalion left Diphu and moved to its permanent location in North Sikkim, taking over posts along the Indo-Tibet border from the Army—Giagong (4,900 metres), Kerang (5,300 metres) and Thangu (3,900 metres) being the three highest. Unlike the Army, the Assam Rifles had little snow clothing and no high altitude rations: but, as was their wont, the men set about their tasks with typical hillmen's cheerfulness.

This period also witnessed further expansion of the Force. 18th Battalion was raised on 1 February 1965, at Talbhat, near Jhansi. After completion of training in August of that year, it was moved to Shillong. The raising of the 19th started on 1 August the same year; this was the first Battalion to be raised in the home state—at Laitkor near Shillong—but completion was delayed because in September it was suddenly called upon to send a large number of trained soldiers to 18th Battalion when the latter was moved to the Naga Hills for operational duties. The 19th had to start again on the 600 replacement recruits.

On 1 August 1965, the administration of N.E.F.A. as well as of the Assam Rifles was transferred from the Ministry of External Affairs to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Indo-Pakistan War, 1965

The Assam Rifles were not directly involved in the Indo-Pak war of 1965 except at one remove. However, the bulk of the Army was once again withdrawn from Nagaland and Manipur, as was done during 1962, and the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in these states devolved mostly on the Assam Rifles. In fact the operational responsibility in No 5 sector, Manipur, was handed over completely to the Assam Rifles, who also assisted the Army in maintain-

ing vigilance along the Tripura-East Pakistan border, where 6th Battalion was placed under command of 61 Infantry Brigade. While maintaining vigil on the border before, during and after the war, 6 Assam Rifles had a number of skirmishes with the East Pakistan Rifles and the *mujahids*. In a clash on 6 August a Battalion patrol wounded two of the East Pakistan Rifles and captured one rifle and some ammunition. In another clash with the *mujahids* on 12 October, 1965, one *mujahid* was killed and another wounded. Such incidents continued till the end of the year.

All Assam Rifles battalions deployed along the Indo-Tibetan border were alerted when the Chinese gave an ultimatum to India as a gesture of support to their Pakistani friends, who were reeling under the blows of the Indian Army on the western front. No further move was however made by the Chinese and the battalions stood down after the war. In Sikkim, however, the Chinese made some aggressive gestures along the Sikkim-Tibet border and continued to do so even after the end of the war.

17th Battalion had its first confrontation with the Chinese on 21 September 1965, when one of its patrols to Bamchola pass (5,350 metres) challenged a Chinese patrol that had intruded into Sikkim. The Assam Rifles patrol took up positions to prevent the Chinese from advancing any further. The Chinese also took up positions and both patrols remained facing each other from 9 a.m. that day to 4 a.m. the next morning, after which the Chinese patrol withdrew to their side of the border. Havildar Krishna Bahadur Gurung who led the patrol was awarded the Governor's Commendation for displaying initiative and courage even when greatly outnumbered. This type of aggressiveness in face of the Chinese trying to intrude into Sikkim then became routine chore with 17th Battalion's patrols.

The first clash of arms occurred on 12 December, 1965, when an Assam Rifles patrol of a platoon strength under Lieut M.D. Uniyal came under heavy fire from about 300 Chinese while moving along the Chhamdo (5,500 metres) hill. Although initially surprised, the patrol returned the fire. However, the odds were against the Assam Rifles patrol because it soon ran out of ammunition. Just then Lieut I.S. Sirohi

who was out patrolling from 17th Battalion's post at Giagong rushed to the rescue, having heard the sounds of firing. Sirohi engaged the enemy from suitable fire positions to enable Lieut Uniyal's patrol to withdraw. In the meantime, Captain G.S. Bajwa had also rushed to the place of the battle with 30 men from Kerang post. In this action the Assam Rifles suffered Lieut Uniyal and six other ranks killed and three other ranks wounded.

It was a small action but it brought out the bravery and tenacity with which small patrols of the Assam Rifles could fight when led by good officers. It is difficult to imagine a battle in winter at an altitude of over 5,000 metres against an enemy overwhelmingly superior in numbers and weapons, but it does highlight the toughness and *esprit-de-corps* of the men of the Assam Rifles.

INSURRECTION IN MIZORAM

ON 1 March, 1966, the Mizo National Front, led by its firebrand President, Laldenga, raised the banner of revolt against the Government. In a well planned and organised series of raids such as had not been witnessed at any time in Nagaland, the insurgents struck at Aizawl, Lungleh and all other important centres of administration, burning, looting and snapping communications with the outside world. They overran virtually the entire territory of Mizoram, capturing several police and para-military posts and paralysing the civil government. Large quantities of arms and ammunition as well as significant amounts of cash were looted. The headquarters town of Aizawl was enveloped in flames; and the surrounding hills echoed the staccato sounds of small arms fire.

Thus did a small but ruthless minority of Mizos disregard all the warnings and advice of their more liberal compatriots and start on a course of revolutionary warfare to gain independence for their state. The intervening years have availed them little, but they have brought untold misery to the people of Mizoram. Despite repeated attempts by the Government of India and their own liberal leaders to negotiate a solution acceptable to the Mizo people, the extremists have continued with their underground war, a kind of war that breeds its own impetus; and the flames have been kept fed by enemies of the country from across our borders. What were the developments that led to this unhappy situation?

Like the Nagas, the Lushai-Chin people are of distinct ethnic stock, distributed over the Indo-Burmese mountainous region east of the Chindwin, south of Tripura-Manipur and north of Arakan. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the British moved into their territory from two sides,

they were split into two separate entities—called Lushais in India and Chins in Burma. Like the Nagas, the Lushais have embraced Christianity; but unlike them, they are a highly literate people—their literacy rate being nearly 60 per cent, one of the highest in India. The combination of high literacy and their warrior qualities makes them formidable guerilla fighters, with high political motivation.

In the earlier years, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the Lushai Hills were administered in two parts, the southern hills by Bengal Presidency (from Chittagong) and the northern half by Assam (from Silchar). Subsequently, both parts were brought under Assam. Under the Government of India Act of 1935, the Lushai Hills were made part of the “Excluded Areas”; and local Chiefs were permitted to retain their powers though no “political activity”, such as standing for elections to the Legislative Assembly, was permitted. As in Nagaland, all of these circumstances would later be interpreted by radical elements among the tribesmen to signify that their mountainous country had never been part of India.

During the war the Lushai and Chin people, like the Nagas, sided with the British. Indeed, the Lushais did more than that; many of them enlisted and fought in the Indian Army not only with the Assam Rifles, the Lushai Scouts and the Chin Hills Battalion, but also with other units of the Army. (One, T. Sailo, joined as a commissioned officer in 1941, rose to the rank of Brigadier in the Indian Army, entered politics after retirement, and, as we shall see, was eventually elected Chief Minister of the Union Territory of the Mizos.) Their military experience provided many of the later leaders of the rebellion with knowledge of both regular and guerilla warfare.

Post-War Lushai Aspirations

During the process of the hand-over of power by the British, the educated and well-to-do elite of Aizawl were in favour of joining the Union of India. Indeed they had expressed this desire once before; in the early 1920s a group of Aizawl citizens petitioned the British, asking for the inclusion of the Lushai Hills in the Government of India Reform Act of

1919; and they had been thrown into jail as “criminals”, for their trouble.

In 1946, the citizens of Aizawl set up their own political organisation (a right that had been denied them before), called the Mizo Union. On 15 August 1947, the Mizo Union sent its formal assent to the Governor of Assam that the Mizo Hills remain part of the State. Thereafter the Mizo Union became an associate of the Indian National Congress at the state level.

An important item on the political programme of the Mizo Union (as well as of the Church leaders) was to curb the unlimited local powers that had been conferred on the tribal Chiefs by the British, and gradually to introduce democratic reforms. This set the Chiefs against the Mizo Union, so that they became the rallying points for the radicals in the hills. The tide of progress, however, was against them. In 1952, the Mizo Union won control of the District Council, a largely elected political body designed to provide autonomous administration based on traditional laws to supplement the administration of the newly created post of Deputy Commissioner (who replaced the old, autocratic “Superintendent” of the British days). It was only a matter of time before the Chiefs were swept away before the onset of democratic reforms.

The seeds of discontent had, however, been sown by local British administrators in the period just after the end of the war. The last two British Superintendents of the Lushai Hills had, without any formal authority from the Central or State government, indulged in political intriguing to try and persuade the Chiefs of the Lushai-Chin clans of India and Burma to settle for a separate mountain state outside the Indian Union. McCall, Superintendent during the war years, had suggested a League of Nations trusteeship for such a state; his successor, Macdonald, advised that the Lushai Hills remain a “protectorate” of Great Britain after the Indian sub-continent was partitioned. Fortunately, as we have seen, both the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, and the Governor of Assam, Sir Andrew Clow, shrugged off this notion. The Mizo Union, at its first General Assembly of September 1946, discussed at length all the alternatives—union with Burma; union with India; independence from both. It resolved that the Lushai Hills should remain

with India subject to the condition that the question be reviewed in ten years.

The Mizo Union leaders rebuffed all approaches by Phizo and other Naga radicals who visited them with the proposal that they join hands with the Nagas for the demand for political independence. What the Union wanted was a separate Mizo state within India. That it had the people behind it was demonstrated when the Union retained its majority in the District Council in the second Indian General Election (though it captured only one seat out of three in the State Legislature).

In April 1954 the name of the district was changed from "Lushai Hills" to "Mizo District" by an Act of Parliament. In the same year Laldenga returned from the Army's Demobilisation Centre and took up the appointment of Cashier in the Mizo District Council. It appears that from the start he was opposed to the liberal outlook of the elders in the Council and, with his charismatic personality, became a rallying point for the radicals. In 1955 and 1956 his clandestine exhortations to the restless young of Aizawl were no doubt helped by exaggerated accounts of Naga successes in the rebellion, then in full swing in the mountains and jungles to the north and north-east. Nevertheless, without a political party as a base, he would probably have remained a local fire-eater but for the "Mautam" factor that suddenly fell into his lap as a gift from the ecosystem of the Lushai Hills.

The Famine of 1959-60

In the winter of 1958 the Mizos were waiting for the dreaded *Mautam*, the phenomenal 50-year cyclical famine that makes its inevitable visitation at the time of the dying of the bamboos in the forests. The subsequent flowering of the young bamboo plants brings with it, also as part of the cyclical scourge, an astronomical increase in the rodent population that feeds on the new plants and seeds. When the bamboos are devoured the hordes of rats move on to the paddy fields and devour the young stalks. Nothing that the villagers can do—beat them back with torches, tin drums and sticks—is of any avail. Hundreds of thousands of the pests may be killed

but other waves come on, devouring everything. The ensuing famine lasts for about a year or two, when just as suddenly as it all started, the visitation is over.

The last time this had happened as was in the British days, in 1910-11. In 1959, when the bamboos began to turn grey, the elders expected the visitation and sent warnings to the Assam Government. Previously it was the Chiefs who used to manage the handling of reserve foodgrains and emergency stocks, organise the gathering of jungle yams and roots and take other measures to alleviate the food shortage. The Chiefs having been done away with, the elders turned to Shillong when the tell-tale signs appeared over the countryside. Alas, their appeals were disregarded. The bureaucrats of Shillong, innocent of the Mizo ecosystem, regarded the warnings as little more than the outpourings of village superstition and made only a pretence of on-the-spot investigation. No precautionary measures were taken.

The bamboos died; the rats came. The inevitable cycle of famine followed, unmitigated by any effort from the State Government to organise local preparations and management. Food stocks ran out and thousands of families in the hill villages were forced to take to the jungles, searching for leaves and roots. In the process their own *jhooms* were neglected, thus ensuring that famine would follow famine. There were many starvation deaths. Shillong's initial indifference and the subsequent delays in activating relief measures caused serious discontent among the people, even alienating some of the more liberal leaders. And when Assam Government's publicity machinery attempted to play down the extent of the disaster, the disillusionment was complete.

This was the opportunity Laldenga had been waiting for. He quit the District Council and organised the Mizo National Famine Front, attracting most of the educated young of Aizawl as well as the radical elements in the hills. To break what he termed an "economic" blockade by Shillong, he sent batches of volunteers across the Burma border to bring back rice from the Chin hillmen. By then he was openly exhorting secession and the establishment of a "sovereign and independent Greater Mizoram". Even some members of the Mizo Union, convinced of Assam's *mala fides*, left to join up with

the M.N.F.F. (which later became the Mizo National Front, dropping the "Famine").

Over the next few years the M.N.F. intensified its activities, initiating a concerted drive to collect "donations" from towns and villages, to recruit volunteers and to give them intensified training in guerilla tactics. At the same time, a "diplomatic front" was organised to obtain arms from East Pakistan and the Chin Hills. Pakistan went out of its way to arrange for the training of Mizo extremists at exclusive bases in the Chittagong Hill Tracts—just as it had done for the Nagas. In Dacca, where he set up a "Mission", Laldenga found the Pakistani Government more than willing to help. Arms shipments soon began to be made to the Mizo hills from Chittagong, via the railhead at Dohazari.

The Assam Government seemed to be totally unaware of the scale of these activities. In fact, when at one time Laldenga and an associate, Lalnunmaiwa, were arrested and put into jail for illegally crossing the border, the Chief Minister Mr Chaliha let them free in exchange for an undertaking in writing not to do so again—a promise that was broken almost immediately after the two plotters left Shillong. The sincerity of the Chief Minister and his keenness to meet the aspirations of the tribal people to the maximum extent possible were taken to be a weakness and the movement became more demanding with each concession made by the Government. It is possible that the Mizos also misinterpreted the establishment of a separate Naga State as a triumph of tribal insurrection.

By the end of 1965, several batches of volunteers had received training in guerilla warfare at East Pakistani training camps. Back in Indian territory they openly boasted about their political organisation (though not about their arms, which they kept concealed). They began parading in the streets, flaunting their own flag. A self-styled "shadow government of Mizoram" was established and by early 1966 there was wide expectation of an armed insurrection.

The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the Government at last decided to send reinforcements to the Mizo Hills. In February 1966, orders were issued for the induction of 18th Assam Rifles, a development that alarmed the M.N.F. leadership. For them it suddenly became a ques-

tion of now or never; and they decided to start the revolt before 18th Battalion could reach Aizawl.

“Operation Jericho”

A brief account of the organisation of the Mizo National Front would be appropriate at this stage. Under its “President”, Laldenga, the M.N.F. was organised into three main sub-divisions: the Political Wing (including civil administration); the Mizo National Army; and the Mizo National Volunteers. The Political Wing and the M.N.A. consisted of the hard-core members, the latter totalling about 5,000. The Volunteers, another 5,000 in strength, were as yet unarmed but were later supplied with rifles and grenades as and when these became available, either of Pakistani provenance or, after March 1966, from captured sources. The “Vice-President” of the M.N.F. was Lalnunmaiwa (a former M.L.A. who had been arrested in 1965, together with Laldenga, and later released by Chief Minister Chaliha); the “General Secretary” was S. Lianzuala.

The Mizo National Army was commanded by self-styled “Brigadier-General” Sawmvela and consisted of two main wings, “Dagger Brigade” and “Lion Brigade”, each of four battalions of variable strength. The M.N.A. also ran a Training School in East Pakistan. The men were armed with rifles, light machine guns and mortars.

The Front declared Independence for Mizoram just after midnight on 28 February/1 March and immediately launched a number of simultaneous attacks throughout the District. The aim of the operation was to isolate Mizo territory from the rest of India, overpower the Assam Rifles detachments, establish control over the main administrative centres and loot treasuries and armouries to sustain the rebellion.

At the commencement of the rebellion the garrison for the Mizo Hills District consisted of 1st Assam Rifles and about four companies of the 5th Battalion of the Border Security Force. 18 A.R. was about to enter the District; by 1 March only the advance party of one platoon had arrived. Other security forces were distributed in numerous posts dotted all over the District. Although the insurgents’ plan was

to organise simultaneous risings throughout Mizoram, they had given top priority to gaining control of Aizawl, Champhai and Lungleh. The main stumbling block to their designs was 1 Assam Rifles.

The Battalion was disposed as follows: HQ at Aizawl, with three platoons and administrative elements; a Wing HQ with two platoons each at Lungleh, Champhai (west of Aizawl, towards the Burma border) and Tuipang (south, on the Arakan border). Four strong (two-platoon) posts had been established at the four strategic extremities of the territory: Champhai to the west, near the Chin Hills border with Burma; Tuipang in the south, on the Arakan border; Demagiri on the Chittagong Hill Tracts border; and Chinluang on the Silchar road. In addition, about a half-dozen smaller posts had been established at important administrative or Border Roads locations.

Laldenga's plan was to capture the three main Assam Rifles posts—Aizawl, Lungleh and Champhai, by surprise attacks before first light of "Independence Day", and cut the road to Silchar by capturing Chinluang and other (police) posts on the north road. Thereafter all the roads within the District were to be cleared to facilitate free movement for command, control and logistical support of the insurgency.

It was a well thought-out plan and its key objective was the capture of Aizawl, which would have to be preceded by the capture of HQ 1 Assam Rifles area. On this would depend the success of the offensive.

1st Battalion being the old Lushai Hills Battalion contained (as it does even today) a good proportion of local Mizos among its ranks. The uprising, which had acquired the tinge of a nationalist rebellion, thus put the loyalty of the Mizos in the Battalion to a severe test. The Battalion had previously made little or no effort to prepare its Lushai members to withstand the appealing propaganda put out by the M.N.F. Yet only four out of the 30 Lushais who were taken prisoner fell victim to the propaganda. It is a matter of great pride for the Assam Rifles that barring a few isolated cases the Lushais remained steadfastly true to their salt and refused to be enticed by hostile propaganda: and the action of the men who fought under the Battalion flag at Aizawl added a new page to the glorious history of 1st Assam Rifles.

Late in the night of 28 February, just as the M.N.A. had deployed their main assault formation to surround Battalion HQ, a grenade went off accidentally—thus alerting the troops and the civil administration. The insurgents quickly decided to call off the attack on the Battalion area so long as the troops were standing-to in their trenches. Thus it was that the first assault on 1 March bypassed Battalion HQ.

The first target in the township the rebels attacked was the telephone exchange, which was destroyed—so that all communications between the Assam Rifles, the civil authorities and the outside world were disrupted. Next the insurgents went for the Treasury, where the guard, comprising of ten constables (mostly Mizos) of the Armed Constabulary, surrendered without putting up any resistance and allowed the hostiles to take away their arms and the cash. Fortunately they carried away only Rs 20,000 from the safe, failing to detect one crore and twenty lakhs in currency notes which had been kept in a separate compartment.

After the Treasury raid the rebels, unaccountably, took time off to arrange a ceremonial funeral for one of their self-styled captains who had been killed in the grenade explosion and who happened to be a brother of Vice-President Lalnunmaiwa. The ensuing lull deceived the Administration into thinking that the raid was an isolated incident. Section 144 was promulgated by the D.C. and a curfew imposed on the town. However, beyond stepping up patrolling in the streets, no other military precautions were taken to prepare for a large-scale uprising. Later estimates gave the number of M.N.F. volunteers round Aizawl as 4,000—but at the time neither the civil officers nor the Assam Rifles seemed to be aware of the extent of the threat. It was unfortunate that the Commandant, Lieut-Colonel Gurdev Singh (Sikh Regiment), happened to be away at Shillong, attending a conference at HQ I.G.A.R., on that date.

The M.N.A. had also launched attacks on Champhai and Lungleh on the night of February 28/March 1st. At Champhai the Quarter Guard of the Assam Rifles post was taken completely by surprise. The two sentries were killed; and the seizure of the Kote, which contained the post's weapons, left most of the men without their arms. They were soon taken prisoner—

though a few managed to escape into the surrounding jungle and later rejoined the Battalion. The post remained in rebel hands for more than two weeks before being recaptured by 2/11 Gorkhas on 17 March.

It was a different story at Lungleh, where a ruse, intended to get infiltrators into the Quarter Guard, failed to deceive the sentry and the post had time to react. It put up a gallant fight against greatly larger numbers and held out for four days before the ammunition and water ran out. Attempts to supply it by air were unsuccessful and on 5 March Lieut Marwah and 66 men were taken prisoner. It must be said that the prisoners were treated well, though every effort was made to persuade the Lushai elements to join the rebel cause. The prisoners were marched away to a jungle hide-out in E. Pakistan, but most of them were later released. (Marwah, four Border Roads officers and some civil officials were not released till the middle of May.) The post was recaptured on 12 March by 3 Bihar.

The hostiles made a determined attempt to capture the Chinluang post on the first night of the insurgency, but after the initial attempt failed they realised that Army reinforcements would be soon on the way from Silchar, and called off the attack.

Tuipang, on the southern border, was not considered of sufficient strategic importance and was left well alone. Demagiri, on the other hand, was a vital target because its capture would open up the supply route from Chittagong. On 2 March the post was subjected to heavy firing and repeated assaults. The insurgents gained control over the entire village, including the police station, but the Assam Rifles post (reinforced by a few men of the B.S.F. who had withdrawn from their forward localities) held out with great courage and, during 14 days of investment, inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers. From 9 to 13 March the I.A.F. strafed the hostiles' positions, forcing them to scatter, and brought some relief to the hard pressed garrison. However, it was not until 17 March that a column of 5 Para came to the relief of the Assam Rifles post.

The smaller posts all held out resolutely—Hnahlan, Valphai, Darngaon and Sangau. At Darngaon, where the

water supply had been cut off and the post was short of ammunition and rations, the resolute leadership of Subedar Amar Bahadur Thapa held the men together during the critical stages, an action for which he was later awarded the Shaurya Chakra. At Sangau, where the garrison totalled only 20 men including N.C.s E., Assistant Commandant Murli Chand at one stage even led an offensive sortie out of the perimeter and captured an insurgent position on a dominating feature. For this action, Rifleman Harka Bahadur Damai earned the Shaurya Chakra.

Siege of 1st Battalion, Aizawl

It was at Aizawl, however, that the critical battle was fought. As we have seen, the insurgents called off their intended attack on HQ 1 A.R. on the 1st, but during the 2nd it became obvious that preparations were being made for a major assault. All the Battalion families were pulled into the perimeter, including officers' families. The D.C. and his family also moved into the Battalion area. On that day the G.O.C. 101 Communication Zone, Major General K.K. Bhandari, the I.G.A.R., and the Commandant arrived from Shillong by helicopter. The two general officers discussed the situation with the second-in-command, Major Shastry, and returned to Shillong in the evening.

On the night of 2/3 March a patrol from the unit was ambushed near the Government High School and Naib Subedar Lal Bahadur Vishwakarma and two riflemen were killed. The hostiles then began to close in on the Battalion. When day dawned on the 3rd, the post found itself surrounded; and heavy firing started from all sides. The rest of the township also came under attack and soon the police station and the jail had fallen, so that the Battalion post remained the only obstacle between "Operation Jericho", as Laldenga had code-named it, and success. However, by then it was also becoming obvious to Laldenga that Army reinforcements would soon link up with 1 Assam Rifles at Aizawl and the HQ post must be taken within the next 2-3 days.

On the morning of the 4th a group of insurgents formed up into a "suicide squad" and mounted a blind charge on the Quarter Guard of the Battalion. The squad penetrated the wired perimeter; there was hand-to-hand fighting; and for a time it was anybody's battle. But the Assam Riflemen fought desperately and, eventually, threw the attackers back. Not content with that, the defenders followed up their success by mounting a counter-attack against hostile positions. In this action an estimated 20 insurgents were killed and six captured.

