

IDSA Special Feature
January 2013

**Contribution of the Indian
Armed Forces to the
Second World War:
Book Release and Panel Discussion**

Contents

Welcome Remarks.....	2
<i>Arvind Gupta</i>	
Writing the History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: A Brief Overview.....	4
<i>History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India</i>	
Keynote Address.....	5
<i>JFR Jacob</i>	
Panel Discussion	
Opening Remarks.....	12
<i>Satish Nambiar</i>	
Campaign in South East Asia 1941-42 and The Arakan Operations 1942-45.....	14
<i>Y.M. Bammi</i>	
Campaign in Western Asia.....	23
<i>Rahul K. Bhonsle</i>	
The East African Campaign 1940-41 and The North African Campaign 1940-43.....	27
<i>P.K. Gautam</i>	
Explore the Socio-Economic Impact of the Second World War.....	33
<i>U.P. Thapliyal</i>	
Reclaiming Our Legacy.....	35
<i>RTS Chhina</i>	
Summaries of the Eight Volumes.....	38
<i>Amit Kumar</i>	

Welcome Remarks

Arvind Gupta

Respected General Jacob, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to this function organized to release the reprints of the eight volumes of the Official history of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45.

I am particularly grateful to Gen. Jacob for having agreed to deliver the Keynote Address today and to share his reminiscences of the Second World War.

Gen. Jacob is one of the most distinguished and loved soldiers of India. Commissioned in 1942, he made a sterling contribution to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. Author of many books, he has contributed through his writings to the evolution of strategic thinking in the country. He has been generous with the IDSA contributing to IDSA's activities in numerous ways. Given his gamut of experience through participation in campaigns in the Middle East, Burma and Sumatra in the Second World War, we are privileged to have him with us at today's function.

The History Division of the Ministry of Defence deserves appreciation for having taken the initiative to reprint the Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War this year. As the Foreword written by Dr. Dhanedhar puts out, the then Government of India in 1945 set up a War Department Historical Section to collect material for the writing of the history of the operations conducted by the Indian Armed Forces in different theatres of the war. It is interesting to note that even after the partition of India, the Section was re-named as the Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, India and Pakistan, which was a joint venture of India and Pakistan. According to the original plan, the official history was to appear in about 20 volumes in three series. The first volume covered the fighting in North Africa and the subsequent volumes dealt with campaigns in other theatres.

The work was done in a systematic manner. Dr Bisheshwar Prasad was the General Editor of the official history. An Advisory Committee under the Defence Secretary was set up. Its members included historians, several Generals as well as the Military Adviser to the Pakistan High Commission in India. Some of those who were in the Advisory Committee included Dr. R.C. Majumdar, Lt. Gen. K.S. Thimayya and Lt. Gen. SPP Thorat.

The books were printed in the fifties and have since gone out of print. The History Division of the MoD commissioned the Pentagon Press to reprint these volumes. You would agree that this is a great initiative on the part of the Ministry of Defence.

The following volumes have been reprinted and being released today:

1. India and the War
2. Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisations 1939-45
3. Campaigns in Western Asia
4. East-African Campaign 1940-41
5. The North African Campaign 1940-43
6. Campaigns in South East Asia (1941-42)
7. The Arakan Operations (1942-45)
8. Post War Occupation Forces : Japan and South East Asia

Brief summaries of these volumes have been circulated.

Britain could not have fought the Second World War without exploiting the men and material available in India. The political parties were opposed to British exploitation. As one of the summaries provided notes, an offshoot of the British effort was the formation of a small nucleus of Indian officers at lower ranks during the War effort.

As the jackets of the books show, the History Division has published 25 volumes covering not only the campaigns of the Indian Army but also the history of the Indian Air Force, the Corps of Engineers and a series of volumes on the medical services.

Post independence, the History Division has published histories on Operation Polo (Hyderabad 1948), Operation Vijay (Goa 1961), the Congo Operation, J&K operations, the India Pakistan War of 1965 and many other volumes totalling in all 15.

The contribution of the Indian Army to the victory of the allied forces in the Second World War is immense. Unfortunately, this has not been sufficiently highlighted. The younger generation needs to be reminded of the sacrifices made by their forefathers.

The reprint of these volumes will also give a stimulus to historical research in India. We hope to work closely with the History Division of the MoD to explore how best we can move forward on some joint projects.

Thank you and Jai Hind.

Dr. Arvind Gupta is Director General of IDSA.

Writing the History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: A Brief Overview

History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India

In 1945, when the Second World War was nearing the end, the Government of India set up an office to collect and collate material for writing the history of the operations conducted by the Indian Armed Forces in various theatres of War. This office was subsequently designated as the War Department Historical Section.

Maj. Gen. TN Corbett, CB, MC was appointed as the Director. In August 1946 Brig. Cordon took over as the Director. Meanwhile, in March 1946, the Section was shifted to Shimla as the climate of Delhi was not considered conducive for quality academic work. However, in 1951, the Section was shifted back to Delhi.