The I.A.F. made an attempt during the morning to land reinforcements by helicopter, but the sniping was too close to camp and too heavy for the choppers to come down. The strength of the post was further reduced that afternoon because it was learned that the police guard at the Treasury had deserted and a platoon had to be sent to take its place. All day heavy fire was directed at the defenders from all sides; the men had to man their trenches without relief for the second night-and-day.

5th March was the crucial day. The men had been at their firing positions since 3rd March. Then news came through that the platoon sent to the Treasury was under heavy attack and needed help. A second platoon was despatched under Major Sidhu to restore the situation there, which it did just in time—an action in which Rfn Bir Bahadur Gurung earned a Shaurya Chakra.

At last, at 1130 hrs, came the air strikes, I.A.F. fighters strafing hostile positions all around the Battalion area. The strafing was repeated in the afternoon and it soon became apparent that the hostiles were beginning to scatter. In desperation they set fire to a row of shops close to the Battalion perimeter, in the hope that the steady breeze would fan the flames to the barracks. Instead, it was Aizawl town that caught the sparks and soon whole rows of houses were ablaze. Some of the fires in the outlying areas may have been a result of the strafing.

By the morning of the 6th the town bore a deserted look, most of the Mizo inhabitants having taken to the jungles. There was another air strike that day and that put paid to the investment. The hostiles melted away, aided by the

knowledge that an Army column was fast approaching down the road from Silchar.

On 2 March the Government of Assam had declared the whole of the Mizo Hills as a "disturbed area" under the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act of 1958. The next day the Union Home Minister announced that the Army had been authorised to move into Mizoram; 61 Mountain Brigade was ordered to proceed from Agartala to the relief of Aizawl.

On 6th evening 8 Sikhs, the leading battalion of the Brigade, reached the outskirts of Aizawl and could be seen from the post. On approaching the town Major Shastry of the Sikhs fired a red Very Light signal to announce the Battalion's arrival. Unfortunately the artillery observer thought that the signal had been fired by the insurgents and ordered the guns to bring down fire on the leading elements. Luckily there were no casualties but the contretemps caused considerable confusion, so that it was not until the morning of the 7th that contact was made with the Assam Rifles—and even that incident was not without its drama. As the leading troops of the Sikhs approached the Battalion area, they mistook a patrol from the Battalion for insurgents and an exchange of fire took place. It was not until Major Sidhu, the Assam Rifles second-in-command, rushed up, took off his turban and waved it at the leading Sikh elements while shouting at them in Punjabi, that mutual recognition was established! By mid-morning the entire town came under the Army's control.

On March 8 Brigade HQ was established in Aizawl. 3 Bihar was at once despatched to Lungleh and 2/11 G.R. to Champhai. Air support was arranged on call for both columns in case they encountered large-scale road blocks on the way; it was essential that both Lungleh and Champhai be retaken with the least possible delay. In the event, the former was recaptured within four days, on 12 March; and the latter on 17 March. Neither column met heavy opposition; the total casualties suffered during this phase were four killed and about twenty wounded, including an officer of 2/11 G.R.

The Army Takes Over

The entire 61 Mountain Brigade of four infantry battalions and supporting arms moved into the Mizo Hills by 15 March. Having secured the three major towns, the Brigade lost no time in spreading out columns throughout the territory, breaking up insurgent groups. In the west the hostiles were hard pressed because the Burmese authorities offered them no sanctuary; but in the east they were able to escape across the border into East Pakistan when hard pressed. Laldenga had already moved his HQ to the Chittagong Tracts.

Although the security forces were in complete control by the end of the month, there were sufficient elements of the M.N.A. left in Mizoram territory to organise limited attacks from their jungle and mountain hide-outs though they posed no great threat, being largely uncoordinated harassing operations. It was the Mizo people who suffered the most during this phase. Many of the village people had given help to the insurgents in the way of food and shelter, so that the security forces tended to treat all strangers in the countryside with suspicion; and the M.N.A. on their part began to carry out reprisals against "loyal" Mizos, particularly Union members. There were several instances of arbitrary executions of school teachers or other government servants who had continued with their duties.

After 61 Brigade took over operational control in the District, 1st Battalion was withdrawn from the southern sector and redeployed in the north, with Wing HQs at Champhai, Tipaimukh and Lungdar. Meanwhile, 18th Battalion had completed its move to the Mizo Hills and was sent down to the southern sector, with its HQ at Lungleh. By mid-April the newly raised 19th Battalion (originally earmarked for Lohit Frontier Division) was also inducted into the Mizo Hills and deployed in the Mat River area, with HQ at Serchip (between Aizawl and Lungleh).

The entry of 6 Assam Rifles is a more interesting story. This Battalion had been under 61 Brigade's operational command while the latter was in Agartala before its induction into the Mizo Hills. When the Brigade moved to Aizawl, the

Commander had wanted to take the Battalion with him, but the Chief Commissioner of Tripura put a veto on that proposal—mainly because he was afraid that the Mizo insurgency would inevitably overflow into his territory. Instead, he ordered 6th Battalion into the Jampai hills on the Mizo-Tripura border and assumed direct command of the Battalion (instead of the normal practice of exercising command through the I.G. Police).

The deployment in the Jampai Hills had hardly been completed when, on 19 March, 61 Brigade launched an operation on the Mizo side of the Jampai Hills border and requested the Chief Commissioner for the use of one wing of 6 A.R. to help seal off the insurgents' escape routes over the hill passes. The Chief Commissioner was reluctant; but as the operation was of some importance the I.G.A.R., on being approached by the Army, agreed to the deployment of one wing of 6 A.R. in Mizo territory. The Chief Commissioner was not amused. Nor can he be blamed; this was the thin end of the wedge, as it turned out. Four platoons from 6 A.R. under Major Nanavathi made their unofficial entry into the Mizo Hills on 24 April; but further strings were being manipulated. The Battalion had been earmarked for a tour of duty in the Naga Hills—and, indeed, one wing of the Battalion had already moved to Dimapur at the end of July. However, the Brigade Commander in the Mizo Hills made frantic efforts, because he wanted these experienced troops with him at any cost; and in the end he had his way. In October 1966 the Battalion drew in its detachments at Dimapur and moved into the Mizo Hills.

In order to meet command and control requirements for the large Assam Rifles force that was being inducted into the Mizo Hills, the Deputy Inspector General States Range was ordered to establish his tactical headquarters at Aizawl on 21 May 1966. The D.I.G. was also appointed 2nd-in-command of 61 Mountain Brigade. His tactical headquarters was, however, closed down on 21 November, by which time the Army was well established and the command arrangements in the Mizo Hills properly organised, so that there was no further need for such an intermediate headquarters. At a later stage during the operations (April 1967), the States Range was asked to establish a Sector Headquarters at Lung-

lawn. This sector was named Lima Sector and the D.I.G. of Assam Rifles States Range was made its commander, with 18th and 19th Battalions of the Assam Rifles, two regular Infantry Battalions and one Border Security Force Battalion under its operational control. At the same time the States Range retained administrative control over all the Assam Rifles battalions located in the Mizo Hills, which it exercised from its main headquarters at Silchar.

On coming under the operational control of the Army, the Assam Rifles battalions were grouped with regular Infantry battalions for operational tasks. Consequently, when the entire District was divided into sectors for combing operations, the Assam Rifles battalions were allotted sectors like any other regular battalion, while the task of Border Security Force was to man posts along the border. (The armed police were located along the lines of communications.) Within their sectors of responsibility the Assam Rifles patrolled vigorously, laid ambushes and carried out raids on hostile hide-outs. They also participated in major operations at Brigade and Sector level. It is on record that the performance of the Assam Rifles matched that of regular Infantry battalions; and it was officially acknowledged that, having operated in the jungles throughout, the Assam Rifles possessed a mastery in junglecraft which gave them an edge over Infantry battalions in insurgency operations.

Security Operations, 1967

By the end of April, 61 Brigade was in firm control, mounting numerous combing operations, both in the interior and in the border areas, to clear the Mizo Hills of hostiles—sector by sector. The M.N.A. were on the run, large numbers escaping across the East Pakistan border into the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In May the number of incidents came down to 23; during June, when the monsoons were in full precipitation, there were only six major encounters. The Assam Rifles played a leading role in these combing and patrolling operations. Each A.R. post was allotted a circle of 20 km radius from which the hostiles had to be chased out. Areas outside the range of these circles were covered by long-range company

columns mounted by regular battalions in reserve.

The insurgents used the monsoon lull to retrain, re-equip and reorganise themselves in their sanctuary areas. Once the rains abated they began to infiltrate back into the Mizo Hills. In September a M.N.F. headquarters was established west of the Aizawl-Lungleh road, near Chhingchhip. Laldenga himself moved forward to this HQ in November to work out a new strategy, but under pressure from the security forces he soon returned to Chittagong. Meanwhile, a peace movement was started by the Church under the leadership of a young member of the Baptist Mission, the Reverend Zairema, who met Laldenga in a jungle rendezvous by the border. There were discussions on a possible cease-fire, a Christmas truce and other matters, but the meeting ended inconclusively, because Laldenga arrogantly insisted that any talks with New Delhi must be on a "government-to-government" basis.

By then the whole of 5 B.S.F. as well as a number of armed police detachments had been inducted into the District and new posts were opened all over the Mizo Hills, but particularly in the border areas on the west. The security forces' aim was to instil confidence among the villagers—with the object of alienating them from the hostiles. However, it was difficult to keep an eye on all the small villages; and many villagers, either willingly or under coercion, continued to give food and shelter to the M.N.A. So a new concept was evolved, code-named *Operation Blanket*. Each company or equivalent post of the Army and the Assam Rifles was required to establish two sub-posts of about 20 men each next to villages within its area of responsibility. The sub-posts were to be self-contained for 10-14 days and sufficiently mobile to be able to fan out to remote villages threatened by the hostiles. Their patrols were to be briefed to help villagers in every way and to get to know the people, so that they could weed out active M.N.F. sympathisers. Other tasks given them were: to control hostile ingress and egress; to deny information and supplies to the insurgents; and generally to enlist the support of the villagers.

Operation Blanket proved only a partial success. The villages were too numerous and scattered for the security forces to keep an eye on all of them, so that the village pipe-

line to the hostiles could not entirely be cut off. It was then decided that the only method of totally isolating the inhabitants from the hostiles would be to group numbers of villages into large hamlets which could be more easily protected by the security forces. Such a scheme would also enable the security forces to operate more freely against the hostiles in the "depopulated" areas, thus lessening the risk of inadvertently harassing innocent people. Furthermore, the concentration of villagers into larger centres would enable the civil administration to implement its various economic and social programmes more effectively.

Accordingly, the beginning of 1967 saw the security forces engaged in the task of grouping the villages, code-named *Operation Accomplishment*. Speedy execution was most essential, to minimise chances of violent reaction by the hostiles. The grouping scheme covered a 30 km belt astride the road from Vairangte, the northernmost tip of the district, through Aizawl and Serchhip, south to Lungleh. It entailed the creation of 18 Group Centres and three smaller protected villages. Because of the paucity of troops it was decided to undertake the operation in three phases with 4 January 1967 as 'D' day for Phase I. "Operation Blanket" types of posts were established in the villages two to three weeks before the scheduled date of its shifting, to prevent M.N.F. interference. In all these activities the Assam Rifles played a large and important role.

When the grouping scheme started, the hostiles appeared to have been taken completely by surprise and did not react for the first two phases of the Operation. However, having realised its implications they hit back sharply at the commencement of Phase III. They forced villagers to disperse before being moved to their new locations; and they kept Army and Assam Rifles patrols under constant pressure. In order to divert the attention of the security forces they stepped up violent activity elsewhere in the District.

On 7 February 1967 a group of about 100 hostiles attacked an *Operation Blanket* post of 19 Assam Rifles at Hnachang on the Aizawl-Lungleh road. Although the attack was beaten back the hostiles knew that the post was in dire straits; but they reckoned without the offensive spirit of the Assam Rifles.

The platoon commander mounted a counter-attack on the hostiles with two sections. However, the odds against them were heavy and the counter-attack failed when the platoon commander was killed. The two attacking sections, after suffering six more killed, became scattered in the jungle. At the post itself, which had also by then suffered five casualties, there were only 11 men left, with Naik Operator Arabinda Home Chowdhury as the senior N.C.O. The Naik rallied these 11 men and put up a stubborn and determined resistance to repeated attempts at overrunning the post. The battle lasted eight hours before reinforcements arrived in the evening, when the hostiles were put to flight. Naik Chowdhury was awarded the Shaurya Chakra for this display of leadership and gallantry.

The Assam Rifles suffered a reverse when on 3 February one of the platoons of the 6th Battalion, while escorting the villagers from their *jhoom* to Lungdai Group Centre, were ambushed and four riflemen were killed. Three rifles were lost before the platoon could take counter-ambush measures to disperse the hostiles. The Battalion was however quick to react and on 21 February Captains Dewan Chand and Jesudas took out columns in their respective areas to try and get back the lost weapons. In the raids that they carried out, seven M.N.F. volunteers including their revenue officer and seven M.N.A. personnel (including one self-styled 2nd Lieutenant) were apprehended. The Battalion made up for previous losses of weapons when one of its platoons, while taking part in a combing operation launched by 61 Brigade, surprised a hostile gang at Sertakzwal and made a sizeable haul of weapons including one light machine gun, four rifles and large quantities of ammunition. Lance Naik Tek Bahadur Mallah, who with great presence of mind had charged at the hostile sentry and killed him before he could alert the camp, was awarded the Shaurya Chakra.

The scheme to regroup villages under *Operation Accomplishment* had the desired effect by curbing the hostiles' initiative. Thereafter, large-scale operations could be launched by the security forces to scour the jungles and hillsides in the interior, gradually forcing the rebels out into Pakistani territory. Some elements also escaped into the Arakan via the

Kaladan valley, an area not firmly under Burmese government control.

At the same time, it is unfortunate that the regrouping scheme was also striking at the heart of tribal economy, cutting the farmers off from their traditional *jhooms*. The curfew imposed on these areas restricted movement to and from the grouped villages to their farming areas. Even standing crops were neglected because food-gathering far from the perimeter became impossible. Hunting had already been denied because of the confiscation of fire-arms. Since theirs was not a market economy, the disruption in the lives and norms of the villages was considerable. All this had the effect of creating a sullen resentment against the security forces among all but the more educated of the Mizo people. The bitterness that resulted would take years to be assuaged.

REFORMS AND REORGANISATIONS

IN matters of operational responsibility the Assam Rifles have, as we have seen, accepted an ever-growing share of the Army's role in the security of the north-east region from both external and internal threats. The tradition was started during the First World War and greatly expanded during the Second—to an extent that can be considered unique. Nevertheless, it was only after Independence that the Force really gained in stature as a strategic asset in the defence of North-eastern India. Today twentyone battalions are deployed on operational duty in eight north-eastern states and union territories.

As is often the case, administrative measures did not always keep pace with these enhanced operational responsibilities. It is true that the Force has come a long way from the days when the Cachar Levy was merely a collection of ill-armed, haphazardly organised, poorly clothed and miserably paid body of men under civilian command; but its task then was limited to keeping marauding tribesmen away from the tea gardens of Assam. Today the Assam Rifles functions virtually as part of the Army, often in independent command of sizeable military operations and, sometimes, with Army units operating under command of Assam Rifles' headquarters. The administrative reforms to facilitate these field responsibilities have been slow in coming—and even then mostly as piecemeal concessions grudgingly conceded.

In the early 1950s certain basic provisions were sanctioned by government—such as service increments; trade, appointments and educational allowances; amenities, grants and Army Canteen Stores facilities; and the supply of tinned and fresh rations to outposts. In addition, self-help measures have resulted in a steady expansion of regimental dairies, poultry farms and piggeries.

In the way of arms and equipment, orders were issued by the Government of India—though only after much hesitation—to include bren and sten guns, 2-in mortars, motor transport and wireless sets in the Peace Equipment Tables, so that the Force could creditably maintain the military character and potential it had acquired during the Second World War. As regards logistical backing for the Force, it was the Assam Rifles' commitments in the Naga insurgency and the Force's subsequent expansion that proved to be a major fillip in the process of rationalising the "pipe-line". The scale of the commitment against the Nagas necessitated a centralised system of supply—of stores, arms, ammunition and equipment. An Ordnance Base Organisation was sanctioned for the Assam Rifles in September 1955 and four years later the Force was made directly dependent on the Army Ordnance Depot in Gauhati. In order to facilitate inspection of arms and ammunition of the expanded Force, an Assistant Inspector of Arms and an Ammunition Technical Officer were authorised for HQ I.G.A.R. Similarly, an officer from the E.M.E. was authorised on its staff to ensure proper maintenance of the expanding fleet of vehicles in the Assam Rifles, which, by then, had been authorised its own Transport Platoon as second-line transport. Reforms regarding first-line transport took a little longer to be instituted: and it was not until 1960 that battalions were authorised 1-ton vehicles in lieu of the old 15-cwt trucks.

It is interesting to record that 2nd Battalion was authorised an elephant in its transport establishment in order to facilitate its routine crossings of the Digru river, particularly during the monsoon period. This was in fact a continuance of an old custom that had lapsed during World War II.

In 1957 the two Pioneer Companies authorised in 1954 were placed under command of officers of the Corps of Engineers and moved out to Foothills, north of Misamari, for training and, subsequently, for the construction of a jeep road to Bomdila. The road was completed in 1958.

In January 1958 a Chief Signals Officer in the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel was authorised to oversee the HQ I.G.A.R. Signals and the Signal Platoon of the battalions.

Study Group on Assam Rifles

The subject of reorganisation of the Assam Rifles had often been raised by the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, as also by the Government of Assam. Each agency, however, had its own special interest in the Force: the Ministry of Defence, because of the increased operational commitment of this fine para-military body in support of Army operations; and the Ministry of External Affairs and the Assam Government, in the expectation that the employment of the Assam Rifles in its military role under the Army would be a temporary phase and ultimately the Force would revert to its special role among the tribals of North East Frontier Agency and hill areas of Assam. However, as time went by the Assam Rifles became more and more involved with the Army, with no signs of its ever returning to the civilian fold.

In 1964 the Governor of Assam suggested the appointment of a Study Team to review the role and the administrative organisation of the Assam Rifles. The thinking in the Ministry of External Affairs (under which the Force operated at that time) was that in view of its frontier security commitments, the Assam Rifles was becoming too "heavy" a force for the needs of the civil administration. The Ministry, therefore, again posed the question whether the Assam Rifles should not be taken over by the Army. In this connection the situation created by the Chinese aggression of 1962 was cited and note was taken of the fact that as many as five battalions had passed under the control of the Army with little likelihood of their ever reverting to civilian control as long as the threat from China remained. Thereafter, the insurgency in Nagaland had necessitated the placing of more battalions under Army control and this requirement appeared also to be a semi-permanent commitment. However, any suggestion of absorbing the Assam Rifles in the regular Army was not acceptable to the Ministry of Defence who continued to feel that they did not have a permanent requirement for Assam Rifles units. It is possible that Ministry of Defence was against the proposal mainly because of the increase in the defence budget that would have been caused by such a transfer.

While on this subject it is pertinent to point out that in most cases of Assam Rifles deployment under the Army, the situation was in fact illegal—or, at best, irregular. During successive emergencies—the Nagaland insurgency, the Chinese aggression, the Mizo Hills rebellion—the army moved in and took over command of Assam Rifles; but no Government orders were ever passed, *pre* or *post facto*, to authorise the “take-over”. Indeed, formal Government orders for command of Assam Rifles exist only for 20 and 21 Battalions.

When Home Ministry took over the responsibility for the Force, it soon recognized the need for an improvement in its mobility and efficiency. It was in pursuance of this requirement that a Study Group was set up by the Emergency Committee of Secretaries at the end of 1969 to suggest the lines on which its functioning could be streamlined to secure maximum efficiency. The Study Group comprised the Deputy Chief of the Army Staff, the Director General of the Border Security Force, the Inspector General of Assam Rifles and a Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

One of the questions examined by the Study Group was whether it would not be more appropriate to have two separate agencies to fulfil the functions of two such disparate responsibilities as security of the international border and maintenance of law and order. After much deliberation the Study Group opined that there were several advantages in retaining a single identity for the Force despite the fact that as organised and equipped at the time it was probably overarmed for the law-and-order role. Taking everything into account it decided to maintain and foster the military character of the Assam Rifles.

It was appreciated that the Force must be capable of carrying out a number of tasks in the border regions: guarding against incursions by enemy forces and other elements; dealing with probing enemy patrols and minor guerilla activity; preventing trans-frontier movements of hostile tribals and other undesirable elements; and collecting local Intelligence by observation of and contact with the local people without encroaching on the responsibilities of the normal Intelligence agencies. In the tribal areas the Assam Rifles should be capable of dealing with large-scale insurgencies, as it was

already doing at various places. It was hoped that in course of time the tribal areas would settle down to a more orderly existence and that the Force could then resume the character of an armed reserve Force to be called upon by the civil authority in aid of law-and-order or internal security situations.

In the matter of overall control of the Force, the Study Group recommended continuance of the existing system whereby the Assam Governor exercised superintendence and control over the Assam Rifles (as provided by the Assam Rifles Act of 1941) with the I.G.A.R. working under him. It further recommended that whenever A.R. units were placed under operational control of the Army, the latter should also take over the administrative responsibility for those units—though the financial liability should continue to be that of Home Ministry, in as much as it related to expenditure on personnel and equipment.

One of the points that struck the Study Group forcibly was that the A.R. battalions seemed always to be fully committed in the field, with no reserves being held at any time. In consequence leave and training details had to be drawn from the normal strength of the wings and sub-wings, leading to understaffing of the outposts. In order to overcome this handicap the Study Group recommended reorganisation of the battalions (without an increase in the overall strength) into a headquarter company and eight service companies, of which only six (18 platoons) would be operationally deployed, the remaining two serving as a reserve—as holding companies for providing personnel for leave, relief and training. The necessary increase in the number of platoons was sought to be made through a decrease in the number of sections in a platoon from the existing four to three. In order to enhance the military character of the Force, it was recommended that a new Headquarter-cum-Support Company be created; this would consist of a mortar and a machine gun platoon besides the signal, quarter-master, motor transport, animal transport and medical platoons of the existing Administrative Wing.

These reorganisations have not yet been authorised in their entirety. Wings and sub-wings have indeed been converted into rifle companies, of which there are now six in a battalion

(replacing three wings and three sub-wings). The intention (though not always the practice) is to deploy not more than four rifle companies on operational duties, leaving two at battalion HQ for training courses, reliefs and turn-over details within the battalion (for leave and other purposes).

Authorisation of a Signals Officer, an Intelligence Officer and a Leave Reserve Officer has increased the officer strength by three. M.T. has been increased, especially load-carrying vehicles; and each battalion has been given a civilian type bus to ferry leave parties and families to and from rail-heads. Each battalion has also been given a 9,000-litre water lorry.

While the Group did not consider the reorganisation of HQ I.G.A.R. necessary, it did suggest some changes in the organisation of Range Headquarters to allow for the operational functioning of the D.I.G.s. Considering that the Army might again have to move out of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizo Hills in the event of external aggression, as had been done in 1962 and 1965, the Assam Rifles had to be given the capability of taking over from the Army smoothly. For this it was considered that two Range headquarters would be required for Nagaland and one each for Manipur, Mizo Hills and North East Frontier Agency. The Group recommended organising these headquarters on the lines of the headquarters of an Infantry Brigade. A Range HQ staff now includes a A.A. & Q.M.G. (instead of a D.A.A. & Q.M.G.), a S.O. 2 Engineers and a defence platoon.