Meanwhile, the partition of the country took place and the Section was re-designated as the Combined Inter-Services Historical Section (India & Pakistan). The writing of the history of the Second World War now turned out to be a joint effort of India and Pakistan. Vigorous efforts to write the history of the Second World War started in 1948 after Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad, a reputed academic, was appointed as the Director of the CIS Historical Section. He planned the history in 25 Volumes, seven of which were devoted to the medical services. Some noted historians like Dr. Tara Chand, Dr. RC Majumdar, Prof. KA Nilakanta Shastri, Dr. SN Sen and Prof. Mohamed Habib were associated with the vetting of these volumes and some senior military officers like Lt. Gen. Sir Dudley Russell, Lt. Gen. KS Thimayya and Lt. Gen. SPP Thorat were also associated in the Advisory Committee. The reputed publishing house, M/s. Orient Longman, undertook the publication of these volumes.

In course of time many of these volumes went out of print. Although efforts were made to reprint some of these volumes earlier, but due to procedural complications the efforts failed. Full credit goes to Dr. Reva Dhanedhar, the present Director of the History Division, who, overcoming many hurdles, succeeded in getting these eight volumes on the Second World War reprinted. But for her keen interest these volumes may not have been reprinted. In this effort, the encouragement received by her from Shri Upmanyu Chatterjee, formerly JS (Trg) & CAO, and Shri Rabindra Prasad, Director (Trg), has also to be appreciated.

It is hoped that the wide publicity given to these reprinted volumes would arouse keen interest among academics and army personnel in matters military. M/s. Pentagon Press deserves all appreciation for reprinting these volumes in a beautiful manner and at a very moderate price.

In the end we thank you all for your kind participation in this endeavour.

Keynote Address

JFR Jacob

Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director General and distinguished members of IDSA

I see in the audience a lot of friends, there is Satish Nambiar who was one of the first into Dhaka in December 1971; he fought his way there. I was there that day of the surrender. Then there is my friend Bammi, who is an old friend of mine as was his brother. I know Dr. Thapliyal, and Bhonsle; they are all friends of mine and I welcome you all and thank you for coming.

I am not going to talk on strategy, the war and that sort of stuff. These are for the experts. I am not. I just took part in the war and I am a soldier. I'll give you a soldier's story. A soldier's story which will put into the picture our experiences; and a human story of war quite different from the battles of Garhwalis etc. I am not talking that. There are all the experts who would talk on that. I'll give you a story which is sometimes humorous, sometimes human, and I hope it would be of some interest. It will give you a picture of what fighting in a long war is. You guys have not had the experience of a long war. It is quite different. I spent five years continuous, it's a long time. I got off once for two weeks leave, that's all and a couple of times we go to FATC in Mathura with the Indian running ledger accounts of my men to get the pay endorsed.

I joined the Army in 1941 to fight the Nazis. Let me make it clear, to fight the Nazis, no one else. I knew about the atrocities and I volunteered for the Middle East and I was posted to an anti-tank regiment in the 8th Army. Unfortunately, the ship I was on to go to Suez was diverted to Basra and I have tried to find my regiment from there. Eventually I missed the Battle of Bir Hakeim, my regiment was cut to pieces there with second field regiment. I met the remnants and moved them along the pipeline from Haifa to Habanaya. As soon as we got to Iraq we tried to re-form but could not get reinforcement properly and at that time the Germans were going to move into the Caucasus to get to the Kirkuk oil fields. So we were then asked to be prepared to go there. So I went on a recce and when I came back we have had a pause and then I got my first lesson in man-management. I had a VCO who I gave some orders to and he didn't carry out. I was a bit rough with him afterwards in front of some men. So he went to see the battery commander telling him that *hamara beizzati hua*. So the next morning Dick Peters, the Battery Commander, called me. He said, Jacko, sit down. How old are you? I said going 20. He said, do you know how much service Gul Mohammed JCO has got, VCO has got. I said yes, 24. He looked me up and down and he said that would be all. It was the lesson I never forgot. I realize how great izzat is. After that we moved up to the border with 1st Fifth, we dug in on our major approaches, the Germans didn't come and we went back to India....

We got the vehicles, guns and everything there and then came a shock, we are not to go back to the Middle East, we are going to join 26 Div in Burma. They are training for jungle warfare in Ranchi, we were proceeded to Ranchi. So with that in mind we went to Ranchi. We were located at Milestone 13 of the Lohadaga Road. At milestone 11 there was a battalion of the Bombay Grenadiers. Now what happens? Bombay Grenadiers, I won't mention the battalion's name, they were ordered to change their class composition. They refused. British officers ran away saying mutiny, mutiny. My CO called me. He had a message from the Div Commander, we were next door to them, guns were deployed and he said, Jacko, we all had nick name, Jacob go see what you can do. I got into my Scout car and I went there and the men were on the parade ground, they were very surly, very angry. I spoke to the senior VCO and I called a Subedar Major. I had a long talk with them, long, long talk, lot of persuasion. All the JCOs or VCOs were there. Eventually after a little while he saw sense. I said, if you go back to duty I will ensure that no action is taken against you. So he thought for some minutes, called the others and then he said OK. He said 'no action', I said yes, I gave you my word. I went back, I spoke to CO Russels who was a relative of the King so he had a lot of clout. I said I have given them my word that they have gone back to duty, no action. So he spoke to the Div Commander Lomax and they endorsed my action and that died. That was the first difficult task I ever had to handle.