A very important recommendation made by the Study Group concerned the logistical arrangements for the Assam Rifles which, it felt, were not very rational. Instead of using men from the sanctioned strengths of battalions for use on the logistical pipe-line, it recommended the creation of *ad hoc* sub-units for both N.E.F.A. and Nagaland. It proposed the raising of four maintenance companies—one each at Silchar, Dimapur, Jorhat and Mohanbari. Their responsibilities were to be: catering for the maintenance by road and air of dependent troops; collection of dry rations, petrol oil and lubricants, ordnance and other stores, from rail-head supply depots and rail-heads concerned and despatching and delivering them to the dependent troops; and arranging supply of fresh rations

and other items of local purchase.

In 1968 was started the process of equipping the Assam Rifles with the new family of small arms—replacement of the .303 family of weapons with the self-loading 7.62 mm rifles, light machine guns and sten guns. By the mid-1970s most of the units had been fully converted to these new weapons.

Since most battalions of the Force are serving under the Army's command it was essential that communications compatibility should be established between the two agencies. However, it is only in the last decade or so that the old war-time HF sets were discarded and a satisfactory measure of modernisation was introduced. After the Bangladesh war, the LHT 217 and LHP 219 HF sets (manufactured indigenously by Bharat Electronics) were introduced. For short range use the RS ANPRC 25 has recently been procured; and it is planned to phase in VHF Radio Relay communication systems to ensure better quality speech circuits.

Although the fate of the Assam Rifles as regards its overall command and control still hangs in the balance, its permanency has at last been accepted in principle. Consequently Key Location Plans in respect of thirteen out of the twentyone battalions had been finalised by the beginning of 1971, so that construction of accommodation and provision of such necessities as parade grounds, sports fields and ranges in respect of at least thirteen battalions could be started. A double-storied building was constructed for HQ I.G.A.R. at its present location. The building when completed in 1971 could, however, accommodate only the Central Records and the Pay and Accounts branches, so another double-storey came up in 1980 to house the M.S. and Medical branches and parts of Records, Signals Exchange and the Canteen. The remaining branches at Headquarters continue to be accommodated in hired buildings and some Nissen Huts departmentally erected.

With the object of giving the Assam Rifles its own cadre of officers, Major General V.B. Tuli on retirement from the Army on 20 May 1972 was re-employed as the first "civilian" Inspector General of Assam Rifles since Independence. This experiment did not endure and he was released from service at the expiry of the six-month term for which he had been initially employed. Major General M.G. Hazari, P.V.S.M.,

A.V.S.M., came on deputation from the Army to take over as the Inspector General and the Assam Rifles reverted to the old practice.

At the instance of the Nagaland Government 3rd and 16th Battalions were placed at the disposal of the State Government for internal law and order duties in 1971.

With the coming into force of the North Eastern Council Act 1971, the North Eastern Council was set up with the Governor of Assam as its Chairman. In October 1972 the Inspector General of Assam Rifles was appointed the ex-officio Security Adviser to the Council.

It had long been felt that the designation of the Pioneer Companies of the Assam Rifles was not an appropriate one. They were commanded by Army Engineer officers and with their engineering capabilities they were more akin to the Army's Construction Companies than "Pioneers". Indeed the usage adversely affected the career prospects of regular Army officers posted to them. On a proposal submitted by the Inspector General, the Ministry of Home Affairs sanctioned the redesignation of the Assam Rifles Pioneer Companies to "Assam Rifles Construction Companies" with effect from January 1974.

In February 1975, in accordance with the Study Group's recommendation, HQ Plains Range moved to Tuensang in Nagaland and was redesignated HQ Nagaland Range Assam Rifles (North). Simultaneously HQ Nagaland Range located at Kohima was redesignated HQ Nagaland Range Assam Rifles (South).

Even after the separation of the Assam Rifles from the Assam Police in 1947 and its take-over by the Ministry of External Affairs for all purposes, its civilian employees had continued to receive Assam State scales of pay and allowances. This anomaly was rectified only in 1975 when Assam Rifles civilian employees were sanctioned Central Government scales, as recommended by the Third Pay Commission. The revised pay scales were given retrospective effect from 1 January 1973 as for other Central Government servants. Thereafter, a proposal for the sanction of revised pay scales for the enlisted personnel of Assam Rifles on the Army pattern

of pay scales was also accepted and sanctioned retrospectively from the same date.

The New Officer Cadre

Till 1968, except for a few Assistant Commandants promoted from JCO ranks of the Assam Rifles, the Force was officered entirely by deputationists from the Army. (A few contract term officers were also employed, either ex-officers of the Army—such as Lieut-Colonel Noble of Madras Regiment and Major 'Bob' Khathing of Kumaon Regiment—or promoted J.C.O.s from the Force itself. The practice of getting regular officers for a limited period of three to four years suffered from inherent drawbacks. First, the system was not conducive to continuity. Secondly, as the Assam Rifles were a civil force governed mainly by civil regulations and accounting procedures, it took Army Officers on deputation a considerable period to understand the characteristics of the Assam Rifles and its modes of functioning. As a result, they either tended to force Army ways on the Assam Rifles or resorted to over-dependence on their subordinates, the permanent staff. Neither development could be described as salutary. Also, due to the nature of the deployment and dispersion of the Force, officers on deputation, particularly Commandants and Seconds-in-Command of battalions, seldom got to know their men (or for that matter even J.C.O.s and N.C.O.s) intimately during their short tenure. According to an anecdote often narrated in 2nd Battalion, one of its Commandants had been unable ever to visit a certain post during his tenure; the men at the post came to know both of the arrival and departure of the Commandant only through the Part I orders.

Because officers seconded to the Assam Rifles came from different regiments of the Army, each with its peculiar traditions and customs, there was a tendency on the part of some Commandants to try and thrust traditions and customs of their own parent regiments on the Assam Rifles Battalions. This practice, besides creating some amusing situations (like an Armoured Corps officer in one battalion fitting a wireless aerial rod on a Jeep and flying on it the unit flag), greatly

hampered the development of the Force's own identity and traditions.

Another inherent drawback was that the Assam Rifles often came off second best in cases where the interests of the Force clashed with those of the Army because of a conflict of loyalties. Army officers with their gaze focused over their shoulders pending their reversion to the Army did not always stand by the Assam Rifles. Lastly, with the expansion of the Force demanding a large requirement of Army officers for posting to the Assam Rifles, the system of Assam Rifles selecting its own officers gradually broke down; and the Army, left to itself in this matter, did not always post its best to the Assam Rifles. It would not be an overstatement to say that the Army at times used the Assam Rifles vacancies as a dumping ground for its unwanted officers. (Ironically, what kept the Assam Rifles going was the fact that not all the "unwanted" Army officers were necessarily bad.) The obvious solution for overcoming the drawbacks of the deputation system was for the Assam Rifles to have its own cadre of officers. Such an opportunity was found in 1967 when the Ministry of Defence faced the problem of rehabilitating a large number of Emergency and Short Service Commissioned Officers who had been commissioned in the Army after the Chinese aggression but had subsequently failed to make the grade for the grant of regular commissions. For their rehabilitation after release from the Army the Government of India reserved vacancies in the Central Civil Services and para-military forces. Consequently at the instance of the Ministry of Defence it was decided that the posts of Assistant Commandants in the Assam Rifles be filled as under:

- (a) 50 per cent of the posts, by Army officers on deputation;
- (b) 30 per cent by ex-E.C.O.s and S.S.C.O.s of the Army;
- (c) 20 per cent from serving J.C.O.s and N.C.O.s of the Force.

In order to provide adequate incentives to applicants, the rank of Deputy Commandant was included in the Peace Establishment of the standard Assam Rifles battalion; and all

posts of Assistant Commandants which were tenable by Army officers in the rank of Major (Wing Commanders and Second-in-Command) were designated as Deputy Commandants in 1970. These measures opened up promotion opportunities for the Assam Rifles cadre of officers.

The introduction of this new cadre of officers inevitably met with a number of difficulties. Inordinate delays in settling the terms and conditions of service of the new officers resulted in their not getting their full entitlements of pay and allowances till long after their appointment. Furthermore, in the initial stages some of the new entrants were even treated as an inferior class of officers; and it was only when the I.G. came down with a heavy hand on those who thought that way, that the status of these officers was fully safeguarded.

Another *contretemps* was caused by delays in determining *inter se* seniority of Assistant Commandants for promotion to Deputy Commandants. It was not until 1974 that lists were finalised and promotions effected. However, at this stage Defence Ministry insisted that only half the vacancies should be filled by the new cadre officers, the remainder to be reserved for Army deputationists. This, combined with the Ministry's insistence that all posts of Commandant be reserved for regular Army officers, caused endless frustration.

The pressures during the peak period of new raisings for the Assam Rifles necessitated the selection of centres other than the Gorkhas; the latter could not cope with the "rush" of raisings during the late nineteen-fifties and early 'sixties. Eventually the whole system of affiliations had to be revised. In 1977 the new arrangements were formalised in an Army Headquarters policy letter, which laid down the new affiliations as follows:

| Regiment | Assam Rifles Bns for Affiliation |
|-----------------|---|
| Garhwal Rifles | 10 Assam Rifles 15 Assam Rifles |
| Kumaon Regiment | 11 Assam Rifles 14 Assam Rifles 17 Assam Rifles |

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Aassm Regiment | 1 Assam Rifles |
| | 20 Assam Rifles |
| 1 G.R. | 2 Assam Rifles |
| | 21 Assam Rifles |
| 3 G.R. | 3 Assam Rifles |
| | 19 Assam Rifles |
| 4 G.R. | 4 Assam Rifles |
| | 18 Assam Rifles |
| 5 G.R. | 12 Assam Rifles |
| | 16 Assam Rifles |
| 8 G.R. | 6 Assam Rifles |
| | 5 Assam Rifles |
| 9 G.R. | 7 Assam Rifles |
| | 9 Assam Rifles |
| 11 G.R. | 13 Assam Rifles |
| | 8 Assam Rifles |

Army HQ indicated that, as far as possible, officers for Assam Rifles battalions including commandants would be selected from the panels of their affiliated regiments.

The Directorate General

By the mid-'seventies it was becoming obvious that the resources of HQ I.G.A.R. were not adequate either to direct the operations of or to administer to a field strength of nearly two divisions—five “brigades” and other “unbrigaded” battalions involved in military-type insurgency operations in three states, together with defence-of-the-border responsibilities in two others. When the “Cadre Review” of the Army was carried out, the rank of the I.G.A.R. was raised to Lieutenant-General and his designation changed to “Director General”. But it required more than that to give the HQ adequate power of direction and operational command. In this endeavour, it was the first D.G., Lieut-General Sushil Kumar, P.V.S.M., and his successor Lieut-General J.K. Puri, A.V.S.M., the D.G. at the time of writing this History, to whom must be given the credit for transforming the somewhat *ad hoc* arrangements at HQ D.G.A.R. into a “finished” para-military headquarters run virtually on military lines.

The first major reform carried out was to establish a medical branch in HQ D.G.A.R. The Assam Rifles by this time boasted of 21 battalion hospitals, each with proper staff and equipment. The total strength of medical staff was 232 M.O.s—including 22 from the A.M.C.—and 1,300 other members such as pharmacists, nursing sisters and attendants and laboratory staff. To administer to this vast medical deployment the D.G. was able to obtain sanction for an A.D.M.S. at his HQ in the rank of Lieut-Colonel, with his own staff.

One of the first benefits of having a medical branch was success in a long-standing struggle for the authorisation of three Dental Units for A.R. personnel exclusively—one each at Shillong, Jorhat and Kohima. Another great boon was the entitlement of A.R. personnel, albeit on a limited scale, for treatment for cancer at the Army Medical facility in Pune, a privilege hitherto denied them. Furthermore, there is now hope for the establishment of a Base Hospital for the Assam Rifles at Dimapur so that our casualties do not have to depend upon (second priority) beds in the Army Base Hospital.

Another successful endeavour on the part of the D.G. was to facilitate legal procedures in the Force. Previously, all legal matters had perforce to be referred to the Law Officer of Meghalaya State. The anomalies of the situation were numerous because not only were the A.R. personnel spread over eight different states, they were also subject to three different codes—the Army Act, the Assam Rifles Act and the Central Services Rules. In 1980 HQ D.G.A.R. was sanctioned a Legal Branch under two officers of the Judge Advocate's Department. Prompt and sound legal advice is now available within the D.G.'s Headquarters.

A further shortcoming was overcome by the efforts of the last two D.G.s by the expansion of the Finance Branch at the Directorate. Finance is the eventual policy-controller in any organisation. In the Assam Rifles the annual budget had increased fourfold in the last decade—from 13 to 52 crores. Accounting, auditing and appropriation procedures for this vast amount entailed a herculean task. After much discussion with the Government of India, financial powers were enhanced and re-delegated from the Ministry of Finance

to the D.G.A.R. with restrictions on three items only: creation of posts; writing off of losses; and reappropriation of funds exceeding 10 per cent of the original budget provision.

Under enhanced financial powers, the D.G.A.R. was empowered to accord administrative approval and sanction construction of major works up to 10 lakhs in place of 5 lakhs. For petty works and repairs, the financial power was increased to 2 lakhs from 25,000. The D.G.A.R. was also empowered to enter into contracts for the supply and conveyance of rations up to two lakhs (and up to 10 lakhs on the recommendation of the Supply Advisory Board), thus greatly easing the problem of timely supply of rations to the troops.

At the same time, enhancement of financial powers was obtained for contingent expenditure (from Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000) to enable the D.G.A.R. to keep pace with inflation; and the financial powers of the D.I. G.A.R. of the Ranges were also increased. Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs authorised the D.G.A.R. to exercise the administrative powers of the Ministry but with prior concurrence of the Financial Adviser, North Eastern Council, Shillong.

A Military Secretary's Branch was created at HQ D.G.A.R. as an *ad hoc* measure. The officer strength of the Force has risen to 410, including 125 officers of the A.R. cadre. A Military Secretary (Lieutenant-Colonel) with adequate clerical staff now manages all officer problems in the Force.

The Engineer Branch at Shillong has been expanded and upgraded by the appointment of a Chief Engineer in the rank of Colonel, an Assistant Director (Lieutenant-Colonel), three officers in the rank of Major and an architect. In addition Engineer staffs have been authorised at each Range HQ and in the battalions, primarily to progress the construction of accommodation (which at present exists at only 25 per cent of authorisation). Further to expedite construction work Central Government approval has been obtained for entrusting major works to the M.E.S. or the Border Roads Organisation wherever possible instead of being entirely dependent on the P.W.D.

Other supportive measures taken at the Directorate General have been the creation of the post of a Public Relations Officer and the upgrading and expansion of the Records

Branch. For the first time a conscious effort is being made to project the image and ethos of the Force through the media—not just as an exercise in publicity but as a positive step towards lessening confrontational attitudes by promoting the image of the Assam Rifles as “Friends of the Hill Peoples”.

Perhaps the most interesting innovation has been the setting up of a Historical Cell in Shillong to collect, collate and preserve papers and other items of archival value and also to carry out research. This is a progressive move and one that could well be emulated by other agencies in a country where preservation of archives has not always received the attention they merit. The inspiration for this venture came mainly from Colonel “Joe” Commissariat, a retired officer with long association with the Assam Rifles. It was the foundation he laid, with researches into Assam Government records, the National Library and other institutions, that, linked to papers produced by the various battalions, proved so timely when the present History was undertaken. Another brainchild of his has been the annual journal of the Assam Rifles, “The Custodian”, which “Joe” has nurtured under his editorship. It has both an English and a Hindi section and carries articles of general military interest as well as those pertaining to problems in the north-east, besides personal accounts and anecdotes.

Service Prospects and Welfare Measures

As the Directorate General acquired more power and prestige, so did its efforts to promote the men’s interests find greater success. Assam Rifles personnel, who had been among the least fortunate servicemen in the military and paramilitary community as far as service prospects were concerned, can now look forward to a bright future as regards both financial security and advancement in the Force—thanks to the persistent efforts of the last two D.G.s.

For J.C.O.s additional vacancies were obtained for three honorary Captains and nine honorary Lieutenants; for N.C.O.s twelve extra vacancies of honorary naib subedars after retirement—thus more than doubling the previous

quota. In addition, the vacancies for J.C.O. promotions to officer grade (Assistant Commandants) were doubled. For the men, 1,512 additional posts of Havildars were sanctioned—72 extra in each battalion—a substantial jump in their career prospects. As for tradesmen and enrolled non-combatants, they have now been combatised and their rank structure substantially expanded.

For officers, 42 posts of Assistant Commandants were upgraded to those of Deputy Commandants (equivalent to Majors). Staff major's posts at each Range HQ were upgraded from Deputy Commandant level to that of Commandant (Lieutenant-Colonel).

A list of other benefits obtained includes: conservancy allowance; civilian clothing allowance to recruits; conveyance allowance for journeys from residence to place of work and back; various cash allowances; subsistence allowance for families of other ranks during imprisonment under military custody; grant of 25 per cent of daily allowance to J.C.O.s and O.R. on duty, in addition to free warrant and ration allowance; bonus on individual pay account savings; enhancement of appointment pay; hair cutting, cleaning and washing allowances; and outfit allowance for J.C.O.s granted honorary commission; Inner Line allowance for all personnel; 60 days earned leave in a year to personnel serving in battalions and at the Centre; one-way free leave pass to their home towns for personnel proceeding on leave because of death or illness of dependent family members; and house allowance in lieu of quarters to A.R. personnel at civil rates.

A grant of 21.50 lakhs from the National Defence Fund helped the D.G. build up the corpus of the Assam Rifles Benevolent Fund, interest on which is now being used to grant *ex gratia* payments to families of members who die whilst in service (Rs 4,500). For those invalided out, payments are made according to the circumstance (Rs 2,000 if due to enemy action, Rs 1,000 if due to accident, Rs 500 if due to illness).

As a measure of self-help to provide further financial assistance in times of need, an Assam Rifles Group Insurance Scheme has been started with Government approval—like the one instituted already by the Indian Army. At first the pre-

miums (and the benefits) were kept low but the response has been so great and demands for enlarging the Scheme so popularly voiced that its scope was enlarged. As it now stands the insurance cover is substantial—Rs 2 lakhs for officers and 50,000 for J.C.O.s and O.R.s against monthly premiums of Rs 100 and 50. Not only that; the profits generated from investments in the Savings Account are used for further welfare funds and measures. Since the Scheme first started Rs 67.20 lakhs have already been paid to bereaved families of four officers, eight J.C.O.s and 286 O.R.s; retirement benefits to date amount to Rs 43.85 lakhs. An amount of Rs 3.70 crores has been invested in long-term investments with various banks and public sector undertakings.

Travel and movement benefits introduced by Central Government authority are: the use of helicopters for 96 flying hours a year by the D.G. and the D.I.G.s; exclusive quotas for A.R. personnel in certain rail services (as for the Army); and use of the Air Force's flying "courier" service by regular Army personnel on deputation with the Force. In addition, it is expected that in the near future sanction will be received for the carriage of A.R. personnel and their families located in Arunachal Pradesh in Air Force planes employed on air supply missions when returning empty; and the extension of the facility of Vayudoot (Third Level) Airline to personnel of 2nd Battalion located in Lohit District.

The Assam Rifles Public School for the children of Assam Rifles personnel was founded at Laitkor (Shillong) by Lieut-General Sushil Kumar in September 1980. The School now accommodates 300 children in five dormitories. Education ranges from Class IV to Class IX, with full facilities for games and sports such as hockey, football, cricket, tennis, athletics and horse-riding and a wide range of hobbies. The School aims at self-sufficiency and has started its own bakery, poultry farm, dairy, vegetable farm, piggery and fishery.

At the same time, an Educational Scholarship Scheme has been introduced covering primary, secondary and middle schools and extends to college education up to post-graduate level.

Assam Rifles Training Centre

The Assam Rifles Training Centre was hurriedly and temporarily shifted from Misamari on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to Dimapur in 1960, in the wake of the Chinese aggression. Since then, its permanent location has been in the melting pot and consequently it has been housed, most shabbily, in what was described very aptly by Col Shakespeare almost a century ago as "mud and wattle huts". Over a period of twenty years, various locations—Diphu, Haflong, Chungajan, Misa and Laitkor (Shillong)—were considered but no decision was taken on a permanent "home". Finally the choice has been narrowed down to Dimapur itself in Nagaland or Diphu (the district headquarters of Karbi Anglong in Assam). After considerable effort and time, 1,000 acres of land have been acquired at Diphu at a cost of Rs 3,22,615, though efforts are still being made to persuade the Nagaland Government to give some land contiguous to Dimapur airfield where the Centre is now housed, so that this can become its permanent home.

The Centre has also been considerably expanded and is now authorised 918 all ranks on its establishment, with a capacity to train and administer 1,280 recruits, 140 radio operators, 60 cipher operators, 70 M.T. drivers and 40 trainees on various refresher cadres at any one time. The Command structure has been upgraded; the Centre is now commanded by a Brigadier, who has four Lieutenant-Colonels under him. There are also four Subedar Majors and 66 J.C.O.s authorised on the staff.

Another new organisation or unit raised is the Air Maintenance Transport Organisation, located at Shillong. It has on its establishment a Deputy Commandant, three J.C.O.s and 57 O.R.s. Its transport authorisation is 26 Jongs or Jeeps, 12 1-ton trucks and six 3-ton lorries. Its headquarter has been located at Shillong to look after the Camp of HQ D.G.A.R., while most of the transport with drivers has been distributed to various Range Headquarters and battalions to ease the maintenance problems and eliminate dependence on civil transport through carriage contracts.

Welfare of Ex-Servicemen

In view of the holistic trend in societal structuring today, it became necessary for the Assam Rifles to aim to be self-contained in welfare matters and start an organisation for looking after the interests of its own ex-servicemen. Accordingly, during the tenure of Lieut-General Chiman Singh as I.G.A.R., the proposal to form an Assam Rifles Ex-Servicemen's Association was taken up. In 1978 the Association was started and branches were subsequently established in Nepal, Kumaon and Garhwal—which together provide a majority of the personnel of the Force and in which now reside nearly 25,000 ex-Assam Rifles personnel. A *contretemps* arose when the Central Government, for various legal and technical reasons, withheld the status of "Ex-Servicemen" from the pensioners of the Assam Rifles. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs was prevailed upon to issue a letter to all the states concerned requesting them to grant facilities to ex-members of the Assam Rifles similar to those granted to former defence services personnel. Some states granted this request *in toto*, some with reservations; but the overall result has been instantly beneficial.

In addition to governmental aid given by the various states, a fund of ten lakh rupees is to be built up for the Association to enable HQ D.G.A.R. to carry out its own welfare programme. This money is being collected from contributions by serving personnel. Besides financial aid to Assam Rifles ex-servicemen and their widows and dependents (who now total more than 4,00,000), various other facilities and concessions are granted: education for selected children in the Battalion schools; merit scholarships for higher education; medical treatment in Battalion hospitals; reimbursements of medical expenses incurred during treatment of serious illnesses at civil hospitals; treatment for tuberculosis at the Gorkha Recruiting Depot at Kunraghat; special pensions for widows in extreme cases of hardships; generous grants to pensioners wounded in active operations; and many other concessions. During the past three years the Association has paid out over two lakhs of rupees in welfare grants and concessions.

THE DECADE OF THE SEVENTIES

IN the three decades since 1950 the Assam Rifles expanded more than fourfold in its overall strength—from five battalions to twentyone together with a substantial increase in the infrastructure of supporting services. During the same period the north-eastern region itself underwent radical political and cartographical transformation. Nowhere else in the country was there such a wide-ranging economic and domestic change of scene. Because the Assam Rifles constituted one of the major governmental agencies during this process of transformation, it would be of interest to include a brief summary of those developments in order fully to appreciate the quality and complexity of the services demanded of the Force during those decades.

The New States of the North-East

The old province of Assam and its frontier tracts have been reorganised into five states and union territories; and just outside its old borders three other political entities have come into being. Soon after the end of the Bangladesh war of 1971 Mrs Indira Gandhi made a trip to the north-eastern region. On 20 January she inaugurated the states of Meghalaya (formerly the districts of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills) and Arunachal (formerly N.E.F.A.) at two colourful ceremonies at Shillong and Ziro. The next day, the new states of Manipur and Tripura and the Union Territory of Mizoram were inaugurated. Over 250,000 square kilometres of north-eastern India containing a population of over 20 millions were reformed politically during those two days of January 1972. All these states were to be inter-linked by sharing a common

Governor and a common High Court—and by the creation of the North-eastern Council to handle common problems and to manage development schemes. (Nagaland, which had an option to join this Council, decided to remain out of it.)

The State of Assam is now residual territory, whittled down to some 80,000 sq kms—less than a third of the area it had comprised at the time of India's Independence. The main reason for this gradual breakaway of component parts was the traditional hillman-plainsman alienations that characterised intra-provincial affairs since the early days of British rule. Now the hill areas—N.E.F.A., Nagaland, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Mizoram—have, in turn, as they gained local political clout, preferred to dissociate themselves from the Assamese-dominated authority at the State's centre.

The psychological trauma caused by these drastic amputations was further aggravated by political problems posed by the concomitant reduction in population of Assam State. It was this factor that undermined the promised political stability of the State, as has been only too evident in recent times. The new Assam is not big enough to absorb with equanimity the flood of refugees from East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) who have been infiltrating across the border for the past 40 years. This illegal immigration, to which must be added the influx of a large number of Nepalis seeking employment, has affected Assam's political stability, economic growth, social security and cultural tranquillity. The Assamese feel—with some justification—that in the years to come they could become a minority in their own state.

Paradoxically, the State of Assam no longer employs any battalions of Assam Rifles. Apart from a few sub-units on the Nagaland border and the HQ of 5th Battalion at Lokhra, all the 21 battalions of the Force are shared by the other seven states and territories (including Sikkim, which was never within or contiguous to the old Province). The D.G.A.R. and his HQ are lodged in Meghalaya; the Training Centre is in Nagaland. This break in traditional relationship is surely another matter of regret for the old "mother" province.

The Frontier Tracts in the north, renamed North-East Frontier Agency in 1951, acquired enhanced political status as the Union Territory of Arunachal (comprising the five former

frontier divisions less Tuensang, which was joined to Nagaland). The part played by the Assam Rifles in leading this backward region towards political, cultural and economic development has elicited high testimony, as we have seen. And the sacrifices made by the battalions of the Force during the Chinese invasion helped to strengthen the bonds that linked them to the local tribals, who had been victims of Tibetan predacity long before the blatant aggression of 1962. In the aftermath of that invasion development activities were accelerated and an elected government established. Five battalions of A.R.—2nd, 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th—are located in the new territory today.

Nagaland, as we have seen, attained statehood in December 1963 after a violent period of open rebellion and intense counter-insurgency operations. After separation from Assam, a fully representative government elected by the Nagas came into power. The cease-fire that was negotiated in 1963 did hold but—as described later in this chapter—a low-key confrontation in the jungles continues, because though the main body of the Naga people is by now convinced of the benefits of peace and progress, a minority group among the hostiles, followers of Phizo, continue to press their demands for an independent and sovereign state for the Nagas outside the Union of India. So, though the cease-fire was generally effective, a negotiated settlement with the die-hards is not yet in sight; and a large number of hostiles are camped across the border in Burmese territory—ready to create mischief if the opportunity presents itself, and to seek training and arms assistance from the Chinese. Eight battalions of Assam Rifles were involved in the process of bringing these tribals into the Indian fold and are still deployed in Nagaland—3rd, 8th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th battalions—and one, 21st, astride the Naga-Manipur border.

The tribals of the autonomous district formerly known as the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills had long aspired to self-government and the opportunity to plan their own future. The breaking point came in the late 'sixties with the passing of the Assam Official Language Bill. Captain Sangma, a Garo and a Minister in the State government, together with his co-tribals, resigned from government as a protest against

the Bill, which they regarded as a threat to their own culture. Thereafter the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos demanded a full-fledged state with their capital at Shillong, a capital they did not wish to share with Assam. When the new state of Meghalaya was inaugurated, the capital of Assam was moved to Gauhati—thus adding to the trauma of the Assamese.

Manipur, the legendary land of dance and music and polo, has also had its share of disturbances, though their roots lie in causes that are markedly different from those in other parts of the north-eastern region, because the socio-political conditions obtaining there are so different. Manipur remains the only part of the north-east where there is no marked degree of hills-plains alienation. Although the inhabitants of the plains, the Meiteis, are generally regarded as a Vaishnavite Hindu sect, ethnically different from the Nagas and Kukis of the hills, there has always been a large measure of cultural, and occasional marital, exchange between the hill tribes and the plainsmen. In fact the latest trend is for the Meitei people to abjure their alleged Hindu origin and associate themselves ethnically with the Nagas, Kukis and Mizos in a pan-Mongoloid drive for self-assertion. The reason for this is partly disillusionment with the corrupt bureaucracy in Imphal and the consequent lack of economic progress in the plains sector and partly to enable the Meiteis to derive the benefits granted to "backward tribes" by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Manipur, as we have seen, was a princely Indian state at the time of Partition. After the departure of the British, the *Durbar* appointed by them (see Chapter 4) lapsed and the Maharaja brought the people of the hills and the plains together under his direct administration. However, in September 1949 the Maharaja, after initial resistance (as in most princely states), signed the Instrument of Merger—and Manipur became a Part C State, later retermed a Union Territory (1956). Since the legislative power for such "territories" vested in the Union Parliament in Delhi (to which, in return, the territories were given weightage in Parliament) there was soon a strong and vociferous movement for full statehood. Although the Centre introduced a number of liberalising reforms, including the creation of a legislature and a Council of Ministers for

Manipur, the Manipuris felt that the scope for Central intervention remained too large.

It was at this period also that the Nagas of Manipur took to armed insurgency in the hill areas in sympathy with the Naga rebels to their north—and echoed their secessionist demands; and soon the Kukis joined in the movement. In the late 'sixties these Manipuri hill tribes maintained constant touch with Naga and Mizo rebels and even acted as a conduit for rebel parties on their way to China and East Pakistan. However, before the insurgency could assume alarming proportions, statehood was conferred on Manipur. Soon thereafter, with the signing of the Shillong Peace Accord in November 1975, the hill insurgency in Manipur lost its punch.

Just as the insurgency in the hills began to die down, the Meiteis of the plains took up arms against the State government. Discontent had been fermenting for some time because of the rampant corruption and endemic inefficiency of the Imphal officials—and the Centre's apparent indulgence of the gross incompetence of the State government. Despite large amounts of development funds allotted by Delhi, little or no infrastructure—roads, power generation, raw materials—and not a single large-scale, or even a medium industry, had been established in the State. An added grievance was the Centre's non-recognition of Meiteilon, an old and established language with its own script, which for the last century or more has been the accepted medium of communication between the hill tribes and the plainsmen.

The Meitei aspiration commands great emotional appeal, but at the moment the hard-core insurgents are limited in number though more sophisticated in their political approach than either the Nagas or the Mizos. The main group, calling itself the People's Liberation Army, is committed to the Mao doctrine of violent insurrection. Its leaders have received training from the Chinese Army in Lhasa. Although the P.L.A.'s activities have caused some concern in recent years, the security forces—including 4th and 20th Battalions (and the 21st astride the Naga-Manipur border)—have been able to maintain a semblance of law and order. Unlike insurgencies elsewhere, the Meitei revolt is confined almost entirely to the plains in both urban and rural areas. Two battalions of the

Assam Rifles, 4th and 20th, are deployed in Manipur—and another, 21st, astride the Manipur-Nagaland border.

When Mizoram was detached from Assam and set up as a Union Territory, this did not satisfy the aspirations of the Mizo people, who demand equal status with Nagaland and Manipur—that is, a full-fledged state of the Union. However, there is no doubt that the granting of the status of a Union Territory, coming shortly after the loss of East Pakistan as a sanctuary, ensured a gradual scaling down in the intensity of the insurgency; and bloody combat is now a rare event. At the same time, the Arakan and parts of the Chittagong Hill tracts continue to be used as clandestine sanctuaries for mounting raids and assassinations. Battalions of the Assam Rifles deployed in the Mizo Hills are the original 1 A.R., later joined by 6th, 18th and 19th Battalions.

Tripura, also a former princely state, merged with the Indian Union after Independence; and its climb up the ladder of political status followed the usual process—Chief Commissionership, Union Territory and, finally, State of the Union. The main problem in this State has been the swamping of the local tribals, economically and politically, by Bengali settlers, a problem that is being increasingly aggravated by a steady flow of refugees from Bangladesh. The permanent home of 6th Battalion, formed from the old Tripura Rifles (States Forces), is in Tripura.

Sikkim, formerly a protectorate of India, has now become a State of the Union. Although not contiguous to the old province of Assam, a battalion of the Assam Rifles—the 17th—was nevertheless raised for deployment in this State. The main reason for this is that one of the most vulnerable approaches from Tibet to India follows the Chumbi Valley-Sikkim route—either over the Nathu and Jelep la or through Chungthang in north Sikkim. 17th Battalion has been entrusted with keeping watch along the northern access.

Nagaland in Transition

After the signing of the Cease Fire Agreement with the leaders of the hostiles, the Government of India as well as the vast majority of the people of Nagaland were determined

not to allow the peace thus established to be broken. Under the terms of the Agreement the security forces agreed to put an end to all jungle operations including searching of villages and arrest of hostiles; and all patrolling was to be confined to within 1,000 yards of each post. Only on the international border were they permitted greater latitude of movement—up to a depth of three miles from the Burma border. On their part the hostiles undertook to refrain from sniping, ambushes, raiding, kidnapping and press-ganging of villagers, imposition of fines and sabotage; and flaunting of their arms, or even uniforms, in towns, villages and within 1,000 yards of security posts. In addition they agreed not to bring in arms from outside Nagaland. (It had been accepted that the terms of the Agreement would also apply to the three northern subdivisions of Manipur, namely, Ukhrul, Mao and Tamenglong, because the insurgency had overflowed into these areas.)

A series of peace talks under the auspices of the Peace Mission were held from 1964 to 1966, first at Chedema and Khensa in Nagaland between hostile leaders and a team from External Affairs Ministry led by Mr Gundevia, then at Delhi with Prime Ministers Shastri and Indira Gandhi. Although these talks led nowhere because of the extremists' demands of independence and sovereignty, the Cease Fire continued to be extended from month to month and was, during the early years, strictly observed by both sides; and the very process had a tranquillising effect on the strife-torn State. The average villager began to settle down to a normal life after nearly a decade of deprivation and terror. With their own government in power and development funds flowing into the State in ever increasing torrents, the people of the towns and villages were determined to prevent a resumption of fighting at any cost. Even the underground elements gradually came to be lulled into quietude. They moved about freely (though they took care to keep their jungles bases and hide-outs secret); they visited Kohima and Mokokchung and other administrative centres without let or hindrance. And it was the hostile leaders who were always the first to ask for an extension of the Cease Fire, which—according to their own code—they observed scrupulously. When accused of breaking the Agreement by sending emissaries to East Pakistan or Burma to

procure arms, they blandly argued that there was no breach of the Agreement in that, because their undertaking had been only that they would not bring arms into Nagaland—not that they would not build up arms dumps *outside* its borders!

And this is where Manipur came in handy for gun-running across both the Indo-Burma and the Indo-Pak borders. Unlike Nagaland, Manipur was controlled by the Home Ministry—so that there was a lack of coordination between Kohima and Imphal. As Gundevia has recorded:

During all these months the Nagaland State Government had obviously prevailed upon the Centre to tolerate many obvious breaches of the cease-fire by the underground, especially in the matter of coercive collections and the parading of arms in the villages. It is said that in the first twelve months after September 1964, the underground must have collected about a million and half rupees in cash or kind. In fact it would be true to say that the cease-fire by now only meant “I won’t shoot, if you don’t shoot”. The Manipuri Members of the Central Parliament, who naturally had a great deal of say in Ukhrul, were not prepared to put up with this constant coercion of the Ukhrul villages by “outside Nagas”. The situation was uncertain but it was obvious that the cease-fire was not effective in this area and there were a number of incidents in the sub-division. Mao and Tamenglong sub-divisions somehow remained quiet, but the situation went from bad to worse in Ukhrul.

By 1967 it was decided that the security forces must take steps to intercept hostile columns proceeding to and returning from Burma and Pakistan—and, together with the Army, the Assam Rifles swung into action. 3rd Battalion took part in operations in the Zubza area, destroying nine hostile camps and keeping the gun-runners scuttling from hide-out to hide-out. 4th Battalion carried out operations on the Manipur-Burma border resulting in a number of skirmishes. In the Tuensang, Mokokchung and other areas of Nagaland, 8th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions all took part in raids and ambushes, netting quite a bag of hostiles together with arms and ammunition. Later in the year a major operation was mounted by 3rd Battalion on the Japvo area. Three officers, 13 J.C.O.s and 382 other ranks under the command of Lieut-Colonel Manohar Singh surrounded a large body of hostiles; though the latter were able to make a break-out on

one front, many of them, bearing arms of Chinese origin, were captured. The pressure was kept up during 1968 and had a sobering effect on the more reckless elements among the hostile leaders.

After three years of amnesty and freedom of movement, of which the hostile leaders (if not the bulk of their insurgent rank-and-file) had taken full advantage, they had come to realise that Phizo's aspirations for secession and sovereignty were no longer shared by the majority of Nagas. The people were definitely turning away from the hostiles, looking for peace and progress within the Indian Union. In this connection it is interesting to record the reaction of Sir Charles Pawsey, who had been invited to India by Government of India to visit Nagaland in 1965, when asked whether he thought Phizo should now be invited also. The retired D.C. had been moving about among his old friends all over Nagaland and had been able to make his own assessment of their mood. His reply was: "Why do *you* want him? *They* don't want him here."

It is not surprising therefore that the proposal to turn to China for arms procurement provided heated debates among the hostile leaders. In fact it was this issue that caused the first major break in the underground ranks and which later led to an irreversible splintering of leadership.

After the success of the counter-insurgency operations in Mizoram, that route to East Pakistan had been effectively sealed off. Phizo, from London, advised turning to China for help, but there was a strong element within the "Nagaland Federal Government" that opposed this move. Kaito Sukhai, who had at one time been the underground C-in-C, warned his colleagues of "very serious consequences" if Chinese help were accepted. (He paid for this act of defiance with his life.) At the same time, the Nagaland Chief Minister, T.N. Angami, had issued a warning on the floor of the Assembly about such a "treachery against the people of Nagaland". Even more important was the fact that the Christian leaders emphatically condemned this proposal. Nevertheless, by early 1968 it was confirmed that about 1,000 men under Isak Swu (self-styled Foreign Minister of the N.F.G.) had gone across Burma to

communist China, to receive training and to bring back sophisticated arms.

As was learnt later, Peking had offered wide-ranging assistance to the Naga hostiles. Starting with offers of some form of "recognition" to a "government-in-exile somewhere in Chinese territory" and providing them with advisers to guide their "foreign relations", they went on to promise massive arms aid and other assistance such as setting up a powerful radio station for their propaganda machinery. Fortunately, things were never allowed to go that far because a substantial number of moderate hostiles, particularly the Christian Nagas from Tuensang, repudiated the extremists and in fact for the first time formed a powerful bloc inside the underground movement that sought "a peaceful political settlement within the Indian Union". It is this bloc that eventually guided the Nagas towards the Shillong Peace Accord of 1975.

Meanwhile, the operations hotted up as more and more sophisticated weaponry came into Nagaland from China. The first major clash between the security forces and the Chinese-trained and equipped rebels took place in the Jotsoma area in June 1968. The rebels, numbering some 200, were using mortars, medium machine-guns and automatic rifles of Chinese make—and short-range rockets which bore Pakistani markings.

Operations were further intensified in 1969 to intercept returning gangs from China and to harass them continuously if they succeeded in entering Indian territory. Fortunately, Intelligence gathering was greatly facilitated by the fact that not only did the vast majority of the Naga peoples support the Government but, for the first time, so did a significant section of the underground. They freely gave information of Chinese-trained gangs, who were hunted down from camp to camp.

In various raids on "Chinese" hide-outs, 10th Battalion captured a large stock of sophisticated arms together with documents which proved their Chinese provenance—and a number of photographs of Mao Tse-tung. 8th Battalion raided the hostiles' "7th Brigade" camp at Khensa and their "19th Battalion" hide-out. 15th Battalion surprised the hostiles' "3 Brigade" and "17th Battalion" at Sanis and recovered large quantities of arms and ammunition. To 15th Battalion also fell the honour of capturing the C-in-C of the hostiles.

During March 1969, the G.O.C. had planned large-scale operations to intercept and apprehend a large gang of hostiles returning from China under the leadership of Mowu Angami, the underground C-in-C. An opportunity arose during these operations for the C.O. of the 15th personally to lead a raiding party of 20 men from his unit. This raid earned for the Battalion the honour of capturing Mowu Angami and his close associate, self-styled Lieut-Colonel Lhuvicha Angami. The unit also recovered a sizeable number of Chinese supplied arms.

The capture of their "C-in-C" as well as a major portion of the arms brought from China, together with the internal dissension within their own ranks, dealt a severe blow to the morale of the extremists. In an effort to regain the initiative they mounted a series of dramatic raids—one of which took place on the night of 1st/2nd August, when they attacked 3rd Battalion's "High School" post located in the heart of Kohima township. Two hand grenades burst in the middle of the family lines—the post not being a tactically sited one. However, the men as well as their womenfolk answered the "Stand To" call, waiting *khukris*-in-hand for the intruders—but the raiders lost heart after the initial assault and did not follow through. In another incident on 10 August the hostiles opened fire on a post of 14 Battalion at Sathazumi but, as in Kohima, did not attempt close quarter assault.

Meanwhile 20th and 21st Battalions, which had begun raising in 1969, completed their initial training and joined the counter-insurgency orbit in the winter of 1969-70. 20 A.R. was raised at Dinapur (Patna) and 21 A.R. at Jairampur (under arrangements made by HQ I.G.A.R.). The former moved to Palel in the southern Manipur hills for intensive collective training in counter-insurgency techniques, on completion of which it was sent to its permanent location in Ukhrul (April 1970) for deployment along the Indo-Burma border. 21 Battalion was sent first to Leimakhong (an Army Cantonment 22 km from Imphal) whence it moved to the Nagaland-Manipur border.

Throughout 1970 the security forces maintained pressure on the hostiles in an effort to break the back of the extremist resistance. The Assam Rifles once again bagged a good pro-

portion of prisoners together with their weapons. 3rd Battalion captured eight; 8th Battalion rounded up 11, including a self-styled Brigadier, recovering 30 weapons including a Chinese-made sub-machine gun. 10th Battalion took part in a number of encounters and also brought in a sizeable bag.

12th Battalion had a windfall when they forced the surrender of self-styled Brigadier Tsimemo Kikon and Lieut-Colonel Hoito Sema; this raid brought in a large quantity of arms, ammunition and equipment including a 73 mm rocket launcher, a Vickers medium machine-gun and prize items such as an ANGRC 9 wireless set with its generator. 13th Battalion made a grand tally of 167 weapons including a rocket launcher and three light machine-guns. 16th Battalion contributed 19 weapons to the Assam Rifles bag. Meanwhile 4th Battalion was active on the Manipur-Burma border, where it took part in a number of operations under the Army's command.

By the end of 1970 the Nagaland insurgency had been largely brought under control, though stray incidents continued. Gradually the Government's writ spread widely over the hills and jungles. The General Elections of the previous year had already demonstrated the success of the democratic process in the State, when the polling was as high as 73 per cent. The elections had been free and fair and many erstwhile underground leaders fought the polls as the United Front Party, winning ten seats. However, the ruling Naga National Organisation won the elections again. An even more dramatic example of the success of the democratic process came in the Parliamentary (mid-term) elections of 1970, when the Nagaland seat in the Lok Sabha went to an opposition candidate, a former rebel leader.

During the 1971 crisis in East Pakistan HQ 8 Mountain Division and its troops moved out of Nagaland to join the Army's order of battle in the international confrontation, leaving only the Deputy G.O.C. (with the local rank of Major General) to exercise operational control over the remaining security forces. Assam Rifles units (under HQ Nagaland Range) relieved most of the regular units. Thus, virtually the complete responsibility for the counter-insurgency operations was taken over by the Assam Rifles, supported by the Central Armed Police and the newly raised Naga Police Force. No

serious breach of the peace occurred during the whole of the period of the 14-day war.

It is to the credit of the then Governor, Mr B.K. Nehru and his successor Mr L.P. Singh (both former members of the Indian Civil Service) that after the Bangladesh war a positive step was taken towards changing a policy of drift to a policy of settlement backed by firmness and understanding. Following a serious incident in August 1972, when the Chief Minister's jeep was ambushed on the Dimapur-Kohima road (and his 16-year old daughter wounded), it was determined that though the "peace offensive" would be vigorously maintained, automatic extensions of Cease Fire would no longer be conceded and that measures would be taken by the police forces, with minimum Army participation, to isolate the small groups of fanatics who were still intent on confrontation. The State Government issued a White Paper explaining the reasons for the resumption of operations:

It means that the Government is taking a giant step towards the establishment of peace in Nagaland. All law-abiding and peace-loving citizens . . . will be protected by the civil authorities with the help of the Police Force, as in any other state in the country. The Army will act only when called for in aid of the Civil Power and it will not operate in the villages.

Slowly this new approach, firm but sympathetic, brought about a sea-change in the situation, ultimately compelling the rebels to sue for peace. At long last, in the last quarter of 1975, the underground leaders took the initiative for the peace talks which, on 11 November, culminated in the signing of the Shillong Accord whereby they, of their own volition, agreed to abide by the Constitution of India and to surrender the arms held by their men. All Government measures such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (by virtue of which underground organisations had been outlawed) were suspended and the erstwhile rebels at last came out of the jungles to rejoin their families in their homes to lead peaceful lives as citizens of India.

It would be tempting to claim that 1975 saw the end of the Naga insurgency, but it would not be accurate. All that can be said is that, by and large, peace returned to the country-

side, as demonstrated during the 1978 elections when the turnout of voters was a record 80-85 per cent—including a large number of former hostiles. Furthermore, in a major policy shift the Chinese government assured New Delhi that it had stopped giving assistance to Naga (and Mizo) rebels (though of late Peking seems to have gone back on its word). Massive doses of development funds have been, often over-enthusiastically, injected into the State, thus opening up the country (but also, alas, bringing a degree of social disruption leading to dissatisfaction and even antagonism).

The crisis is over, but it would be too sanguine to claim that the emergency has fizzled out. There has been no serious incident for some time, but it has to be admitted that die-hard elements among the extremist pro-Peking elements have still not given up their ambitions; and rebel gangs are still sitting across the border, negotiating to go to China for training and arms aid. The aim of these “ultras” still is to create an independent Nagaland. The Army and the Assam Rifles continue to remain deployed in the State, though their main activity now centres more on nation-building than confrontation—the “civil action” programme adopted by the Forces.

The fact is that though there has been no major incidents since the Shillong Accord, watch-and-ward has to be maintained—particularly in the border areas; because the forces of obscurantism are still active in their frontier hide-outs.