Then we were moved to Ranchi, it was the time of the Bengal famine, it was terrible. I cut rations in half and it was pathetic to see the faces when the food ran out and the line of people still standing. I then said I'll do something for them which was highly illegal, at every RIASCD (Royal Indian Army Service Corps Depot) I stopped at I drew seven days ration for 200 men and there was a lot of talk, there were people resisting. They say, you sign, I said, I will sign, I signed in triplicate; they made me sign in triplicate, every RAISC Depot I drew the rations and distributed en route all the way to Cox Bazaar. It was one of the worst famines in history.

Anyway we got to the Arakan. There was sporadic action, we had to support various attacks and I am not going to go deep into that, these guys will tell you. Then I got malaria, dysentery first and then malaria. We were on one of the passes on Mayu range and I had to get to the malaria treatment forward unit. There was no road, then my guys built a raft for me, and we went down the Naf river, all the way down the Naf river escorted by crocodiles to a place called Redwinbyng to Forward Malaria Treatment Unit. My fever was not coming down and they could not find the bug in my blood. Then I told the doctor, 'Doctor give me Quinine, I took Quinine and the fever went down'. He said, you took Quinine? Why didn't you tell us because if you take Quinine then the bug does not appear in the blood slide. So thank God for that, they could not discharge me with malaria. Malaria was an offence in those days, you could be charged. They discharged me with fever, the doctors here will know, NYD (not yet diagnosed). So I got away with that fever NYD.

Then, after I did this sporadic fighting, we got orders that we will go for combined amphibious operations. We were to concentrate at Ukhia. I had in my battery a guy, a very

nice guy, a friend Robin Merlise. Robin was the son of the MGRA (Master General Royal Artillery) top gunner, he was the top gunner, loud and angry man. I liked Robin. I have seen this guy with a book try to attack a cobra, he was nuts. I sent an advance party off and I told Robin to bring the battery up to Ookia. I said, you hit the Arakan road, turn right north, I'll have a guide waiting for you at Ookia. So Robin who borrowed my book – I had a slim volume rice paper of the Oxford book of modern verse and Robin borrowed that – and coming down he hit the Arakan road, and he was reading my book and instead of going North he turned left and went South taking the battery with him. I don't know if you have seen a road like the Arakan road, it was mud. There were wooden planks on either side for the wheels of the vehicle. That was a road, very narrow road. There are wooden planks and it was a mud road. Fortunately, a string of barbed wire stretched across the road. The British stopped the convoy of guns and with great difficulty turned them round. I caught up with Robin. I went to the CO. Earlier he had taken in the jeep and trailer instruments to meet his father and we were in action and we were missing them. I told the CO, look Pep – we were on first name terms in World War II; in the regiment everyone was first named unless on parade. So I said, Pep – he was related to the King – Please take Robin, I can't keep him. He said, Jacko I have no room for him. I said then post him. He said you know what you are asking me to do, he is the son of the MGRA. Anyway, he paused and he said OK Jacob I'll speak to Philip. He had a lot of clout. He spoke to Christison who is the Corps Commander and...said he will do something and within 24 hours Robin's posting came to FATC (Field Artillery Training Centre) Mathura.

The CO was short one major and I was not a senior, there were four British officers senior to me. He wrote to the CRA, big battle please post me an officer, the four British officers I have aren't suitable for promotion, unfit. Jacob is fit but too junior. The answer came saying – he just wrote one line – Jacob will be promoted.

So anyway, we are on training and then I never know what a sting of a jelly fish can be, what pain it can be. One of our Jawans had it. We trained on those beaches and it was for this reason I recommended the landing here and not at Cox Bazaar in 1971 because I knew these beaches. Anyway, Mountbatten told me this, that originally we were to land in the Andaman Islands. I met Mountbatten many years later and he chatted a lot with me. Then he told me an interesting story: he said 'the objective for your Division at that time was the Andamans and the simulation of that act was to be on Ramree Island'. The plan was then changed, Ramree was the objective and no one told the intelligence and they kept on simulating an attack on Ramree until we landed; so this is war, the confusion that goes on. We landed on Fox white beach and there was bombardment and one of the sad things is one of my best friends in the LCA hit a mine and we saw nothing more of it, George Bingham. Anyways, there was sporadic fighting and we carried on. Two or three incidents I want to describe to you all which might interest you.

The 1st, naval guys will know, they ask me to do FOB (Forward Officer Bombardment) on the battleship Queen Elizabeth on Mount Peter. I had a problem, the Navy used the cardinal

point method, I was not used to it. We bombarded Mount Peter. We then drove about a thousand Japs up one of the swamps. They didn't come out. So parties were sent and I was one of those parties in LCA; I don't know if you guys have seen the crocodile pictures, huge sea going crocodiles, they are about 20 feet plus, there are full of crocodiles. We had a Jap interpreter shouting to them to come out, not one came out, not one. You can imagine what happened to them, not one came out. There were 1000 of them there.