Developments in Mizoram

Political activity in the Mizo Hills following the outbreak of the insurgency centred on attempts to obtain statehood for Mizoram. Mizo Union leaders did not want any left-over ties with Assam, not only because of the State Government's negligent attitude during the famine, but also because they felt that Chief Minister Chaliha's leniency towards M.N.F. leaders had been an encouragement to the insurgents. They repeatedly clamoured for full statehood for Mizoram; and their efforts were partly rewarded in early 1972 when Mizoram became a Union Territory.

On the administrative front, the scheme for the grouping of villages into P.P.V.s (Protected Progressive Villages) in

order to deny the terrorists access to food and supplies from isolated villages was being pursued vigorously. However, after a few years further groupings had to be called off because of the adverse effect they had on *jhoom* cultivation in the forests and the consequent drastic fall in food production.

As for the security forces, besides working on the P.P.V. scheme (*Op Accomplishment*), columns and patrols were sent out into the hills and jungles to flush out pockets of rebels from their jungle hide-outs. 1st, 6th, 18th and 19th Battalions played a full part in those operations.

There is little doubt that count for count the Assam Rifles compared favourably with other security forces in the tally for the capture of prisoners and weapons. Because of their unorthodox training methods and their tradition of emphasis on junior leadership and initiative, A.R. patrols even in minor strength often brought about a scoop that any regular unit would have envied.

In a counter-insurgency campaign Intelligence regarding the whereabouts of the hostiles and their planned activities is always difficult to garner; and even when available it is seldom in time to be of value. Fortunately the Assam Rifles had had longer experience than the Army in this matter. All the battalions had by this time organised their own local Intelligence networks and because of their long tradition of establishing rapport with the tribals the system was made to work with some effect. 6th Battalion particularly had a very good "I" team operating under Havildar Lachman Singh, whose timely tips were the cause of several successful raids. His "spy ring" extended to several areas and was effective in both luring underground "drop-outs" to come over and in obtaining information of hostiles' arms dumps. In one raid based on Lachman's information, the Battalion netted a cache of 62 weapons. This N.C.O. was later awarded the Governor's Gold Medal.

Another prominent personality in 6 A.R. was Captain Diwan Chand, a post commander who had been nick-named "Boya" (meaning cowherd) by the Lushais. He had gained local fame because of a series of successful raids he had led. So "notorious" had he become that the M.N.F. rebels declared a price of five thousand rupees on his head. Their chance

came in June 1967 when "Boya" led a raid on Muallungthu village. Actually, the hostiles had "fed" the A.R. post information of a gathering of hostiles in Muallungthu village to lure Diwan Chand to the "kill", knowing that Diwan Chand was not one to pass up such a chance. They laid an ambush for him: and as the raiding party approached the village it ran into the trap. A number of hostiles opened fire, but they were obviously concentrating on the officer, whose tall, lanky frame singled him out among his men. Diwan Chand was wounded and collapsed on the ground, but nobody else was hit. As soon as they saw their target go down, the ambushing party melted away.

There was great rejoicing among the hostiles, it was learned later; and Diwan's "death" was celebrated in more than one rebel camp. However, within a month Boya's "ghost" returned to the fray: and what the M.N.F. did about recovering the five thousand rupee award the next time "Boya" was seen charging at a hostile camp at the head of his raiding party, it was never divulged. (Capt Diwan Chand was awarded a Shaurya Chakra for the June encounter.)

Not everyone was content to let Diwan Chand get away as the acknowledged trend-setter in the 6th. The medical officer of the Battalion, Capt D.S. Marathe (sometimes irreverently referred to as "middle-aged Marathe" by the youngsters of the unit) fancied himself as a close rival to "Boya". One day in January 1968 one of his female patients from a grouped village complained to him that her house had been broken into and ransacked by a hostile who was even then hiding in the jungle by the riverside. Marathe quickly got in touch with "I" Havildar Lachman and talked him into bringing the war dog and a few men for a foray into the forest. Keeping the information about the marauder entirely to himself, the M.O. led the "column" to his patient's *basha*, gave the war dog the scent and happily trundled off behind the animal as it led towards the river—visions of coming laurels egging him on towards the enemy.

When the dog lost the scent on the river bank, Marathe knew exactly what to do. He commandeered a canoe from further upstream, put the dog in it and paddled across to the opposite bank, where the animal quickly picked up the scent

again. Within a short distance Marathe had tracked the enemy down. The marauder had shinned up a tree to hide himself, but the dog had scented him out. Marathe prodded the prisoner homeward at the point of his pistol and rowed him back across the river. He and his column escorted the crest-fallen tribal into the interrogation room to search him for arms. Later, the M.O. reluctantly let the poor chap go and saw to it that news of his exploit did not get out to the officers tents: all that had been found on the prisoner were a pink lace bra and an assortment of other items of intimate female wear.

By mid-year in 1968 it had become obvious that the relentless pressure kept up by Army and Assam Rifles columns and patrols had broken the back of the insurgency, especially in the countryside. Except perhaps at Aizawl and one or two other population centres, the hostiles went on the defensive; and morale was low. The grouping of villages effectively denied them a regular flow of information, money and food. Many of the lesser functionaries in their organisation decided to give themselves up; and the average villager, who had been neutral till then (if not hostile), began to give full support to the security forces in the search for hide-outs and arms caches. The Assam Rifles made full use of the cooperation and continued to add to their tally of successful "finds".

In order to escape from frequent interception and destruction by Army and A.R. patrols, many large groups made for the international border on all sides—into the Chin Hills area of Burma, or the Arakan, or East Pakistan (though only in the latter were they made welcome). In June 1968 a large party crossed into the Chin and Arakan areas and attacked a number of posts held by the Burmese security forces. Burma Army reacted sharply and mounted a drive to push them back into India. In a jointly planned Indo-Burma operation many rebel parties were driven by the Burmese into a net spread by our security forces, where some were captured and the gangs broken up. 19th Battalion contributed to many such actions on the Arakan border and 18th Battalion on the eastern frontier. By the end of the year, the only recourse left to the hostiles was to sneak into East Pakistan, where they were sure of a warm reception. They established themselves in some

strength in the Sajak Range opposite Tuipuibari, Phulding and Marpara, whence they mounted small sabotage forays into the south-western Mizo hills, though with minimum effect. These hostiles regrouped themselves into an "Army HQ" with two "brigades" (seven "battalions"). However, though the overall strength was said to be nearly 2,500, the hard-core armed element numbered only 1,200—sharing about 800 small arms.

In order to encourage the hostiles to surrender, Government of Assam declared an amnesty for those who would surrender with arms. The initial period of the amnesty lasted from August 1968 to April 1969, but since the response was encouraging it was extended into 1970. During all this period the four battalions of Assam Rifles were constantly engaged in offensive patrolling, too numerous to be recounted in detail. The total weapons captured by the four battalions during this period gives an indication of their business: 10 light machine-guns, 152 rifles, 24 sten guns and 32 pistols.

Nor must it be overlooked that the role of the security forces was not confined to military operations. Their responsibility was dual; and, if anything, greater stress was placed on efforts at reconciliation of hostile elements than on offensive patrolling. In this endeavour even fraternisation—normally frowned upon in conventional military operations—was encouraged. In addition, the security forces were called upon to undertake a multiplicity of routine tasks normally carried out by the civil administration: demanding, drawing and issuing rations; accounting for civil supplies and maintaining other administrative records; hygiene in the villages; running of schools; control of security passes; and a number of other chores unconnected with military operations. In many cases post commanders virtually officiated as political or administrative authorities—often with consequences that rebounded adversely on these officers and eventually took months to sort out.

Evidence of the gradual return to normalcy came with the events of 1971. The confrontation with Pakistan had little effect on the situation in the Mizo Hills, even after the Army started pulling out. 61 Brigade was the first to go; and later, when 73 Brigade also left, control of the operations passed to

HQ States Range of the Assam Rifles, under command of Colonel M.D. ("Joe") Commissariat. The force under his command consisted of two battalions of regular Infantry (gradually scaled down till only one company remained), four battalions of Assam Rifles, two battalions of Central Reserve Police Force, a battalion plus of Border Security Force, one of the Provincial Armed Constabulary, and certain ancillary army sub-units.

Commissariat's main concern during this period was to prevent the re-entry of Mizo hostiles from East Pakistan (or to apprehend them if they entered Mizo territory). This he did effectively by launching a number of operations along the border. However, a fresh amnesty offer had the desired effect and a number of high ranking M.N.F. functionaries gave themselves up. Many of them were of sufficient importance ("Foreign" and "Finance" Ministers and the two "brigade" commanders among them) to be sent on to Delhi for interrogation.

The liberation of Bangladesh resulted in the dismantling of Mizo underground bases in that territory. Not only did the hostiles lose their safe sanctuary in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, whence so many operations had been launched, but their arms pipe-line and training facilities were also suddenly cut off. Furthermore, after the surrender of so many leading personalities, the M.N.F. forces were in complete disarray—and remained rudderless for the next three years. In this predicament Laldenga thought it wisest to run for cover and sought asylum in Islamabad with the Pakistanis.

The first general elections after the constitution of the Union Territory of Mizoram resulted in a massive mandate for the liberal elements of the Mizo Union. Curiously, the Indian Congress (and the Mizo Labour Party) fielded a number of notorious M.N.F. leaders—erstwhile "ministers" and officials of Laldenga's "government". Their rejection by the electorate clearly proved the preference of the Mizos for the more responsible members of the Mizo Union, which formed the first popular Ministry in the Territory under its former President Mr Chhunga. Soon thereafter, however, the Congress High Command under Mrs Gandhi's direction cajoled the Union leaders to join the Congress. Warmly responding to

the popular Prime Minister of India, the Mizo Union leaders joined the Congress *en bloc* and the Union Party was dissolved.

Conditions in the Territory remained peaceful till 1974, when a fresh upsurge of violence swept across the land. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in Bangladesh, and the overthrow of his government, new sanctuaries were established in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by die-hard elements among M.N.F. and they soon launched a terrorist drive in Mizoram. An attempted assassination of the Lieutenant-Governor, S. Mukherjee, was later followed by a dastardly act of terrorism when a group of M.N.F. desperadoes entered the Police HQ in the heart of Aizawl and shot dead the I.G., the D.I.G. and the Superintendent of Police. Government of India reacted strongly—first by enforcing a thorough shake-up in the administration. Then, contrary to practice, an officer of the Indian Police Service was appointed Chief Secretary to the Mizoram Government and a tough security policy was initiated. At the same time, the new administration mounted a major publicity campaign to educate the people about the benefits of democratic rule, the hollowness of the M.N.F. claims and the futility of their destructive ways. This campaign achieved amazing results; very soon nearly 500 M.N.F. members surrendered to the security forces, many of them with their arms.

Lastly, development activity was stepped up both in the towns and in the countryside. This multi-prong strategy gradually resulted in normalcy being restored. Laldenga, opportunist as ever, asked to come to Delhi to negotiate a settlement. This was granted: and after lengthy discussions a "Peace Accord" was signed at Delhi in July 1976 by which the M.N.F. accepted Mizoram as being an integral part of India and agreed to abjure all violence and suspend all activities.

It was soon discovered that Laldenga had not been acting in good faith. While pretending to negotiate at Delhi he had, in fact, launched a new recruitment drive and also sent parties of volunteers to China for training. On receiving evidence of this double-dealing, the Janata Government of Morarji Desai ordered Laldenga to leave the country by 6 June 1977

unless he declared himself in writing to be a citizen of India.

Laldenga gave this guarantee and stated that all he wanted was to take part in the democratic process with himself as Chief Minister. The Janata Government in Delhi gave in—and even persuaded Mr Chhunga to tender his Government's resignation, so that Laldenga might be given a chance. However, in the elections that followed Laldenga's followers were rejected and retired Indian Army Brigadier Sailo's People's Conference won an overwhelming majority. Unfortunately, immature state political intrigue brought down his Ministry within a few months but in the elections held the next year, 1979, the honest and upright Brigadier again led the successful party and was back in power as Chief Minister.

True to his colours, Laldenga took to terrorism again and organised a campaign to evict all non-Mizos out of the state. Assassinations and mass intimidations resulted in large-scale exodus from Mizoram. Unfortunately, this "Quit Order" to the "Vais" (non-Mizos) found mass appeal, and the Mizo people in general turned anti-Vai.

It was not until Laldenga was taken into custody and the Army and the Assam Rifles were called out to launch a fresh counter-insurgency operation that law and order was again restored. Mass surrenders again took place; and, with Laldenga once more in exile, there has since been a return to peace and quiet. However, it would be rash to assume that a solution to Mizoram's problems has been found and that the insurgency is a thing of the past.

As in all of the tribal areas of the north-east—the Mizo and Naga Hills, the border areas of the north and elsewhere—the rapidity with which the socio-economic scene in India has changed since Independence has had an inevitable impact on the social and cultural patterns of tribal organisations; and the impact has, in large measure, been a disrupting factor. Despite all the safeguards built into India's Constitution at the behest of a Prime Minister so much in empathy with the tribal ethos, the process of development has resulted in the inevitable imposition of a culture and language alien to tribal peoples. Each impetus of inflowing funds has brought with it congestion, noise, pollution and venality—and a cold bureaucratic system to replace the warmth of paternalistic

authority. The result has been that in some of the strategic border areas the ensuing alienation led to a persistent demand for secession. That momentum is perhaps slowing down, but the destabilisation of the tribal ethos continues.

The Assam Rifles in a Changing Environment

The transformation of British India's Assam Province into a multi-unit region of tribal and plains states has had its impact on the Assam Rifles also. The continuing unrest caused by secessionist moves, the resulting insurgencies and the consequent deployment of the Force in the disturbed areas are likely to have a major influence on the ethos of the Force and its future role in the region. Today, as the Assam Rifles moves towards the 150th anniversary of the raising of its first progenitor, the Cachar Levy, it finds itself experiencing an identity crisis that will require careful understanding and sympathetic management if a solution to its problems is to be arrived at in a just and purposeful manner.

The first body of troops for the Assam borders was raised in 1835 to keep control of the tribals threatening the plain areas of north-east Assam: and its functions included expeditions into tribal territory, a process that laid the foundation for the extension of British rule and the expansion of Empire. Over the decades the Force also established a tradition of providing significant assistance to the civil administration and the tribal population in the form of medical aid and educational facilities, construction and maintenance of roads and tracks and crucial support during regional calamities such as floods and earthquakes. Personnel of the Force came to identify themselves with the region they served because it became home for them and their families; and a degree of rapport grew up between them and the tribal people.

At the same time a process of gradual militarisation of Assam's military police was inevitably set in motion. It started with the military columns that were despatched as punitive raids into tribal territory in the second half of the last century—in the Naga Hills, in the northern frontier districts and in the Lushai and Chin Hills. During these expeditions detachments from military police battalions

served for extended periods alongside Army troops in field operations. Then came the Kaiser's War, when large numbers of Gorkhas from the Assam military police were drafted to regular Army battalions serving in the trenches in France and in other theatres. Towards the end of that war, in the Kuki rebellion, the military police virtually ran the show and, again, fought alongside regular troops. Official recognition to this militarisation process was accorded by the Central Government when the designation of the Force was changed to "Assam Rifles"—reminiscent of a line regiment of the regulars—and the grant of formal linkages with regiments of the Indian Army.

It was, however, the Second World War that saw the completion of the transformation. Front-line service rendered by "V" Force elements, both in extent and quality, raised the prestige of the Assam Rifles at par with the regular Indian Army as a fighting force. The two were brought together in administrative details also—types of uniform, rationing procedure and other details. Not even the neglect of the "forgotten Force" in the immediate post-war years could detract from the established repute. By then the Assam Rifles looked and trained and fought (and was officered) like regular infantry—a fact that the Himmatsinhji Committee was quick to recognize, as we have seen.

For a period after Independence the five battalions of Assam Rifles served mainly in a role supportive of the Frontier Administration and of the Assam Government; and it seemed as if the process of development and integration of the north-east would gradually change the ethos of the Assam Rifles back to its former "tribal service" status. It probably would have, if the region had been granted a long period of peace and tranquillity. There is ample testimony that the Assam Rifles, in its role as an instrument of the Frontier Administration, was ideally suited for this purpose.

However, that was not to be. The region was destined to enjoy neither peace nor tranquillity for long. Major insurgencies in two districts and a full-scale armed invasion of N.E.F.A. soon had the Riflemen out fighting as front-line soldiers again. Indeed, as the insurgencies spread and the threat from China intensified, the police image of the Force

virtually disappeared. More and more battalions had to be raised to meet the military requirement. By 1969 there were 21 battalions, all employed either on border-defence tasks or in counter-insurgency roles, all but two directly under the Army's command. Recently announced Central Government plans indicate that the Force is now due for another period of rapid expansion; by the end of the nineteen-eighties eleven more battalions are expected to be added to its order of battle. Presumably most if not all of these new raisings will be deployed under the Army, to replace the battalions of Border Security Force and other police detachments now serving under the Army in Nagaland and Mizoram.

In the matter of cooperation in the field and operational liaison, a close rapport between the Army and the Assam Rifles has been established in recent years. Shared experience in battle, particularly during the sharp and intense fighting following the Chinese invasion of 1962, has created a special bond between them. And, of course, the fact that the battalions and sub-units are commanded by regular officers from the Army gives this bond renewed strength and durability. However, notwithstanding these linkages the unfortunate fact is that the Assam Rifles continues to suffer from a feeling of insecurity about its future. Unlike the Army, or even bodies of police forces such as the B.S.F. or the C.R.P., the Assam Rifles can claim no "god-father" among the powers-that-be. And this is because of the curious vicissitudes which the command-and-control aspect of this Force has experienced.

Despite the federal status granted to the Assam Rifles in 1937, its area of employment remained restricted to one province; therefore it continued to be controlled by the Governor of Assam on behalf of the Governor General and, under him, a provincial I.G. of Police (later an I.G. from the Army). After Independence N.E.F.A. was regarded as having a special status under the Ministry of External Affairs and because the only police force in this Agency was the Assam Rifles, overall control and budgeting of all Assam Rifles were also placed under that Ministry, with the Governor of Assam exercising the Ministry's power over the Force through N.E.F.A. Secretariat at Shillong. In practice this turned out to be a cosy arrangement. There has always been close rapport

between Foreign and Defence Ministries in matters concerning external threats and defence of the border—so the Assam Rifles met with understanding from both. Furthermore, it constituted the only armed force under “command” of Foreign Ministry, its own “private army” as it were, and was therefore accorded special consideration and treatment, with no competition from other bodies to dilute the working intimacy of this relationship.

All that suddenly came to an end in the mid-sixties. After the status of N.E.F.A. changed to that of a Union Territory, its administration was of course transferred to Home Ministry and the overall control of the Assam Rifles passed into the same hands. As it happened, it was just about then that Home Ministry started to raise the Border Security Force, which was eventually to become the largest of the para-military forces under the Ministry. It was not surprising that thereafter the Assam Rifles found itself relegated to bottom place in the Ministry’s scale of priorities. Home Ministry officials had had no experience and possessed little background knowledge of the Force, whose headquarters in Shillong was in any case far removed from the seat of the Central Government. They were quite content to let the previous arrangement continue whereby the Governor of Assam exercised powers of superintendence over the Force, leaving them free to get on with the task of building up the B.S.F.

Nor can Home Ministry be entirely blamed for this step-motherly attitude in this respect. Although budgeting for the Assam Rifles remains with Home, it is Defence Ministry that controls operational responsibility—because virtually the whole Force is deployed under the Army’s command on military tasks. When, in an internal emergency situation, Home Ministry requires the use of Assam Rifle units, the Army—its hands full with counter-insurgency operations—is reluctant to part with any. The result is that as requirements for new units arise, Home Ministry raises more and more B.S.F. battalions for its para-military requirements, to the total neglect of the interests of the Assam Rifles. For example, two B.S.F. battalions are now deployed on the Indo-Burma border, hitherto considered a prescriptive domain of the Assam Rifles. Another cause for grievance was the recent decision to place the B.S.F.

above the Assam Rifles in the para-military order of precedence—in disregard of the latter's long history, traditions and achievements.

The duality of control, whereby the Assam Rifles becomes "nobody's baby", is not the only disadvantage it suffers from in the present situation. Although doing a full-time Army job, unlike the Army it remains a regional body (despite its federal status) so that, deployed as it is on operational tasks, there is no opportunity for postings in less arduous locations in the rest of the country; and internal arrangements for rest and recreation are not sufficient to afford adequate relief from the strain and stress of continuous operational deployment.

It is a tangled skein of command and control and employability that has so haplessly ensnared this fine fighting force. Its own Directorate General has done much towards establishing rights and privileges for the Force on the lines of the regular Army—and towards enhancing the efficiency of the Force as a military adjunct. But at higher levels there are too many anomalies to ensure equitable treatment. It is this that must be put right as a matter of priority.

It has been suggested on a number of occasions in the past that it is time that the Ministry of Defence took over responsibility for the Assam Rifles, since the Force is almost totally deployed under the Army. However, apart from the question of budgeting, there are other reasons also why such a step can at best be a temporary solution. Eventually the Central Government will have to face up to a permanent arrangement for the security of the north-eastern region.

Today, the Sino-Indian border is a "live" one, along which the country faces a major enemy. It is only the regular Army that can undertake the "defence" of this border in these circumstances. Hence the para-military forces under its command are also deployed on a military role—"defence" of the border. In contrast, along stretches of the international border where there is no operational emergency (such as the Indo-Bangladesh border) it is the Home Ministry that is responsible for its "security"—and it deploys its own para-military forces.

It is to be emphasised that the Army's deployment on the north-east frontier is the exception, not the rule. It is not unreasonable to envisage a settlement with China that would

defuse the “liveness” of the present crisis; and then the responsibility for the N.E.F.A. border would revert to the Home Ministry. Similarly, intensity of the insurgencies in Nagaland and Mizoram will surely de-escalate one day, hopefully in the foreseeable future, to a sufficient degree for that responsibility also to revert to Home Ministry, so that the forces deployed in these areas would also be police or para-military. It is then that the question will arise of the standing—even the survivability—of the Assam Rifles among the plethora of police and para-military bodies deployed for these various tasks in the north-eastern region. The Defence Ministry and the Army will have disengaged themselves from the scene: and unless plans and policies are formulated now for a future for the Force, it may be too late when the time comes.

A Police Commission set up by Home Ministry a few years ago considered this problem and recommended the creation of a special force for this region—to be called the “North-eastern Rifles”—which would be mainly responsible for its security. It is unfortunate that the Commission did not go further and make a specific recommendation, the obvious one being that the Assam Rifles, more militarised than any of the other bodies, would be the ideal hard-core around which the “North-eastern Rifles” could be built—starting from now. Again, the main reason for this omission could have been the fact that the Police Commission presumed that the Assam Rifles were permanently under the Army’s control. This is the danger of the present situation: the assumption, as the years pass by, by more and more authorities that the Assam Rifles is part of the Army. And it is going to be increasingly difficult to disabuse them from this preconception if the situation continues in the present trend for an indefinite period. Understandably, the image of the Assam Rifles has merged with that of the Army, a process which the Force itself has done much to promote. Police officers in charge of para-military administration and planning in the Central Government cannot be blamed if they look upon the Assam Rifles with a degree of remoteness, even hostility.

Over the past twenty years or more, Army Headquarters in Delhi has periodically approached the Ministries to undertake a rationalisation programme for the diverse para-military

forces deployed throughout Indian territory. In as much as these forces pertain to the defence of India, this is quite naturally a prime concern of the General Staff. Sadly, all such efforts have failed to produce a commonly desired solution mainly because there is insufficient rapport between the Defence and Home Ministries—more specifically between the Army and the Police—and even demands of national defence have not brought the two agencies to an agreed and mutually benefiting agreement.