Then I got an order to go and support 32 East African Brigade. Obama's grandfather was supposed to have been in that Brigade – I never met him. So I went to this Brigade under protest. I have seen these troops, I didn't want to go anywhere near them. So I went. They were on a hill ridge. At the bottom was a pagoda. They smashed all the pagodas. So I called the CO and I told him, the Regimental Sergeant Major, huge chap he thumped his chest and he said, Sir me good Muslim, me smashing them Idols. You know I was furious. Then we had dug gun pits, alternative gun pits. It takes a long time to dig them. These people used my gun pits as I was more and more annoyed, things are getting worse. That night there was no one near, they fired 30,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, I had nothing. And we were all ducked. I tell you I have never had a worst time. Then they invited me for a meal, I went. They took all the rations – maize, jam every damn thing – and put in a cooking pot and heat cooked it. They offered me some, I put some in my mouth, it was awful. Thank God in a couple of weeks' time we got a message to move back and I have never been more thankful, so much due to East African Brigade.

Now, when we got back we had two sorts of parties of entertainment, one we were with the British Regiment 160 British Field regiment and us. Hermione Gingold was one of the most famous British singers, came down as we all concentrated the gun position and she sang for us songs and ... she made us all sing with her. We sang with her. Then, hell broke loose, the tannoys – a tannoy is a loud speaker – take post, man the guns. So we all had to rush to the guns. Hermione was whisked off and we waited for orders and then it came, it was a different kind of music, the music of the guns.

Then we had a chap called Rafiq Mohammed; he was a Punjabi from Lahore and he came to entertain troops, he had a unit called Fauji Dilkush. I want to mention this because your great General B. G. Kaul in World War II he was in Fauji Dilkush, you know B. G. Kaul of NEFA fame. I am told he was in Fauji Dilkush, that's what I heard and I think it's correct. Anyway this guy, Mohammed Rafiq, came and he said, I won't sing unless you give me rum. Anyway we gave him a bottle of rum, he sang this lovely song *Chali re chali re*, the men were in tears, *koi kahan yahan chali koi kahan wahan chali maine kaha piya ke gaon chali re*. The reason I have mentioned it was because I was told, that General Kaul was in Fauji Dilkush, for some time attached to it. We did the landing at Letpan, we landed either side of Letpanchong and then we were promised leave in India.

We embarked on the M.V. Dunera, M.V. Dunera Troop Ship, there was a Lincoln Battalion and us. We were promised leave, we have been in the jungle for a long time, we were

promised short leave, we arrived in Madras. Next morning the Tannoys blurted out. All ranks will go for route march wearing full FSMO (field service marching order). I said what the hell is happening, it was raining and we marched about 20 miles in the rain. I came back soaking, that night the ship moved out of the harbour, where we are going. We were promised leave. Then the skyline of Ramree came in sight. A boat pulls up and Major General Chambers, one-eyed Chambers we used to call him, who was BGS 15 Corps, who had taken over from our GOC. Time is up and we are all on deck and he gave a speech, I have called you back to take part in one of the most strategic operations, you should be proud to be a part of this operation and he went on and on and then he said I have to regard your leave. He was booed by the Lincoln battalion. He left the ship amidst loud catcalls and boos...

We went to Ramree, with tin sheets. We were visited by many VIPs including Mountbatten asking us if we were happy and all sorts of rubbish. Mountbatten turned up, we met him before, he was talking to us and he asked us what is all this, so the funny part of it, then I told him Lord Mountbatten my Mountain Gunners called you Lord Mountain Battery, he laughed. Anyway this strategic operation Rangoon, Rangoon was evacuated and we took it over and we then went back to India on the same M.V. Dunera.

We went back for leave near Bangalore. This time they didn't send us back. We went to a place I don't know, you know Bangalore Vadiganhalli 30 miles out, near Tipu's thing, and from there we were told to rest and prepare for Operation Zipper. Operation Zipper was a planned invasion of Malaysia. We were to land somewhere near Port Swettenham. Two atom bombs were dropped and Japan surrendered. Now the great Gen. MacArthur decided that no one should move into the occupied territories until His Highness signed the instrument of surrender, which he did 12 days later on the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay. We were not allowed to move in. I will now give you one result of this. The Americans were very keen on the Communists going back to Vietnam, people don't know this, they were very keen from Truman right down to ... Donovan of OSS (Office of Strategic Services), the predecessor of the CIA. So they locked the French up and the ... landed in Vietnam, the Vietnam, Viet Minh were in control. You can check on this in the *March of Folly*. So, that was there, the war was over as far as we are concerned.

I just want to give you a few lessons which I have to tell you something of some substance. I learnt my soldiering in World War II, I knew nothing. The guys of today, the young guys are well trained, they are fit, I knew nothing when I joined the Army, I had few months training in Mhow, seven weeks in DLRD. My number one taught me the gun, my officers taught me everything. So I learned my soldiering in World War II, everything I owe to World War II, it shaped me. First thing I learnt was that our light shells were of no use, they were no use against Japanese bunkers or anything. So lesson one, you need a heavy gun. 25 pounder is of no damn use. In case you are in sugar fired bunker 7.2, World War I gun was brought, you went back 30 yards firing a 200 pound shell. That is the first thing, you need a heavy shell. I remembered this later and I had it passed at the army commanders

conference that 155 would be the field gun. Then the second thing is the use of armour. They said you can't use armour in the jungle, absolute rubbish. We used armour in single tanks along a narrow track and Thimayya learnt this lesson because at Zoji La they got one tank and sent it up and a single tank was used. So, armour in the jungle can be used but not as you visualize it.

I saw many infantry attacks, I never saw any attack going more than one company up or upfront one country up, I never saw one. The CO cannot handle so many companies in the attack. If attack is the basic operation of war and not offence as we teach it, then organization should be tailored for that. You cannot use more companies in the attack. In 1970, when they sent me APCs for two regiments they wanted to use four companies as lorried battalions. I hacked it down to three companies with the help of Inder Gill, so your mechanised battalions to have three companies.

All other armies except the British and Commonwealth work on three companies. So I think that should be. The only arm that has reorganized after World War II is our gunners who from 8 Gun Battery have gone down to 6 Guns. So that lesson must be learnt. You need destruction not neutralization. The artillery support should be geared to destroy, not neutralize. I have actually got it through the artillery school when I was Commandant. You need destruction and lastly mobility. Unfortunately, the great General Montgomery decided that it was not a principal of war, he changed it and put flexibility in its place, Mobility is one of the prime principles of war. The Japanese were far more mobile than us and it is mobility, mobility, we are basically, let me tell you, a World War II Army. We have not advanced much from World War II. Our Army lacks mobility today. Mobility, mobility, mobility.

These are a few thoughts. I am just a lone voice in the wilderness. I just want to thank you for listening to me, bearing with me, an old soldier who has tried his best. Thank you and God Bless You.

Lt. Gen. (retd.) JFR Jacob, PVSM was born in Calcutta and commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in June 1942. He served with his Regiment in the Middle East in 1942-43 and then took part in the Burma operations in the Mayu Range as well as in operations in Sumatra. He was the Chief of Staff Eastern Army during the critical period prior to and during the 1971 War. After retirement Gen Jacob became the governor of Goa and subsequently of Punjab. He is the author of the widely acclaimed book "Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a nation" published in 1997.

Panel Discussion

Opening Remarks

Satish Nambiar

General Jacob Sir, ladies and gentlemen, it's my privilege to chair this panel discussion this afternoon. Having listened to General Jacob, it fills one's heart with joy that we had someone around to remind us of the Indian Armed Forces' contribution in World War II. I say this with some feeling because at least I know two of us, myself and Yogi Bammi, are more or less contemporaries and we commanded battalions which have a very rich tradition. In fact, one of the battalions that I commanded, the first battalion of the Maratha Light Infantry of which I assumed command in 1972, was 205 years old when I assumed command and it had gone through various expeditions and fought in World War II in Italy and got a Victoria Cross. It was part of the occupation force that took the Japanese surrender in Japan and I am sure Bammi would have something to say about his battalion (the first battalion). I am not too sure about Gautam and Rahul as to which units they served with, but that's a sort of background we have. I say this for some reason because somehow or the other I have a feeling that over the years the contribution of the Indian Armed Forces in World War II has not really been recognized within the country and I cannot illustrate this better than by just reading an extract of something which Dr. Raja Mohan wrote a couple of years back:

He starts off by saying, "it is important to draw attention to two historical facts. First, that the Indian armed forces contributed very significantly to Allied efforts in the 20th century's two World Wars and second that the British Indian Army was the main peacekeeper in the Indian Ocean littoral and beyond." The irony, of course, he goes on to say, is that "it is not just the rest of the world that is ignorant of the security legacy of the days of the Raj, India's own post-colonial political class prodded by a self-serving civilian bureaucracy," and this is why I am quoting him, "seem to have deliberately induced a collective national amnesia about the country's rich pre-independence military traditions, as a consequence of which on achieving independence modern India's political leadership seems to have been somewhat reluctant to recognize the contribution of its military to the making of the modern world and today's India. The Indian national movement was deeply divided in its attitudes towards the Indian Army under British rule. These divisions became sharper as the movement confronted the meaning of World War II and the political choices it offered. While the Indian National Congress speaking as the principal vehicle of the national movement condemned the imperialistic war, individual leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru backed the allied war effort against the fascists. Further accentuating the ambivalence within India's political leadership of the time an Indian National Army led by Subhash Chandra Bose used Japanese assistance in an effort to forcibly liberate India from the British." He goes on to conclude that "it was no surprise then that the divided national movement could not leverage the Indian Army's extraordinary contribution to the allied victory in the negotiations with the British on the terms of independence, the distribution of the spoils of war and the construction of the post war international order."

I just thought I'll read this because it encapsulates a lot of what one would have liked to say. To get back to my own views on this, it is somewhat ironic that despite the military operations that had to be undertaken in Jammu and Kashmir immediately after independence, the Hyderabad and Junagarh action, the liberation from the Portuguese of Goa, Daman & Diu, dealing with the Chinese aggression in 1962, taking the war across the international border in Punjab and Rajasthan during the 1965 conflict with Pakistan, and of course the 1971 war, the military component of comprehensive national power was never really factored into the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. This, I think, in some ways was probably first recognized and implemented in the planning, preparation and conduct of the 1971 operations, which no one is better qualified to speak on than General Jacob and probably somewhat may be with mixed results in Sri Lanka in 1987-90 and in the Maldives in 1988.