The Director General of the Assam Rifles is in a favourable situation today to take a fresh initiative in this matter. Being a senior officer of the Army serving under the Home Ministry, and with an efficiently performing militarised headquarters that deals almost exclusively with para-military concerns, he can be instrumental in setting in motion a gradual, objective and sympathetic move towards an attempted rationalisation of the para-military complex operating in the north-eastern region. Providing he is able to co-opt the support of both the ministries concerned, he should be able to merge the parochial interests of the various elements—police, para-military and Army—into a workable arrangement. The Police Commission has suggested a possible solution—a combined North-eastern Frontier Rifles under the Home Ministry. With the cooperation of all concerned not only could the interests of the Assam Rifles be safeguarded in setting up such a body, but its rich heritage of service and experience could be projected towards a unified para-military effort in Assam and the seven states.

APPENDIX A

INSPECTORS AND DEPUTY INSPECTORS GENERAL OF THE ASSAM RIFLES 1947-1982

Inspectors General

| | | |
|--|----------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr H.G. Bartley, I.P., C.I.E. | 1947-48 | The post of |
| 2. Col Sidhiman Rai, M.C. | 1948-49 | Inspector General |
| 3. Brig R.N.D. Frier, M.C. | 1949-52 | Assam Rifles was |
| 4. Brig K. Bhagwati Singh | 1952-54 | later redesignated |
| 5. Brig K.S. Katoch, M.C. | 1954-55 | as Director General |
| 6. Brig Harbhajan Singh | 1955-57 | Assam Rifles |
| 7. Maj Gen Ajit Singh Guraya, A.V.S.M. | 1958-65 | |
| 8. Maj Gen Shiv Narain Bhatia | 1965-68 | |
| 9. Maj Gen Vidya Bhusan Tuli | 1968-72 | |
| 10. Maj Gen M.G. Hazari, P.V.S.M., A.V.S.M. | 1973-75 | |
| 11. Maj Gen K. Chiman Singh | 1976-79 | |
| 12. Lt Gen Sushil Kumar, P.V.S.M. | 1979-81 | First D.G.A.R. |
| 13. Lt Gen J.K. Puri, A.V.S.M. | 1981 . . | |

Deputy Inspectors General

(a) Headquarters

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------|---|
| 1. Brig Nahar Singh | 1977-79 | The post of |
| 2. Brig M.M. Pandit | 1980-81 | Deputy Inspector |
| 3. Brig D.S.R. Sahni, S.M. | 1981-82 | General Assam Rifles (HQ) was later redesignated as Deputy Director General Assam Rifles |

(b) Mizoram Range (erstwhile "States" Range)

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Col J.D. Nadirshaw, Vr.C., S.C. | 1960-62 |
| 2. Col Jaswant Singh, K.C. | 1962-64 |

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| 3. Col S.R. Nanda | 1964-66 |
| 4. Col Iqbal Singh, M.C. | 1966-68 |
| 5. Col Bhagat Singh | 1968-70 |
| 6. Col M.D. Commissariat | 1970-72 |
| 7. Col A.S. Assar | 1972-74 |
| 8. Col B.S. Ailawadi | 1975-76 |
| 9. Brig Nahar Singh | 1976-77 |
| 10. Brig K.N. Singh | 1977-79 |
| 11. Brig M.M. Pandit | 1979-80 |
| 12. Brig Jasbir Singh | 1980-82 |
| 13. Brig K.G.P. Kurup | 1982 . . |

(c) Nagaland Range (South)

| | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| 1. Col Hardit Singh | 1961-62 |
| 2. Brig Mohan Mukund Singh | 1962-64 |
| 3. Brig H.L. Kapur | 1964-65 |
| 4. Brig G.C. Sircar | 1965-67 |
| 5. Brig M.S. Grewal | 1968-69 |
| 6. Brig O.G. Sawhney | 1970-74 |
| 7. Brig A.J. Texeira | 1974-78 |
| 8. Brig K.D. Issar | 1978-81 |
| 9. Brig S.C. Gupta, Vr.C. | 1981 . . |

(d) Nagaland Range (North) (earlier 4A Sector)

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Col B.K. Sabnis | 1963-64 |
| 2. Col N.K. Sinha | 1964 |
| 3. Col C.S. Reddy | 1964-66 |
| 4. Col Rattan Lal | 1966-68 |
| 5. Col G.S. Sangha, M.V.C. | 1968-70 |
| 6. Col K.C. Aiyanna | 1970-71 |
| 7. Col Avtar Singh, V.S.M. | 1971-75 |
| 8. Brig N.S. Surrey, A.V.S.M. | 1976-79 |
| 9. Brig N. Viswanathan | 1979-82 |
| 10. Brig S.C. Sardeshpande | 1982 . . |

(e) Arunachal Range (erstwhile N.E.F.A. Range)

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| 1. Col H.S. Parab | 1959-60 |
| 2. Col G.K. Karandikar | 1961 |
| 3. Col V.V. Vieyra | 1962 |
| 4. Brig Hardit Singh | 1962-63 |
| 5. Brig Umrao Singh | 1963-64 |
| 6. Brig V.P. Naib | 1964 |
| 7. Brig R.S. Butalia | 1964-67 |
| 8. Brig Haripal Singh | 1967-70 |
| 9. Brig A.R. Taode | 1970-74 |

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| 10. Brig G.S. Sharma, Vr.C. | 1974-76 |
| 11. Brig Narjit Singh | 1976-80 |
| 12. Brig A.K. Dewan, Vr.C. | 1980 . . |

(f) Manipur Range

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Col A.S. Bedi | 1956-58 |
| 2. Col S.S. Kalaan, M.C. | 1958-60 |
| 3. Col G.K. Karandikar | 1960-61 |
| 4. Col J.D. Nadirshaw, Vr.C., S.C. | 1961-62 |
| 5. Col U.C. Pant | 1962-63 |
| 6. Col V.P. Naib | 1963-64 |
| 7. Col B.S. Gill | 1964-66 |
| 8. Col K.J.S. Chhatwal | 1966-68 |
| 9. Col Prithipal Singh | 1968-70 |
| 10. Col Avtar Singh, V.S.M. | 1971 |
| 11. Col H.S. Mahal | 1971-76 |
| 12. Brig S.S. Manhas, Vr.C. | 1976-79 |
| 13. Brig Jagjit Singh | 1979 . . |

APPENDIX B

ASSAM RIFLES HONOURS AND AWARDS 1890-1982

Pre-Second World War

| | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1891 | Subedar Sangram Sing | I.O.M. (South Lushai Hills Rising) |
| | Havildar Chandra Sing Thapa | „ „ „ |
| 1894 | Havildar Major Bakshi Ram | I.O.M. (Abor Expedition) |
| | Havildar Bhuta Sing | „ „ |
| 1897 | Subedar Major Jitman Gurung | Title of "Rai Bahadur". |
| 1907 | Subedar Major Arjan Rai | Title of "Sirdar Bahadur". Also awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal (I.D.S.M.) and King's Police Medal (K.P.M.) and later Order of British India, 2nd Class (O.B.I.—II) |
| 1912 | Jemadar Harka Sing Rai | I.D.S.M. (Chinlong Expedition) |
| | Subedar Jangbir Lama | I.D.S.M. (Abor Expedition) |
| | Havildar Dalbahadur Thapa | „ „ |
| | Captain G.S. Dunbar | Mention in Despatches (Abor Expedition) |
| | Sergt Dorward | „ „ „ |
| | Subedar Jangbir Lama | „ „ „ |
| | Jemadar Sarabjit Thapa | „ „ „ |
| 1913 | Captain A Graham | King's Police Medal (K.P.M.) (Daphla Expedition) |
| | Subedar Sanjai Subha | O.B.I.—II and later the title of "Rai Bahadur" |
| 1914 | Major C Bliss | C.I.E., K.P.M. |
| | Subedar Major Kamaluddin | K.P.M. |
| | Subedar Hari Ram | „ |

| | | |
|------|--------------------------|---|
| 1915 | Subedar Major Jamaluddin | O.B.I.—II and later the title of “Khan Bahadur” |
| | Captain Montifiore | Commander of the Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.) (Chin Hills Rising) |
| | Subedar Hari Ram | I.D.S.M. (Kuki operations) |
| | Subedar Nain Sing Mal | “ ” |
| 1917 | Jemadar Hanspal Limbu | “ ” |
| to | Rifleman Kishenbahadur | |
| 1919 | Chhettri | “ ” |
| | Havildar Jangbir Gurung | K.P.M. “ ” |
| | Rifleman Bhabajit Rai | “ ” |
| | Subedar Pokul Thapa | “ ” |

Six Riflemen were specially promoted in the field and numerous “Mentions in Despatches” and a number of *Jangi Inams* were granted for these operations.

| | | |
|------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1915 | In the war of 1914-18, eleven Indian officers and 131 O.R.s of the Assam Rifles serving with Gorkha Regiments were specially promoted in the field, and seven Indian Officers and 69 other ranks were awarded various honours, including 7 I.O.M., 5 I.D.S.M., 12 M.S.M. | |
| 1920 | Subedar Major Hetman Rai | Rai Bahadur |
| | Subedar Birman Thapa | I.D.S.M. |
| | Jemadar Satal Sing Cachari | I.D.S.M. |
| 1921 | Colonel L.W. Shakespear, C.B. | C.I.E. (Kuki Operations) |
| 1924 | Subedar Major Jangbir Lama | Sirdar Bahadur |
| | Jemadar Surbir Ale | K.P.M. (Rampa State Rebellion) |
| | Subedar Jagatsher Limbu | “ ” “ ” |
| | Subedar Kainbir Limbu | “ ” “ ” |
| | Subedar Major Mansur Rai | I.O.M. “ ” |

Second World War

M.B.E. (Military)

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| T/Lt Colonel G.A.E. Keene | 3rd Battalion |
| Subedar Ratna Bahadur Limbu | 2nd Battalion |
| Subedar Major Singbahadur Rai | 2nd Battalion |

M.C.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Capt. G.St. G.T. Allen | Assistant Commandant 3rd Battalion |
|------------------------|--|

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Subedar Asurdhan Rai | 1st Battalion |
| Subedar Uttam Sing Chhettri | 3rd Battalion |
| Jemadar Kharka Bahadur Limbu | 3rd Battalion |
| Jemadar Deb Sing Chhettri | 1st Battalion |

O.B.I. (2nd Class with the title of Bahadur)

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Subedar Major Sardar Bahadur Sukraj Limbu | 4th Battalion |
| Subedar Major Sardar Bahadur Balbahadur Gurung | 3rd Battalion |
| Subedar Major Sardar Sahib Shamsheer Gurung | 1st Battalion |
| Subedar Major Gauri Sing Cachari | 5th Battalion |

I.O.M. (2nd Class)

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Subedar Bindraman Rai | 3rd Battalion |
|-----------------------|---------------|

Military Medal

| | | | |
|---------|------|------------------------|---------------|
| 25637/3 | Hav | Chandra Bahadur Thapa | 2nd Battalion |
| 3529 | Nk | Sibajit Rai | 4th Battalion |
| 32120 | L/Nk | Yangra Songba | 3rd Battalion |
| 31168 | L/Nk | Tilbahadur Gurung | 3rd Battalion |
| 44419 | L/Nk | Dhanbahadur Thapa | 4th Battalion |
| 45219 | L/Nk | Bombahadur Chhettri | 4th Battalion |
| 32495 | Rfn | Kharkabahadur Chhettri | 3rd Battalion |
| 44970 | „ | Pathar Sing Limbu | 4th Battalion |
| 31333 | „ | Rupdhoz Limbu | 3rd Battalion |
| 27222 | „ | Dhoj Bahadur Rai | 2nd Battalion |
| 32265 | „ | Jankhothang Kuki | 3rd Battalion |
| 43853 | „ | Balbahadur Newar | 4th Battalion |
| 44801 | „ | Dakbahadur Limbu | 4th Battalion |

I.D.S.M.

| | | | |
|-------|------|---------------------------|---------------|
| | | Jemadar Indra Bahadur Pun | 3rd Battalion |
| 43147 | Hav | Manbahadur Chhettri | 4th Battalion |
| 30172 | Hav | Asbahadur Gurung | 3rd Battalion |
| 13564 | Hav | Aishore Rai | 1st Battalion |
| 13755 | Hav | Lal Sing Rana | 1st Battalion |
| 44180 | Nk | Pahalsing Gurung | 4th Battalion |
| 43732 | Nk | Singbir Lama | 4th Battalion |
| 43843 | Nk | Dhanbahadur Ghale | 4th Battalion |
| 43845 | Nk | Narbahadur Rai | 4th Battalion |
| 44151 | L/Nk | Monbahadur Gurung | 4th Battalion |
| 43077 | L/Nk | Aitaram Limbu | 4th Battalion |
| 44759 | L/Nk | Dilaram Mall | 4th Battalion |
| 44358 | Rfn | Jainarain Limbu | 4th Battalion |
| 43790 | „ | Nguljalum Kuki | 4th Battalion |
| 32190 | „ | Gandharu Rajbangshi | 3rd Battalion |

Bar to I.D.S.M.

| | | | |
|-------|----|---------------|---------------|
| 43077 | Nk | Aituram Limbu | 4th Battalion |
|-------|----|---------------|---------------|

B.E.M.

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 24461 | Hav | Dharmasing | 2nd Battalion |
| 24996 | Hav | Bombahadur Pun | 2nd Battalion |
| 25531 | Hav | Imansing Gurung | 2nd Battalion |
| 25962 | Nk | Gyanbahadur | 2nd Battalion |
| 26848 | L/Nk | Manichand Rai | 2nd Battalion |
| 26038 | Com- pounder | Hav Sonam Lama | 2nd Battalion |

B.E.M. (Civil Division)

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Head Clerk | Prasanna Hari Das Gupta | 3rd Battalion |
|------------|-------------------------|---------------|

Post-Independence**Ashoka Chakra**

| | | | | |
|----------|---------------|---------------------------------------|------|------|
| 30385 | Subedar Major | Kharka Bahadur Limbu, M.C. (Posth) | 8 AR | 1961 |
| IC-5261 | Captain | Man Bahadur Rai, M.C., I.D.S.M. | 8 AR | 1962 |
| EC-53763 | Captain | Jasram Singh | 6 AR | 1969 |

Kirti Chakra

| | | | | |
|----------|---------|------------------------------|------|------|
| EC-57412 | Captain | A.N. Kathat (Posth) | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 16526 | Nk | Tek Bahadur Chhettri (Posth) | 1 AR | 1969 |
| IC-2467 | Major | Amar Sen | 3 AR | 1957 |
| IC-2848 | Major | I.S. Rawat | 3 AR | 1957 |
| 31571 | Jemadar | Indra Bahadur Gurung (Posth) | 3 AR | 1959 |
| 44786 | Jemadar | Bhakta Bahadur Gurung | 4 AR | 1960 |
| 44149 | Subedar | Mangal Bahadur Limbu | 4 AR | 1961 |
| 46584 | Nk | Kisna Bahadur Gurung | 4 AR | 1962 |
| 46632 | Nk | Karna Bahadur Rai (Posth) | 4 AR | 1962 |
| IC/4272 | Lt Col | J.B. Dorabji | 5 AR | 1959 |
| JC-50923 | Jemadar | U.S. Gurung | 5 AR | 1959 |
| 54037 | Nk | Surbir Thapa | 5 AR | 1959 |
| IC-8630 | Major | D.N. Kanwar Pal | 5 AR | 1963 |
| IC-3824 | Maj | D.H. D'Cruz | 6 AR | 1953 |
| 61074 | Jemadar | Dam Bahadur Rana | 6 AR | 1961 |
| EC-55333 | Captain | S.R. Kesori | 6 AR | 1969 |
| IC-21004 | Captain | D.P. Mathur | 6 AR | 1969 |
| IC-9755 | Captain | Harbans Singh | 7 AR | 1959 |
| 80029 | Jemadar | Dal Bahadur Thapa (Posth) | 8 AR | 1961 |

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|-----------------|-------|------|
| 90919 | L/Nk | Amar Singh Rana | 9 AR | 1959 |
| 27152 | Subedar | Chalhuna Lushai | 18 AR | 1968 |
| 190062 | Subedar | Kalyan Singh | 19 AR | 1975 |

Ati Vishist Seva Medal

| | | | | |
|----------|------|---------------------------|-----------------|------|
| 264 AI | Brig | Ajit Singh Guraya | IGAR | 1962 |
| IC-6983W | Brig | N.S. Surrey | NL Range (N) | 1978 |
| IC-3978A | Col | Raj Raj Chatterjee (Retd) | DGAR | 1981 |
| IC-6111N | Brig | K.D. Issar | NL Range (S) | 1982 |

Vir Chakra

| | | | | |
|---------|---------|-------------------------|-------|------|
| 26460 | Subedar | Jagandhoj Limbu | 2 AR | 1962 |
| 29659 | Rfn | Purna Bahadur Tamang | 2 AR | 1962 |
| IC-3174 | Major | Pandharinath Anant Rege | 11 AR | 1962 |
| 111604 | L/Nk | Hasta Bahadur Gurung | 11 AR | 1962 |
| 112293 | Rfn | Bajiram Thapa | 11 AR | 1962 |

Shaurya Chakra

| | | | | |
|-----------|---------|----------------------------|------|------|
| 15677 | Nk | Ganga Prasad Thapa | 1 AR | 1955 |
| 16562 | Rfn | Purna Bahadur Rana | 1 AR | 1955 |
| 16662 | Rfn | Jogeswar Konwar | 1 AR | 1955 |
| 16027 | Nk | Dile Rai | 1 AR | 1961 |
| 14511 | Subedar | Amar Bahadur Rana | 1 AR | 1966 |
| 17551 | Rfn | Harka Bahadur Damai | 1 AR | 1966 |
| 17963 | Rfn | Bir Bahadur Gurung | 1 AR | 1966 |
| 15564 | Jemadar | Babudhan Gurung | 1 AR | 1966 |
| 15563 | Hav | Harka Bahadur Thapa | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 16930 | Nk | Urbadutt Chhettri | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 18045 | Rfn | Nomal Chandra Koch (Posth) | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 17363 | Rfn | Bhuwa Thapa (Posth) | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 18578 | Rfn | Pash Bahadur Gurung | 1 AR | 1972 |
| 31334 | Subedar | Damar Bahadur Thapa | 3 AR | 1959 |
| 32116 | Hav | Merin Ao | 3 AR | 1959 |
| 32746 | L/Nk | Nar Bahadur Chhettri | 3 AR | 1959 |
| 33382 | Rfn | Lok Bahadur Tamang | 3 AR | 1959 |
| 33537 | Rfn | Saligram Rana | 3 AR | 1959 |
| 45420 | Rfn | Til Bahadur Thapa (Posth) | 4 AR | 1951 |
| 44302 | Jemadar | Man Bahadur Pun | 4 AR | 1960 |
| 44161 | Jemadar | Purna Bahadur Gurung | 4 AR | 1960 |
| 46954 | Nk | Phurenji Sherpa | 4 AR | 1960 |
| 45733 | Rfn | Yamkhulun Kuki | 4 AR | 1960 |
| IC-30176A | Capt | Raghuvinder Kapoor | 4 AR | 1981 |
| 50638 | Hav | Bil Bahadur Thapa | 5 AR | 1956 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| 50598 | Subedar | D.B. Gurung | 5 AR | 1959 |
| 61387 | Hav | Nanda Bahadur Sahi | 6 AR | 1960 |
| 62225 | Hav | Ram Prasad Limbu | 6 AR | 1961 |
| 62552 | L/Nk | Rasal Singh Sen | 6 AR | 1961 |
| 63008 | Nk | Tara Dutt Jaishi | 6 AR | 1961 |
| EC-51767 | Captain | Diwan Chand | 6 AR | 1967 |
| 62506 | Nk | Tek Bahadur Mall | 6 AR | 1967 |
| 62188 | Rfn | Jagat Bahadur Chhetri | 6 AR | 1969 |
| 64245 | Nk | Bhim Prasad Jaishi | 6 AR | 1969 |
| 61395 | Subedar | Indra Singh Gurung | 6 AR | 1975 |
| 70477 | Rfn | Tek Bahadur Thapa | 7 AR | 1953 |
| IC-2558 | Lt Col | J.D. Nadirshaw | 8 AR | 1957 |
| IC-2791 | Major | Balwant Singh | 8 AR | 1960 |
| 80074 | Hav | Gopal Sing Gurung | 8 AR | 1960 |
| IC-938 | Lt Col | R.J. Solomon | 8 AR | 1961 |
| 81419 | Rfn | Kehar Singh Damai | 8 AR | 1961 |
| 90496 | Hav | Passang Tamang | 9 AR | 1961 |
| 102447 | L/Nk | Ganesh Bahadur Rai | 10 AR | 1976 |
| IC-11327 | Captain | Bhola Nath | 12 AR | 1962 |
| 503078 | Hav | Nar Bahadur Gurung | 12 AR | 1962 |
| 132756 | L/Nk | D.B. Thakuri | 13 AR | 1975 |
| 132979 | Rfn | Damar Bahadur | 13 AR | 1982 |
| JC-130106 | Subedar | D.S. Kandari | 13 AR | 1982 |
| 50670 | Jemadar | Bhim Bahadur Gurung | 14 AR | 1960 |
| 141222 | L/Nk | Alby D'Cruz | 14 AR | 1960 |
| 140096 | L/Nk | Kalu Rai (Posth) | 14 AR | 1960 |
| 141252 | Rfn | Bevela Lushai | 14 AR | 1960 |
| 140068 | Nk | Atra Bahadur Rai | 14 AR | 1960 |
| 140026 | Jemadar | Damar Bahadur Limbu | 14 AR | 1965 |
| 141450 | Subedar | Randhir Singh | 14 AR | 1974 |
| 140285 | Jemadar | Ram Prasad Badoni (Posth) | 14 AR | 1976 |
| 9402712 | L/Nk | Sal Bahadur | 15 AR | 1962 |
| 2371 | Spr | Tilak Mani Pathak | 15 AR | 1962 |
| 151416 | Rfn | Khim Singh | 15 AR | 1963 |
| 150816 | Rfn | Surbir Tamang | 15 AR | 1963 |
| JC-17705 | Subedar | Neki Ram (Rajput) | 15 AR | 1964 |
| IC-30858L | Captain | Harsh Kaul | 16 AR | 1981 |
| 180034 | Subedar | Prem Bahadur Rai | 18 AR | 1970 |
| 181883 | L/Nk | Karna Bahadur Gurung | 18 AR | 1975 |
| — | Asst Comdt | R.N. Sharma | 18 AR | 1976 |
| 182113 | L/NK | Liangaia Lushai | 18 AR | 1976 |
| 181558 | Rfn | Tasok Gusar | 18 AR | 1979 |
| 191514 | Nk | Arabinda Home Choudhury | 19 AR | 1968 |
| JC-190567 | Subedar | Pemba Lama | 19 AR | 1975 |
| JC-191025 | Nb/Sube- dar | Nyalu Rengma | 19 AR | 1975 |
| 2001059 | Rfn | Amar Bahadur Gurung | 20 AR | 1976 |