Now I just mentioned this because as we move further forward into the 21st century and it is inevitable that India will be dragged into playing a greater role in particularly in regional affairs and probably globally affairs as well, we have to prepare ourselves for that. In that context the need to factor in the military dimension of comprehensive national power is very important and I suppose it is therefore very apt that today we are recapitulating some of the history of the Indian Armed Forces' contribution in World War II.

To do that, we have with us General Bammi, an old friend and colleague who has done a great deal of exceptional service in the Indian Army; he served as Defence Advisor at our High Commission in Malaysia and Singapore and after retirement he is done a lot of strategic studies and produced a number of books. Similarly, Rahul Bhonsle, after leaving the Army, again having served with great distinction over three decades, he has done a great deal of work and personally I am aware of these four guys at least Bammi, Rahul Bhonsle, Gautam and Chhina because I was closely associated with them or they were closely associated with me whichever way you want to look at it when I was the Director at the USI and I know the work that all of them have done. Dr. Thapliyal, of course, I have had a brief acquaintanceship with, but I think his record also is quite outstanding in terms of his contribution to the History Division of the Ministry of Defence, which I am of course aware of because I had something to do with the efforts to make public the histories of our various operations. So with that ladies and gentlemen I'll hand you over to General Bammi. Thank you.

Lt. Gen. (retd.) Satish Nambiar is a Distinguished Fellow at IDSA. During his distinguished career in the Army, he held several important positions including as Director General of Military Operations, the first Force Commander and Head of the United Nations Forces in the former Yugoslavia, and the Deputy Chief of the Army Staff. A former Director of the United Service Institution of India, he was conferred the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.

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

Y.M. Bammi

Introduction

After the end of World War II, the Government of India formed a Historical Division in the Ministry of Defence. This office was tasked to produce History of the Second World War, with special reference to the part played by soldiers of the British Indian Army.

Based on the war diaries, reports and other documents held by the Division, as well as in consultation with a few actual participants, the History of WW II was prepared and published in the 1950s. As by now the volumes are out of print, a reprint has been undertaken of eight of these volumes, in collaboration with Pentagon Publishers, New Delhi.

On 30 October 2012, the IDSA assisted the release by arranging a review of the eight volumes by five of its members, each covering one or two volumes.

This review covers the two volumes relating to the Campaign in South East Asia 1941-42 and the South East on The Arakan Operations 1942-45.

Part 1- Campaign in South East Asia

General



The region covered extends from Hong Kong to Malaya, including Borneo, Singapore and parts of Burma, and highlights the British and Dutch colonies. The strategic importance of

the region to Japan and the Allies, the historical background of the conflict and the prevailing situation in China and Indo-China provide the curtain raiser. The impact of terrain and climate on the operations, strengths of the opposing forces, strategies adopted by the two adversaries and the prevailing local political environment are well covered.

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

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

The Operations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Order of Battle

Malaya

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

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

Singapore

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

Casualties in Malaya

British - 38,496

Indian - 67,340

Australian - 18490

Local Volunteers - 14388

Total - 138708 (including 130,000 POWs)

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

Gen. Percival, the Commander of Commonwealth Forces states: "12 and 15 Brigades fought gallantly, 3/16 Punjab and Jats (a combined unit formed by amalgamating remnants of 2/9 Jat and 4/9 Jat who had earlier suffered very heavy casualties) were nearly decimated."

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

Comments

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

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

Part Two: The Arakan Operations 1942-45

General



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

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

The operation was planned and conducted in four phases, troops given

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

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

Operations

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

Order of Battle

14 Indian Inf Div

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

26 Indian Inf Div

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

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

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

Important Achievements

The special aspects of these operations were as under-

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

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

Special Aspects

The following merit mention-

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

Winners of Awards

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

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

Lessons from Japanese Operations

The Volume lists the following-

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

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

Comments

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

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

Recommendations for Future Publications

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

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

1. Even if not covered in War Diaries, special research could have been carried out for Honours and Awards, Battle and Theatre Honours won, casualties suffered and heroic deeds and other incidents of importance of own troops. These are often available on the internet, regimental histories and articles written by the actual participants.
2. Details of enemy casualties, weapons and equipment captured and POWs taken should also be included, by researched publications of the adversaries.
3. Quality of maps and printing is given special attention. With the present day electronic devices, it should be possible to improve them, at low cost.

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

Campaign in Western Asia

Rahul K. Bhonsle

General

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

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

Nuances of the Theatre and Operations

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

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

The net outcome was that this remained a peripheral theatre for Hitler but for the British it could not be neglected, as it was part of the external defence of India. Deployment of forces in this theatre was diverted for employment from South East Asia and Indian 10 Infantry Division earmarked for Malaya was diverted to Basra. This was followed by 6 and 8 Indian Infantry Divisions in Western Asia; in addition 5 Infantry and 31 Armoured were also deployed later. These were grouped in 4 and 21 Corps during the course of the Campaign.

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

Contribution of Indian Armed Forces in this Theatre

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

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

Operational Performance of the Indian Armed Forces

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

- (a) Pre-emptive planning and preparation of forces for operations was undertaken with a number of contingencies envisaged. This necessitated preparation of a number of alternate plans and preparing troops for the same.
- (b) Flexibility in planning and deployment of forces was admirably demonstrated by the Indian formations in an entirely unknown area of operations in foreign land where commanders and troops had not operated before.
- (c) Rapid deployment and mobility as well as movement was demonstrated by Indian formations, particularly by landing at Basra and rapidly advancing through Iraq to Baghdad and Mosul, which led to the collapse of the indigenous political regime led by Rashid Ali in the country who abandoned the Vichy.