Sena Medal

| | | | | |
|----------|------------|------------------------|-------|------|
| 18104 | L/Nk | Yam Bahadur Chhetri | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 16021 | L/Nk | Budhiman Sarki | 1 AR | 1968 |
| 18079 | Rfn | Dhan Bahadur Chhetri | 1 AR | 1968 |
| — | Asst Comdt | Durga Bahadur Rai | 1 AR | 1969 |
| 16885 | Nk | Khim Bahadur Gurung | 1 AR | 1970 |
| JC-16400 | Jem | Liansiama Lushai | 1 AR | 1972 |
| 18406 | L/Nk | Tej Bahadur Rana | 1 AR | 1977 |
| 18435 | L/Nk | Kharka Bahadur Gurung | 1 AR | 1977 |
| IC-30011 | Capt | A.S. Negi | 2 AR | 1981 |
| 45388 | Sub | Chhabilal Rai | 4 AR | 1972 |
| 46807 | Rfn | Kulman Limbu | 4 AR | 1972 |
| 47395 | L/Nk | Harka Bahadur Rai | 4 AR | 1965 |
| 47414 | Hav | Jasbir Sarki | 4 AR | 1981 |
| 54417 | Hav | Bishan Singh Chhetri | 5 AR | 1962 |
| 54424 | Nk | Budhiman Thapa | 5 AR | 1962 |
| 61785 | Sub | Mani Kumar Rai | 6 AR | 1970 |
| 61023 | Sub | Jash Bahadur Lama | 6 AR | 1971 |
| JC-63939 | Jem | Bindhoj Limbu | 6 AR | 1975 |
| — | Asst Comdt | M.K. Singha | 6 AR | 1975 |
| JC-61352 | Sub | S.K. Lushai | 6 AR | 1977 |
| JC-62253 | Nb/Sub | Gopl Lal Limbu | 6 AR | 1981 |
| IC-8859 | Major | Sumer Singh | 7 AR | 1964 |
| 71982 | Nk | Nare Bora | 7 AR | 1967 |
| 73025 | Nk | Chandra Bahadur Rai | 7 AR | 1982 |
| 72877 | L/Nk | Jagat Bahadur Tamang | 7 AR | 1982 |
| 80031 | Sub | Tek Bahadur Gurung | 8 AR | 1971 |
| — | Dy Comdt | Uttam Padera | 10 AR | 1975 |
| IC-7233 | Lt Col | Niranjan Singh | 12 AR | 1970 |
| 131012 | Nk | K.K. Kuki | 13 AR | 1975 |
| IC-8088 | Major | Jai Singh | 14 AR | 1964 |
| 91006 | Sub | Harka Bahadur Limbu | 14 AR | 1964 |
| — | Asst Comdt | O.P. Kalra | 14 AR | 1972 |
| 142001 | Rfn | Pukh Bahadur | 14 AR | 1975 |
| 142096 | L/Nk | Mahabir Prasad | 14 AR | 1975 |
| 150697 | L/Nk | Kharka Bahadur Chhetri | 15 AR | 1975 |
| 150624 | Nk | Tham Bahadur Pun | 15 AR | 1982 |
| 30458 | Jem | Chitra Bahadur Gurung | 18 AR | 1968 |
| 181991 | Rfn | Ngurkhuma Lushai | 18 AR | 1968 |
| IC-21693 | Major | R.S. Tomar | 18 AR | 1979 |

Vishist Seva Medal

| | | | | |
|-----------|------------|-----------------------|-------|------|
| — | Asst Comdt | Durga Bahadur Rai | 1 AR | 1966 |
| IC-4577 | Lt Col | P.N. Anand | 1 AR | 1969 |
| JC-14031 | Sub Maj | Ishori Dutt Chhetri | 1 AR | 1969 |
| IC-5441 | Lt Col | S.N. Dar | 1 AR | 1969 |
| — | Asst Comdt | Murli Chand | 1 AR | 1971 |
| IC-14039X | Lt Col | Krishan Pal | 1 AR | 1982 |
| IC-13988 | Lt Col | Tapan Roye | 4 AR | 1981 |
| JC-45388 | Sub Maj | Chhabi Lal Rai, SM | 4 AR | 1981 |
| IC-6357 | Lt Col | R.P. Gautam | 6 AR | 1967 |
| IC-4108 | Lt Col | R.R. Singh | 6 AR | 1970 |
| IC-9438 | Lt Col | P.K. Nair | 6 AR | 1977 |
| JC-71194 | Nb/Sub | Krishna Singh Chhetri | 7 AR | 1981 |
| IC-13975 | Lt Col | Kuldip Singh | 8 AR | 1981 |
| IC-7915P | Lt Col | R.L. Sharma | 12 AR | 1977 |
| IC-29756 | Capt | R.P.S. Gill | 13 AR | 1977 |
| IC-12337 | Lt Col | Baldev Singh | 13 AR | 1979 |
| IC-4857 | Lt Col | P.D. Vala | 15 AR | 1972 |
| IC-8495M | Lt Col | V.N. Channa | 15 AR | 1975 |
| — | Asst Comdt | R.B. Chhetri | 16 AR | 1966 |
| — | Asst Comdt | H.B. Limbu | 16 AR | 1966 |
| IC-12091F | Lt Col | S.C. Nagarkar (Posth) | 16 AR | 1981 |
| IC-12631K | Lt Col | J.S. Ahluwalia | 16 AR | 1982 |
| — | Dy Comdt | Narbu Sherpa | 17 AR | 1981 |
| IC-3509 | Lt Col | R.B.J. Snaize | 18 AR | 1971 |
| IC-7036 | Lt Col | M.S. Behl | 19 AR | 1976 |
| IC-13837Y | Lt Col | George Francis | 19 AR | 1982 |

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT POLICY 1835-1982

At the time of the raising of the earlier militia bodies such as the Cachar Levy, the Kuki Levy, the Jorhat Militia and the Surma Valley Frontier Police, there was no hard and fast recruitment policy. Local inhabitants, tribal and non-tribal, were enrolled on a basis of availability and selection. Gradually, as the various units evolved into a Military Police and came to be officered by military instead of police officers, recruitment became standardised.

In the days of Capt Butler (1850) in-take was confined mainly to Nepalis, Cacharis and Shans. Some years later, Jaruas from Assam were tried out and, having proved their worth, freely enrolled. In 1865 a Recruiting Depot was opened at Sylhet which functioned for 10-12 years before it was found unnecessary and closed down. Thereafter, each battalion collected its own recruits as best as it could.

At a later date an attempt was made to recruit Mohamedans, Sikhs, Punjabis and Dogras. Only the Dogras proved a success and were thereafter freely enlisted. The Naga Hills Military Police (by then designated 3 A.R.) had two companies of Dogras right upto 1905, after which date they were reduced to one company and finally given up altogether because during the 1914-1918 War recruitment was confined to the province of Assam.

In about 1887 Government of India prohibited the enlistment of Magar and Gurung Gorkhas from Nepal as it interfered with the recruitment for the Army's Gorkha Regiments. Thereafter more Cacharis and Jaruas were enrolled and also local tribals—Nagas, Kukis and Lushais—but without much success. The situation was relieved in 1891 when Government of India gave sanction for the enrolment of Kiranti Nepalis of Eastern Nepal—Rais, Limbus and Moorims. A Recruiting

Depot for this purpose was first opened at Purneah, later shifted to Darjeeling.

By about 1900 the class composition for the battalions was fixed as follows: four companies of Nepalis, three of Jaruas, one of Cacharis and a few local tribesmen. This remained the policy till well after Independence. It is only after the outbreak of the insurgency in Nagaland in the late 'fifties, that there was sudden and large expansion of the Force, and Kumaonis and Garhwalis were enlisted. They proved a success and are enrolled even today in large numbers.

A major innovation took place after the Himmatsinhji Report of 1950. This mainly affected specialists such as Signals, Hospital and M.T. personnel. These being technical trades and requiring higher educational qualifications, Gorkhas could not be found in adequate numbers. Hence, most of the trades—radio operators, radio mechanics, pharmacists, laboratory assistants, compounders and fitters—were filled by recruitment from Kerala and Bengal. This system continues till today.

When the Government of India issued general orders that recruitment would be on an all-India basis and certain quotas would be fixed for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, HQ D.G.A.R. did not pay much heed to it because it was presumed that these orders were for police and other civil recruitment and not for combatants. It was assumed that the Assam Rifles would be covered under the term "Defence Forces", as virtually all the battalions were by then serving under operational control of the Army and its personnel were placed under the Army Act. Furthermore, not only were the officers seconded from the regular Army, the A.R. itself was patterned almost wholly on Army lines, all its battalions being affiliated to regiments of the Army. In fact, for all purposes the Assam Rifles resembled a "mini-army". Little wonder that no concrete efforts were made to comply with the Government's new recruiting policy. Besides, it was proved from past experience and historical data that only hill tribes answered well to the call of service in the tribal areas of the north-east, where geographical conditions and the pattern of life resembled conditions obtaining in their part of the country—Nepal, Kumaon, Garhwal.

In 1982 the class composition of General Duty personnel in the Force was as under:

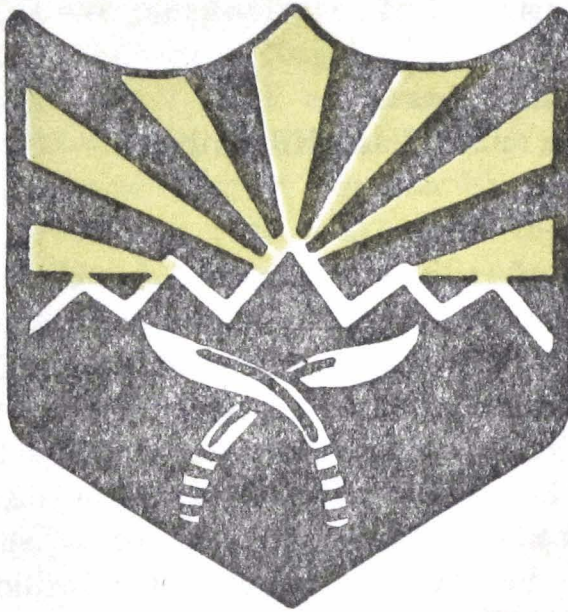
| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Gorkhas and other Nepalis | — 42.44% |
| Garhwalis | — 14.50% |
| Kumaonis | — 13.94% |
| Dogras | — 04.44% |
| Local Hill Tribes | — 15.36% |
| All India mixed Class (Hill Tribals) | — 01.90% |
| Assamese | — 07.42% |

Government of India has now ruled that class composition in any form would be unconstitutional and has quoted Article 16(1) and Sub-Article (2) of the Constitution in support, opining that recruitment based purely on race, descent, place of birth or residence was unconstitutional. "Equal Opportunities to All" is the policy. The Government has also ruled that 15% of Scheduled Castes and 7½% of Scheduled Tribes would have to be recruited, whereas the position as regards these classes in 1980 was:

| | <i>Scheduled Castes</i> | <i>Scheduled Tribes</i> |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Combatant Officers | Nil | 0.72% |
| Civil Officers | 4% | 8% |
| J.C.O.s including civil equivalents | 3.7% | 2% |
| Other ranks | 5.5% | 8% |
| Scavengers | 75% | 25% |

The new policy of recruiting members from the backward sections of society to accord with the Government's policy of offering "Equal Opportunities to All" has just started being implemented (1983). There are some doubts as to who would be qualified under the word "tribes". Perhaps the Nepalis of north-east India who migrated to India mainly to escape their poverty-stricken existence in the hills of Nepal would be counted in: it is too early to tell. What is certain is that, as in many other aspects, in the matter of recruitment also, the Assam Rifles face the future with a degree of uncertainty.

ASSAM RIFLES CREST



depicting: sunrise over the Himalayan snowline; crossed *khukris* of the Assam Rifles; five mountain peaks representing the original HQs—I.G.A.R. and the four Range HQs. The sun's seven rays correspond to the seven states and territories in which the Force operated: Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal, Mizo Hills, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim.

ASSAM RIFLES MARCHING SONG

“*POORAB KA RAKSHAK*”

Ham Parbhat ki Nutan Kirne,
Ranthal par gambhir chale,
Assam Rifles Sainik ke nate
Rakshak hai ham purab ke,
Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai.

Kasam hai Ganga maiya ki
Ham desh ke rakhwale hai,
Bharat ke har kone se,
Assam Rifles ke sainik hai,
Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai.

Vishwa premhit, shanti, ahinsa,
Gandhi ne sikhlaiye hai,
Kabhinna apna shis jhukana,
Kabhinna aan gawani hai,
Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai.

Desh ki raksha dharam hamara,
Biro ne sikhlaya hai,
Shatru damankar maa ka gaurav
Hamne nitya badhaya hai,
Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai, Ham ek hai.

INDEX

- Abbay, Col 77
Abors 11, 27, 28, 29, 40, 41
Achingmori 197, 198, 200, 202, 203, 204
Aghuneto 207, 209, 210
Ahoms 18, 19
Aishan Kukis 49
Aizawl 33, 34, 36, 53, 98, 253, 254, 264, 308
Akas 27, 28
Akbar Hydari, Sir 170, 171, 178, 215
Alexander 77
Allen, Geoffrey 195
Angami, Lhuvicha 302
Angami, Mowu 302
Angami, Phizo 214, 215, 216, 218, 256, 300
Angami, Rfn Lule 136, 137
Angami, T.N. 300
Angami Nagas 23, 27
Ao, Sub 246
Ao, Imkongmeren 218
Ao, Shilu 248
Applegate, Maj W.F. 172
XIV Army 118, 119, 122, 133, 145, 149, 151, 156, 157, 161
Arunachal 293-294
Assam 292, 293
1 Assam Light Infantry 23, 28
2 Assam Light Infantry 28
Assam Military Police 30, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59
Assam Regiment 100, 103, 144, 147, 148, 165, 168, 176
Assam Rifles
1st Battalion 25, 33-39, 58, 59, 61, 67, 74, 78, 86, 87, 90, 91, 93, 98, 99, 100, 101, 113, 115, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 124, 130, 131, 145, 146, 151, 152, 168, 169, 170, 177, 179, 186, 208, 222, 229, 259, 260, 263, 266, 284, 293, 297
2nd Battation 29, 39-43, 59, 60, 61, 65, 74, 76, 87, 93, 96, 100, 103, 104, 106, 113, 131, 133, 134, 135, 138, 149, 150, 151, 169, 170, 175, 177, 181, 184, 186, 187, 190, 208, 229, 234, 244, 245, 246, 247, 274, 281, 284, 289, 293, 294
3rd Battalion 25, 43-50, 59, 60, 61, 67, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80, 87, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 100, 102, 103, 106, 113, 131, 135, 136, 137, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 151, 152, 154, 156, 168, 169, 172, 174, 175, 177, 178, 185, 190, 207, 208, 209, 222, 224, 248, 280, 284, 293, 294, 299, 302, 303
4th Battalion 26, 53-54, 59, 60, 61, 65, 74, 82, 86, 87, 91, 94, 98, 100, 101, 102, 106, 108, 110, 113, 131, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 151, 152, 153, 154, 168, 169, 170, 172, 175, 176, 177, 178, 185, 187, 190, 208, 219, 224, 225, 284, 293, 296, 297, 299, 303
5th Battalion 84-85, 87, 93, 100-101, 103, 135, 169, 173, 176, 177, 184, 186, 187, 190, 193, 201, 208, 232, 234, 241, 284, 293, 294
6th Battalion 113, 186-187, 208,

- 220, 222, 223, 239, 251, 266,
 267, 271, 284, 293, 297, 306,
 307
 7th Battalion 198, 199, 201, 220,
 222, 229, 234, 235, 236, 244,
 246, 249, 284, 293, 294
 8th Battalion 220, 222, 226, 248,
 284, 293, 294, 299, 301, 303
 9th Battalion 219, 220, 221, 222,
 234, 284, 293, 294
 10th Battalion 220, 223, 248, 283,
 293, 294, 299, 301, 303
 11th Battalion 220, 229, 234, 244,
 283, 293, 294
 12th Battalion 220, 223, 248, 284,
 293, 294, 299, 303
 13th Battalion 220, 248, 284, 293,
 294, 299, 303
 14th Battalion 220, 224, 248, 283,
 293, 294, 299, 302
 15th Battalion 220, 248, 283, 293,
 294, 299, 301, 302
 16th Battalion 220, 248, 280, 284,
 293, 294, 299, 303
 17th Battalion 234, 250, 251, 252,
 283, 293, 297
 18th Battalion 250, 258, 259, 266,
 268, 284, 293, 297, 308
 19th Battalion 250, 266, 268, 270,
 284, 293, 297, 308
 20th Battalion 276, 284, 293, 296,
 297, 302
 21st Battalion 276, 284, 293, 294,
 296, 297, 302
 jungle training 99, 100
 Study Group 275-280
 Training Centre 290
- Bajwa, Capt G.S. 252
 Baladhan 76
 Balipara 101
 Bangmual 74
 Bartley, H.G. 78, 172
 Barua 199
 Batra, Brig R.N. 177
 Bawkwa 77
 Bhagwati Singh, Brig K. 199
 Bhandari, Maj Gen K.K. 263
 Bhatia, Lieut 201
 Bhawani Singh, Sub 75
 Bhutanese 27-28
 3 Bihar 211, 262, 265
 Binnie, Capt 170
 Blake, Capt 24
 Bliss, Maj 54
 Bopungwemi 92
 Bor, Eleanor 96
 Border Roads Organisation 238
 Border Security Force (B.S.F.) 259,
 262, 268, 269, 316
 Bowen, Maj 153, 154, 155, 156, 157,
 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164
 Bowers, Gen 41
 Bowman, Capt 116
 Brampton, Lieut 133
 Briggs, Gen 123
 23 British Brigade 149
 2nd British Division 155
 36th British Division 155
 Broome, Capt 77
 Bruce 21
 Brown, Maj W.F. 96, 97
 Bura, Maj D.B. 222
 Burma 151-164, 214
 1st Burma Division 108
 Burma refugees 102-104
 Butler, Capt 24, 25, 43, 44, 56
- Cabinet Mission 215
 Cachar Levy 21-25, 56, 230, 273, 313
 Cacharis 19
 Cameron, Lieut S.G. 125
 Campbell, Brig Gen Sir Archibald 20
 Caroe, Sir Olaf 165, 166
 Carter, Lieut 75
 Cease-Fire Agreement 228
 Central Reserve Police (C.R.P.) 249
 Chaukan Pass 234-237
 "Chakka forts" 45, 46
 Chaliha, B.P. 227, 248, 258, 259, 305
 Champhai 116
 Chassadh 72, 73, 74
 Chengri 35
 Chhettri, Jem Bhim Sing 116

- Chhettri, Jem Deb Sing 116, (Sub)
 122
 Chhettri, Rfn Kharka Bahadur 138
 Chhettri, Jem Kul Bahadur 116
 Chhettri, L/Nk Man Bahadur 159,
 161
 Chhettri, Jem Ratan Sing 116
 Chhettri, Jem Uttam Singh 148,
 (Sub Maj) 186
 Chhunga 310, 312
 Chiman Singh, Lt Gen 291
 Chin Hills 61, 66, 67
 Chin Lian, Hav 159
 China 96, 97, 135, 189, 192, 193, 214,
 317
 Chiang Kai-Shek 97, 133, 193
 Chindwin Valley 72
 Chinese aggression of 1962 231-250,
 275, 276, 282
 Chingmei 94
 Chourojit Singh 187
 Chowdhury, Nk Arabinda Home 271
 Cloete, Capt 66, (Maj) 72, 73
 Clow, Sir Andrew 255
 Cole (Mrs) 62, 63
 Cole, H.W.G. 62
 Collett, Gen 48
 Commissariat, Col M.D. ("Joe")
 287, 310
 Communist uprising 185-187
 Coote, Capt 62, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70,
 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 81
 Copeland, Capt 76
 IV Corps 105, 108, 110, 111, 112,
 115, 119, 120, 127, 129, 131, 138,
 139, 140, 142, 143, 145, 152, 153,
 156, 157, 247
 XV Corps 111, 112, 113, 115
 XXXIII Corps 119, 120, 127, 145,
 152, 237, 247
 Cuerdon, Lt Col 111

 Dalai Lama 232, 233
 Daletme 117, 118
 Daling 28
 Daly 35, 36
 Damai, Rfn Harka Bahadur 263
 Damant 44
 Daphla 78
 Daphlas 27, 28, 59
 Desai, Morarji 311
 Dewangiri 28
 Dharram Sing, Hav 104, 105
 Dhola 241
 Diwan Chand, Capt 271, 306, 307
 Dogras 32
 Dulin 74
 Dunbar, Capt Sir G. Sutherland 41
 Dyer, Gen 85

 28th East African Brigade 127, 130
 11th East African Division 126, 127
 East Pakistan 214
 Eden Memorandum 97
 Elwin, Verrier 175, 206, 236
 Enjakoop 80, 81
 Ex-servicemen 291

 Falkland, Capt 67, 76, 77
 French-Mullen, Col 74
 Fisher, Col 42
 Force 136 152, 157-164
 Fort Hertz 134, 135
 Fort Tregear 36, 53
 Fort White 126
 Fouquet, Maj 24
 Fraser-Smith, Capt 153
 Frontier Police of Bengal 33
 Fuhrer-Haimendorf, von 94, 213

 "Rani" Gaidinliu 90-92
 Gandhi, Indira 292, 298, 310
 Gandhi, Mahatma 85
 Gangaw 126-130
 39 Garhwalis 38
 Garos 26
 Gebbart, Maj J. 151 (see also Bowen)
 Gerty, Maj B.C.H. 95
 Ghoom 94
 Gill, Sqd Leader H.S. 201
 Gillett 155
 Gnulbul 77
 Godfrey, Lieut 137, 138
 Goodall, Capt 60, 75, 78, (Maj) 87

- Gorkha Brigade 100
 2 "Goorkhas" 34
 4 "Goorkhas" 34
 6 Gorkhas 21
 8 Gorkhas 21
 2/2 G.R. 55, 63, 78, 99
 2/7 G.R. 55
 2/8 G.R. 244
 2/11 G.R. 262, 265
 4/5 Gorkha Rifles 149
 4/8 Gorkha Rifles 222
 Grange 21, 22, 23
 Grantham, Capt 72
 Gregorson 42
 4 Grenadiers 242
 3 Guards 240
 Gundevia, Y.D. 206, 227, 228, 298,
 299
 Gupta, Capt B. 181
 Gupta, Maj U.K. 201
 Guraya, Maj Gen Ajit Singh 235,
 237
 Gurdev Singh, Lt Col 261
 Gurung, Jem Amarbahadur 135
 Gurung, Hav Ast Bahadur 138
 Gurung, Jem Bakhatman 55
 Gurung, Sub Balbahadur 94, (Sub
 Maj) 131, 174
 Gurung, Jem Bharatram 133
 Gurung, Sub Bhotu 95
 Gurung, Rfn Bir Bahadur 264
 Gurung, Sub Bom Bahadur 139,
 (Hav) 159
 Gurung, Jem Chandrabahadur 134
 Gurung, Sub Dal Bahadur 249
 Gurung, Nk Dhansuha 136
 Gurung, Hav Iman Sing 103
 Gurung, Nk Kalu 143
 Gurung, Sub Kharka Bahadur 181
 Gurung, Hav Krishna Bahadur 251
 Gurung, Jem Lachhuman 116
 Gurung, Sub Laxman 117
 Gurung, Sub Nandabir 133
 Gurung, Rfn Tilbahadur 187
 Gusar 199
 Hackett, Maj 74, 75
 Haka 37, 67
 Hall, Capt 36
 Halliday, Capt 65, 68
 Halliday, Lieut J.S. 123, 124
 Hangrung 76
 Hannay, Col 28
 Haswell, Lt Col 111
 Hayter, Lt Col J. 157
 Hazari, Maj Gen M.G. 279
 Hazarika, Lt Col M.M. 186
 Hebbert, Capt 66, 67
 Hellem 60
 Hem Lal, Sub 242
 Henema 91, 92
 Higgins 68, 69, 71, 74, 91
 Himmatsinhji, Maj Gen 190
 Himmatsinhji Committee 189-192,
 314
 Homalin 102
 Hooper, Lieut 76, (Capt) 84
 Hutchins, Lieut P.P.P. 134
 Imphal 119, 140-144
 Indian Air Force (I.A.F.) 199, 200,
 203, 224, 235, 237, 262, 264
 Indian Infantry Brigade
 1st 105, 106
 5th 244, 245
 7th 240, 241, 243
 8th 265
 11th 237, 245, 247
 61st 251, 309
 73rd 309
 109th 113
 116th 138, 145
 123rd 123, 124
 161st 123, 124, 125
 181st 229, 239
 98 Indian Infantry Company 118
 Indian Infantry Division
 4th 233, 234, 237, 240, 241, 242,
 244
 5th 120, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127,
 144, 145
 7th 127, 130
 14th 113, 116
 17th 102, 108, 142