- (d) Fall of Iraq opened the door for operations in Syria and establishing a presence in Iran.
- (e) While fighting was not as intense as in other theatres troops on the ground faced a number of challenging situations with stiff resistance and repeated counter-attacks to evict lodgements involving some tough fighting. Vichy French air was active throughout the campaign and Indian troops adopted innovative tactics to evade attacks, some even bringing down an aircraft or two by machine gun fire.
- (f) Outflanking moves and flank attacks ensured speedy success; this was particularly so in the Battle of Deir ez Zor. 10 Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. (later Field Marshal) Bill Slim achieved rapid success by outflanking march across difficult terrain leading to capitulation of enemy resistance. Slim later used these manoeuvres in the Burma Campaign with great success. In the same tradition the Indian armed forces carried out a series of outflanking movements in Bangladesh in 1971, winning rapid victory in a difficult terrain marked by a large number of rivers and water bodies.

Lessons for the Future

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

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

Conclusion

India has a long legacy of military history going back to many millennia. Study of military

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

Brig. (Retd.) Rahul Bhonsle is an army veteran with over three decades of active service. He is currently an independent research consultant in defence and security issues in South Asia.

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

P.K. Gautam

Introduction

The aim of re-launching these volumes is to raise awareness about this vital but neglected Indian contribution. Raising awareness needs to be sustained. Accordingly, I will first give a brief narrative of the contribution of Indian Armed Forces as recorded by Major PC Bharucha and editor Bisheshwar Prasad with the team of Indian, Pakistani and British scholars and military personnel who produced the histories in 1963 and 1955 of *The East African Campaign 1940-41* and *The North African Campaign 1940-43* respectively. Second, I'll talk about how these campaigns are lodged in memory and what remains unwritten. And third, I will highlight some policy issues. But to get the fundamentals right in our study of Africa today, a brief overview of colonization is important.

Colonial Discourse

The colonial discourse also needs to be revisited. After Napoleonic wars, the industrial revolution in Europe – the most astonishing phenomenon in world history took shape. Certain European powers in the guise of spreading civilization among the heathens set to seek raw materials for their factories and markets for their goods in a scramble for colonies, first in Africa, and later in Southern Asia, the Pacific and China.¹ In 1870, as described by J.F.C. Fuller, except for Egypt, Tripoli, Tunisia and Algeria in the north, the Cape of Good Hope, the Orange Free State and Transvaal in the south, and a number of scattered European settlements on the coast of Africa, the map of that country was still almost a blank.² Thirty years later in 1900, except for Morocco, Tripoli, Abyssinia and Liberia, the area had been parcelled out between Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Portugal. In 1875, in order to secure the route to India, Britain bought the Khedive's share of the Suez Canal and in 1877 Britain annexed Transvaal and conquered Zululand. War broke out with Boers who sought independence in South Africa (and ended with the Anglo- Boer War of 1899-1902). The Arab revolt broke out in Egypt, and Gambetta and French invited Great Britain for discussion. Britain crushed Arabi Pasha in September 1882. From Egypt the British were drawn into Sudan. By 1881 France had extended its power over the vast

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

² Ibid.

region of Sahara and in 1881 occupied Tunisia, much to annoyance of the Italians.³ In 1883 France proclaimed a protectorate in Madagascar. In 1884 Belgium acquired Congo and, as a competitive counter, in 1884 Germany occupied the coast of Angra Pequena in South West Africa, Togoland and Cameroon. By 1885 the hinterland of Zanzibar was added, to become German East Africa. This led to tension with Great Britain.⁴ Due to entente now between France and Britain, Britain was allowed a free hand in Morocco, yet France and Spain partitioned Morocco in 1904.

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

Contribution of Indian Armed Forces

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

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., pp.133-34 .

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

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

With British success in North Africa against the Italians, the German General Rommel landed at Tripoli in March 1941 and counter-attacked with the advanced party of his legendary *Afrika Korps*. With bold action, surprise and deception, by April 1941, *Afrika Korps* was on the border of Egypt. Initially, the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade slowed the advance of the Axis powers and allowed the occupation of Tobruk, which, as a stubborn thorn in the side of the Axis, continued to be an obstacle for a free approach to the Nile valley in Egypt. Rommel then defeated the British Commonwealth offensive called 'Battle Axe'. Accounts of the fluidity, ebb and flow, and chaos of the battles are detailed in the book. It was like a pendulum or game of seesaw of forces moving east and west and then reversing direction. These operations lasted for over two years with the sterling performance of the 4th Indian Infantry Division (5, 7, 11 Indian Infantry Brigades), 3rd Indian Motor Brigade later joined by the 5th Indian Infantry Division (9, 10 and 29 Indian Infantry Brigades), and the 10th Indian Division which had earlier operated in Iraq. The British Eighth Army under Auchinleck in 'Operation Crusader' got nearly destroyed with bold counter attacks by Rommel including innovative use of 88 mm ack ack guns in an anti-tank role. It is here that Rommel famously remarked: "I get better information of my troops from the wireless intercepts of the enemy than from my own staff"; this is a truism that continues to be true to this day. Rommel was unstoppable. The battles at Sidi Razeg, final capture of Tobruk, and abandonment of Gazala by British (called the 'Gazala gallop') or withdrawal of British till El Alamein where at Alam Halfa Rommel got overstretched are well known milestones.