- 19th 152, 154, 155, 156, 157
 20th 142, 144
 23rd 108, 109, 110, 113, 237, 247
 26th 117
 39th 108
 Indian National Congress 59, 85, 86
 Indo-Pak War of 1965 250-52
 Irwin, Gen 108
 Isak Swu 300

 Jadong 90, 91
 Jaiprakash Narayan 228, 248
 Jairamdas Daulatram 183, 198, 201
 Jallianwala Bagh 85
 Jamaludin, Sub Maj 88
 James 170
 Jampi 73, 76, 80
 Japanese invasion 101-164
 Jaruas 32
 Jesudas, Capt 271
 Johnstone, Maj 44, 45
 Jones, Lieut 122
 Jorhat Militia 22, 29
 Jotsoma 301
 Jowai 26

 Kabui 90, 91
 Kairon 74
 Kaito Sukhai 300
 Kalemyo 119, 120
 Kalinga Airlines 235
 Kaman Singh, Lt Col 201
 Kameng Sector 240-244
 Kamjong 75
 Kamrup 185
 Kan 127
 Kanpopki 74
 Kanwarpal, Capt D.N. 249
 Karenni 151, 157-164
 Keary, Maj Gen Sir H. 79, 80, 81
 Keene, Maj G.A.E. 103, 135, (Lt Col) 131, 146
 Kekrima 25
 Kennedy, Capt W.M. 47
 Kerami 75
 Kharga Sing, Jem 71
 Khathing, Maj R. ("Bob") 181, 193, 194, 195, 281

 Khekiye 209
 Khengoi 71, 72
 Khenzeman 232, 233, 241, 242
 Khilafat Movement 85
 Khonoma 24, 44, 45, 46
 Kipamedza 49
 Kiranti Nepalis 56
 Kitchener, Lord 52
 Koba, Gen 163
 Kochar, Maj Gen R.K. 212
 Kochs 19
 Kohima 44, 144-150
 Kohima Brigade 112
 Kongyu 102
 Kuki, Rfn Jamosin 137
 Kuki Levy 25, 29, 34
 Kuki rebellion 57, 59, 61-82
 Kukis 18, 23, 33, 34
 Kulwant Singh, Maj Gen 190
 6 Kumaon 246
 Kunraghat 93

 Lachman Singh, Hav 306, 307
 Ladies' War Society of Rangoon 77
 Laibol 80
 Laitek 76
 Laldenga 253, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 263, 269, 310, 311, 312
 Lalnunmaiwa 258, 259, 261
 Lama, Sub Bure 116, 122
 Lama, Hav Foo 95
 Lama, Sub Maj Jangbir 88
 Lama, Sub T. 139, 140
 Lax, Capt 134
 Lenakot 70, 74
 "Levy" 21
 Lewis, Lieut 124
 Lhota 44
 Lianzuala, S. 259
 Lightfoot, Capt 96, 97, (Lt Col) 111, 135, 194, 195
 Limbu, Jem Chhabilal 133
 Limbu, Jem Dam Bahadur 235
 Limbu, Jem Desh Bahadur 182
 Limbu, Capt H.B. 182, 183, 194
 Limbu, Jem Jas Bahadur 123
 Limbu, Sub Jeharman 142

- Limbu, Sub Maj Kharka Bahadur 226
 Limbu, Jem Ratnabahadur 103, 104, (Sub) 133
 Limbu, Sub Maj Sukraj 109
 Loch, Capt 37, 38, 39
 Lokhra 84
 Longju 233
 Longya 68, 69, 70
 Lungleh 33
 Lushai, Rfn Lianthanga 123
 Lushai, Sub Pakunga 116
 Lushai Brigade 118-123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 152
 Lushai Hills Military Police Battalion 39
 Lushais 18, 27, 33, 34, 35

 Macdonald, Capt 92, 255
 Macintyre, Lieut 47, 48
 Mackrell 104, 105
 Macleod, Lieut 149
 Macquoid, Col 79, 80
 2 Madras 244
 Makware 49
 Mallah, L/Nk Tek Bahadur 271
 Maltby, Gen 166
 Manipur 37, 61, 67, 98, 108, 295-297
 Manipuris 48
 Manley 104, 105
 Manohar Singh, Lt Col 299
 Mao 48, 225
 Maphitel range 73
 Marathe, Capt D.S. 307, 308
 Marindin, Brig 118, 119, 128, 138
 Marwah, Lieut 262
 Mathew, Capt 55
 Matong 75
Mautam 256
 Maxwell, Lieut 40, (Capt) 41
 McCall 255
 McMahan, Sir Henry 96
 McMahan Line 96, 189, 192, 193, 198, 231, 233, 234, 241
 Mechuka 198, 202
 Medhi, Bishnu Ram 184
 Meghalaya 295

 Mehta, K.L. 196, 205
 Meitei revolt 296
 Messervy, Gen 129, 130
 Mills, J.P. 92, 94, 95, 214
 Minyong Abors 42
 Miris 18, 27, 28
 Mishmis 27, 29, 41
 "Mizo National Army" (M.N.A.) 259, 266, 268, 269, 271
 Mizo National Front (M.N.F.) 253, 258, 269, 270, 271, 305, 306, 307, 310, 311
 Mizo rebellion 253-272, 276
 Mizo Union 255, 256, 257, 305, 310, 311
 Mizoram 297, 305-313
 Mokochung 102
 Molesworth, Lieut 75, (Col) 41
 Mombi 68, 69, 70
 Monpas 27
 Montifiore, Capt 65, 67, 76, 77, 80
 Moplah rebellion 87
 Mouatt, Lieut Kay 72, 75
 61 Mountain Brigade 265, 266, 267, 268, 271
 8 Mountain Division 248, 303
 Mujibur Rehman, Sheikh 311
 Mukherjee, S. 311
 Murli Chand 263
 Murray, Capt 139, (Lt Col) 111
 Muslim League 172
 Mutaguchi, Lt Gen 140

 Naga Club 215
 "Naga Federal Government" 227
 Naga insurgency 207-230, 275, 276
 Naga National Council (N.N.C.) 215, 217, 218
 Naga National Organisation 303
 Nagaland 227, 294, 297-305
 Nagas 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 29, 49
 Nam Ka Chu 240, 241, 243
 Nampho Kuno 68
 Nanavathi, Maj 267
 Nation, Gen 45, 46
 Nationalist upsurge 85
 Nehru, B.K. 304

- Nehru, Jawaharlal 171, 174, 175,
 193, 204-206, 215, 217, 218, 227,
 228, 248
 Nepal 167
 Nevill, Capt 60
 Ngulbul 62
 Ngulkhup 62, 63, 81
 Niemi 75
 Ninu 39
 Niranjana Prasad, Maj Gen 242, 243
 Noble, Lt Col 281
 Nokhu 95
 Noklak 207
 North Assam Brigade 108, 112
 North East Frontier Agency
 (N.E.F.A.) 135, 173, 231-50
 North Eastern Council 280, 293
 North Vanlaiphai 116
 Nungoinu 70
 Nuthall, Brig Gen 39
 Nye, Maj A.R. 95

 O'Dwyer, Sir Michael 85
 Ogilvy, Capt 84
 Ord, Lt Col W.A. 117

 Pachei 75, 80, 81
 Pakistan 179, 180, 250-252
 Pakokku 127, 128
 Palel 65, 66
 Pangsha 94, 95, 207
 5 Para 262
 Parachute Regiment 201
 Parry, Lieut 74
 Parsons, Lt Col W.J. 116, 117
 Pascoe, Lieut E.A.C. 122, 123
 Patrick, Capt 72, 74, 75
 Pawsey, Charles 95, 146, (Sir) 214,
 300
 Peace Council 227, 228
 People's Conference 312
 Perowne, Brig 149
 Pethick-Lawrence, Lord 217
 Plowden, Capt 46, 47
 Police Commission 318, 319
 Porteous 48
 Pozey, Lt Col 111

 Prior, Lieut 75, (Capt) 81
 Punaka 27
 3/2 Punjab 125
 Puri, Lt Gen J.K. 284
 Purneah 56
 Purr 224

 Radcliffe 179
 Radhakrishnan, S. 227
 R.A.F. 160, 170
 Rai, Hav Aisore 123
 Rai, Sub Aswidhan 124, 125
 Rai, Sub Bindraman 137, 138
 Rai, Sub Durga Bahadur 187
 Rai, Sub Maj Hetman 89
 Rai, Sub Indra Lal 139
 Rai, Lt Col K.S. 201
 Rai, Sub Nakulman 139, 156
 Rai, Sub Ran Bahadur 249
 Rai, Lt Col Sidhiman 172, 173
 Rai, Sub Maj Sing Bahadur 149
 Rai, L/Nk Sukh Bahadur 103
 Rajbanshi, Rfn Gandharv 138
 Rajbanshi, Sub Tark Chandra 135
 17 Rajput 210
 Rana, Capt D.B. 179, 180
 Rana, Hav Lal Sing 125
 Rana, Hav Pahal Singh 181
 Ranking, Maj Gen 145
 Rattan Singh, Lt Col 241, 242
 Reid 24
 Rennick, Col 37, 40
 Richards, Col Hugh 144, 146
 Ridgeway, Lieut 45
 60th Rifles (British Army) 38
 Roberts, Col F. (later Field Marshal
 Lord Roberts) 34
 Roosevelt 97
 Roy, Maj D.K. 181
 Royal Air Force 160, 170
 Royal Indian Navy 100
 1/9 Royal Jat 125, 128
 Rupa 98
 Rutherford, Col 26

 Sadiya 101
 Sahi, Hav Kul Bahadur 117

- Sallo, Brig T. 254, 312
 Sakhai 211
 Sakhrie, T. 218
 Salechua 117
 Samguting 23, 25, 216
 Sanderson, Lieut 74, 75
 Sangma, Capt 294
 Sangram Sing, Sub 37
 Sato, Gen 142, 144
 Sawmvela 259
 Scoones, Lt Gen 142, 144
 Scott, Rev Michael 228, 248
 Scurfield, Lt Col G. 156
 Second Afghan War 45
 Sema, Yikuho 223
 Shakespear, Capt J. 37
 Shakespear, Col L.W. 58, 59, 61, 65,
 68, 71, 74, 76, 79, 290
 Shans 18
 Sharma, Maj H.R. 175, 183, (Lt Col)
 179
 Sharma, Sub Hari Lal 221
 Shastri, Lal Bahadur 298
 Shastry, Maj 263, 265
 Shillong Peace Accord 296, 304, 305
 Shishupal, Maj 236
 Shore, General Sir John 20
 Shuganu 66
 Sibsagar 90, 219
 Sidhu, Maj 264, 265
 1 Sikh 243, 244
 4 Sikh 246
 8 Sikh 265
 Sikkim 297
 Simla Convention of 1914 96, 97,
 189, 193
 Simon Commission 215
 Singh, Maj H.P. 241
 Singh, Maj J.B. 223
 Singh, L.P. 304
 Singh, Maj R.D. 198, 199
 Sirohi, Lieut I.S. 251
 Skinner, Col 36
 Slave trade 94
 Slim, Gen 118, 119, 127, 129, 131
 Solomon, Lt Col R.J. 222
 Som Bahadur, Hav 242
 Somra 76
 Stanley, Major N. 138, 144, (Lt Col)
 151, (Col) 152, 153, 154, 155, 156,
 161
 Steadman, Capt 66, 68, 69, 70, 77
 Stewart, Lieut 35, 37
 Stilwell, Gen 154
 Stopford, Lt Gen 119, 120
 Sultan, Gen Dan 129
 Sumer Singh, Maj 235, 236
 Sushil Kumar, Lt Gen 284, 289
 Sutherland, Capt 110
 Sylhet 56
 Symond, Gen 36, 37
 Syntengs 26

 Tamang, Capt M. 185
 Tamu 66, 72, 74, 81, 102
 Tegnoupal 74
 Thapa, Sub Amar Bahadur 263
 Thapa, Sub Basante 139
 Thapa, Hav Chandra Sing 37
 Thapa, Jem Dhan Bahadur 143
 Thapa, Jem Krishna Bahadur 123
 Thapa, Jem Lachhman 123
 Thapa, Hav Padam Bahadur 103
 Thapa, L/Nk Rabe 159
 Thapa, Nb Sub Shamsher Bahadur
 242
 Thapa, Jem Tilbikram 110
 Thingsulthiliah 116
 Third Burma War 34
 Third Pay Commission 280
 Tibet 189, 193, 194, 195, 231, 232
 Tiddim 119, 120, 122
 Tikendrajit Singh 48
 Tolbung 77
 Towang 96-98, 192-195
 Tregear, Brig Gen 35, 36, 37, 82
 Tripura 173, 297
 Tripura Rifles 115
 Tuensang 207, 208, 209, 212, 213
 Tukur, Lieut 75
 Tuli, Maj Gen V.B. 279
 Tura 26, 83
 Tyson, Geoffrey 104

- Ukha 95
 United Front 303
 Uniyal, Lieut M.D. 251, 252
 US Air Force 102

 "V" Force 106-112, 115, 116, 117,
 118, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128,
 130, 133, 134, 136, 137, 138, 139,
 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 151-
 164, 166, 314
 Vetch, Capt 28
 Vickers, Maj A. 59, 79
 Vijayanagar 236, 237
 Vincent, Capt 24, 25
 Vishwakarma, Nb Sub Lal Bahadur
 263
 Vitsoni 219

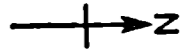
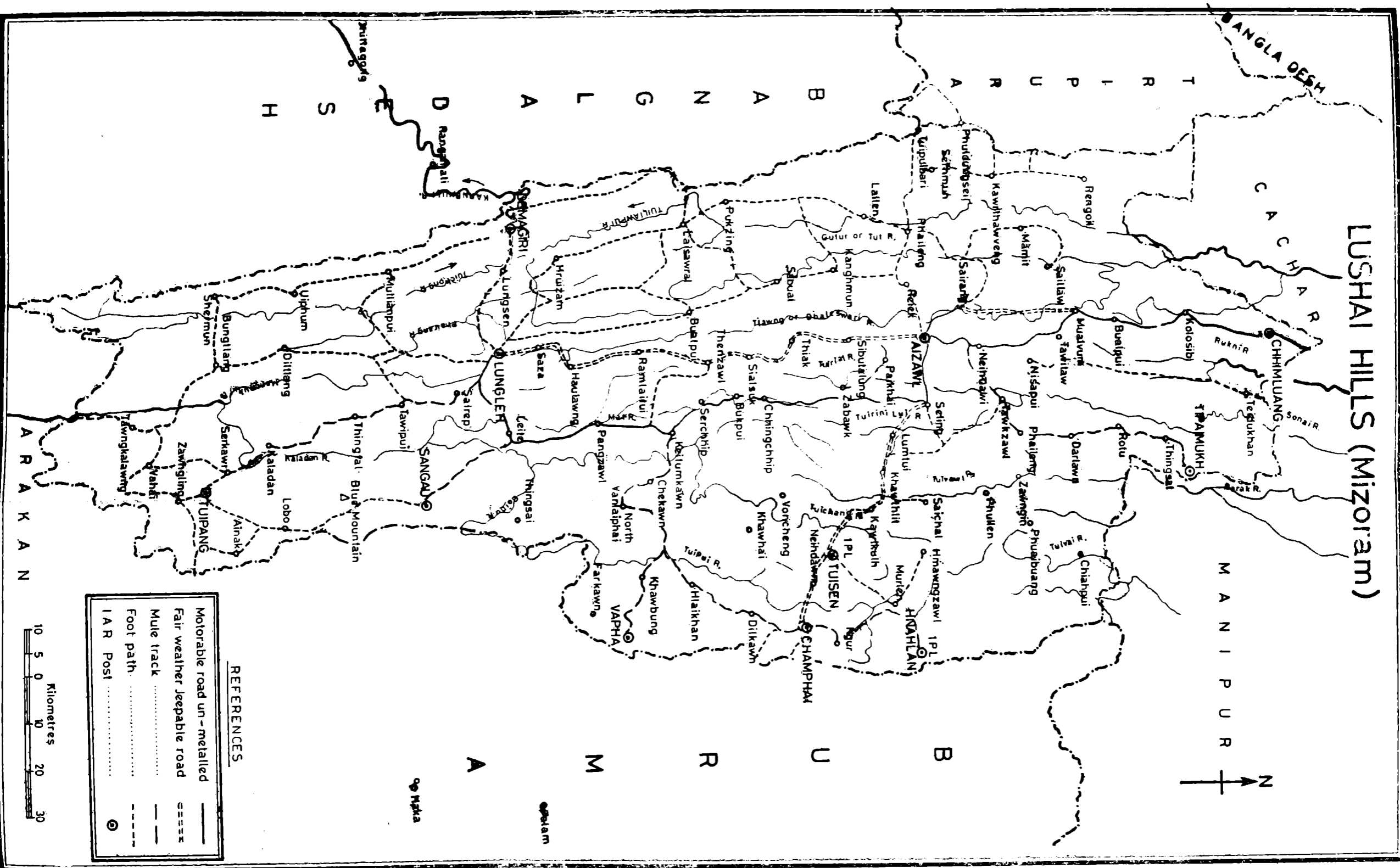
 Wakching 102
 Walker, Lieut 76
 Walong Sector 245-248
 Ward (Mrs) 182

 Ward, Kingdon 182
 Wavell, Gen 105, 106, 107, (Lord)
 217, 255
 Welsh, Capt 20
 West, Maj 135
 Williams, Brig Felix 107, 139
 Williams, Maj W.R.B. 94, 95
 Williamson, Noel 42
 Wilson, Capt 133
 Withok 72
 Wokha 44, 102
 Woods, Lieut 122
 World War I 32, 51-60, 273
 World War II 99-164, 274, 314
 Wright 77

 Yeshin 126
 Yokwa Chins 77

 Zairema, Rev 269
 Ziro 173, 174
 Zongling 90

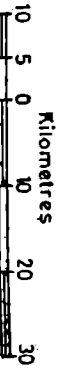
LUSHAI HILLS (Mizoram)



M A N I P U R

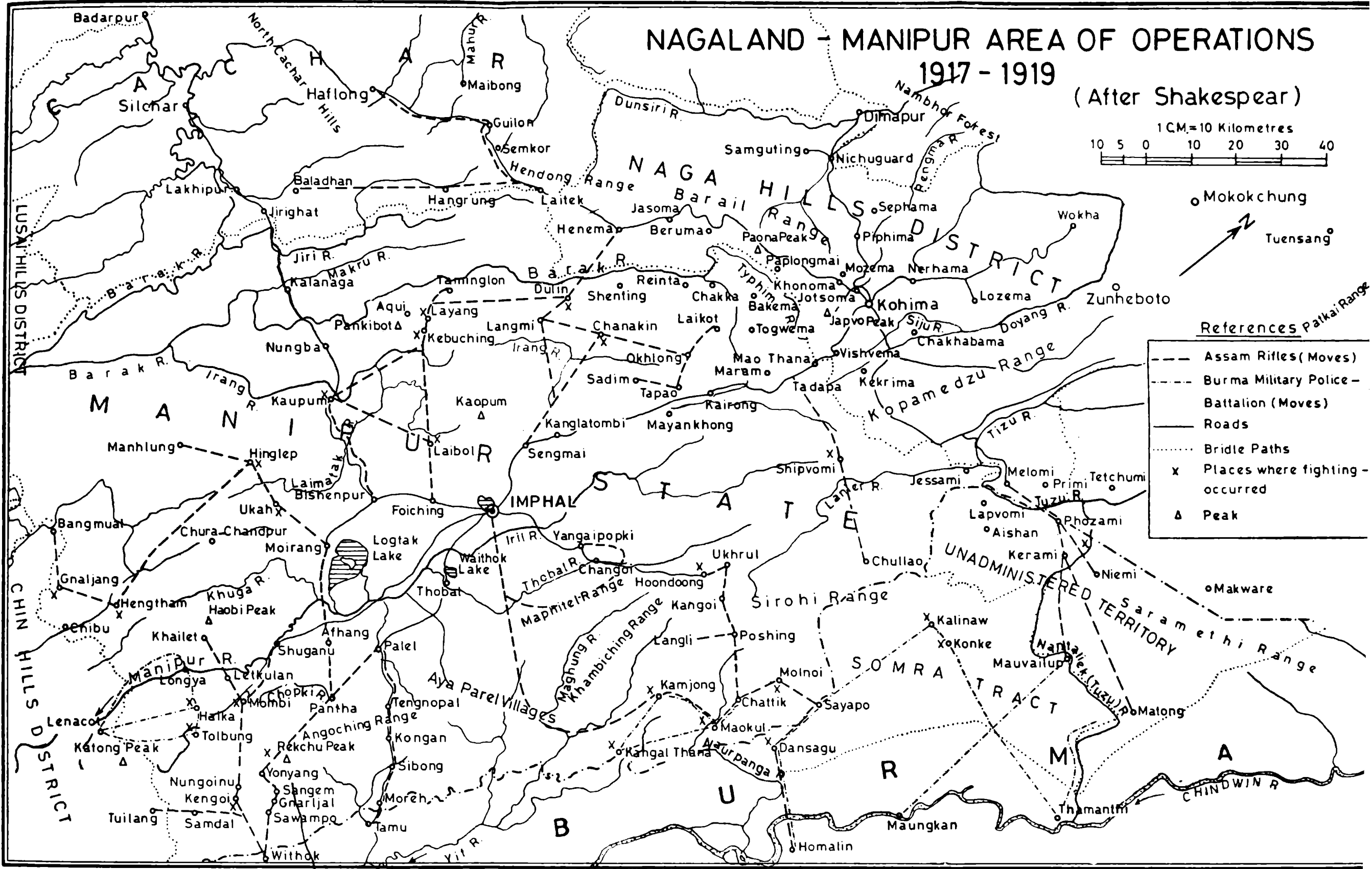
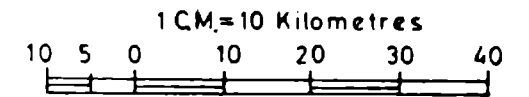
REFERENCES

| | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Motorable road un-metalled | — |
| Fair weather jeepable road | ---- |
| Mule track | - - - - |
| Foot path | |
| I A R Post | ⊙ |



NAGALAND - MANIPUR AREA OF OPERATIONS 1917 - 1919

(After Shakespear)



Mokokchung
Tuensang

References Patkai Range

- Assam Rifles (Moves)
- - - Burma Military Police - Battalion (Moves)
- Roads
- Bridle Paths
- x Places where fighting - occurred
- Δ Peak