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

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

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

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

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

Campaigns in Memory and What Remains Unwritten

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

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

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

year have studied the campaign. The limited study of the North African Campaign prescribed for Military History paper and with its biographical studies has been as under:

- (a) **Part B Promotion Examination.** From 1998-2015. Biography of Rommel in 2001.
- (b) **Part D Promotion Examination.** From 1998- 2015. North African Campaign and biography of Rommel in 2000.
- (c) **Staff College Competitive Examination.** From 2004-2015.
 - (i) 2006 - North African Campaign, and biographies of Montgomery and Rommel.
 - (ii) 2012 - North African Campaign and biography of Rommel.
 - (iii) 2015- Biography of Field Marshall William Slim.

What Remains Unwritten

One story which I recall in the military academy was how in the dead of night as all Commonwealth troops were pinned down by enemy fire the war cry of the Maratha Light Infantry: 'Bolo Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Ki Jai' was carried over a long distance across the sand dunes. This infused a new zeal charged with an offensive spirit. Taking the cue, all troops - Indian, British, New Zealander and Australian – pressed home the attack.

History from below or subaltern account of 25 lakh Indian soldiers does not exist, but many anecdotes and records survive which may be of use not only to the military but a new interpretation of history by non-historians. Like the novel *Across the Black Waters* by Mulk Raj Anand about the First World War, no archival work even as a novel exists on the censored letters of Indian troops. We do not even know if the letter or summaries have been preserved.

No Hobson Jobson equivalent exists to record the codes on speech on radio telephony where to confuse Italian intelligence it was common to code Asmara as 'Bum-beaten' or the Army Group Reinforcing Artillery or AGRA was coded as Taj Mahal.

The campaigns also saw special forces such as the Gazelle Force and The Long Range Penetration Group and how with a sense of humour bordering on truth the Higher Army HQ - in its chaotic stage of staff offices which pitched tents on the outskirts of Alexandria – was called the Short Range Penetration Group by regimental officers who were in the frontline. I recall how my Sikh friends narrated stories of washing hair each month with petrol from tanks or making omelettes on the heated body of tanks in the desert.

There is no new knowledge with us except that of the Patriots resistance of Ethiopia to Italians and how occupation was resisted.

Policy Issues

To sustain interest, theoretical tools and new ideas of historical inquiry exist across the

globe beyond the 'bugle and trumpet' to include war and society approach. MOD history Division should reach out with digital archives so that students are not deterred to enter the security zone of RK Puram. Alternately, a user friendly free access zone must be made. Scholars from Centres such as West Asian and African Studies, Centre for Historical Studies and even non-historians from Indian universities need to be attracted to the archives the way bees are to the pollen and nectar. Otherwise, after 30 years, in 2042, we may just see another re-launch with no new knowledge or interpretation as is today. For wider coverage to the citizens of India and the world, these books must also be digitized.

INDU needs to reconsider the role of military history seriously linked to archives which are no longer secret or classified such as of the period under study of both the world wars. Good historical work must teach how to think. But military history is too serious a business to be left to the military or the history division of MoD alone. Indian universities must open up departments and study the many under- or un-studied aspects of the Indian contribution. Issues like military labour market, motivation, recruiting pattern, training, leadership, mental and physical toughness and war economics are some topics that can be accepted by university professors for dissertation by their students. Comparison of militaries as seen through Indian accounts of the Germans and Italians, local population and levies can also be attempted. Academics can also now with open archives write new interpretations of history including history from the middle and below.

Indian embassies in the theatre of operation must be gifted copies of the book of each of the reprints. Ambassadors and Defence Attaches may be budgeted to get local scholars provide current account of the monuments and war graves. Onus will be on the diplomats to get India's contribution re-recognised in the local discourse. The East African campaign of World War I against Germany also needs to be a part of the study.

*Col. (Retd.) P.K. Gautam is Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. He has over 29 years of military service and is a veteran of the 1971 war in Bangladesh and Operation Meghdoot (Siachen). He has recorded his 1971 experience in the book **Operation Bangladesh** (2007). As an original officer of 27 Poonch Mountain Battery of 24 Field Regiment, his researched articles on the battle accounts of the then 12th Poonch Mountain Battery (comprising Punjabi Mussalman and Jat Sikh sections) were published in the **Artillery Journal** and **The Journal of the Royal Artillery** covering the Burma Campaign of World War II. His work at IDSA as it relates to the Indian Armed Forces and military history includes **Composition and Regimental System of the Indian Army: Continuity and Change** (2008), **Renaissance of Military History and War Studies in India**, IDSA Occasional Paper Number 21, November 2011.*

Explore the Socio-Economic Impact of the Second World War

U.P. Thapliyal

Respected Chairman, Generals of the Indian army, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be a participant in this celebration, organized to launch a reprint of the official history of the Indian Armed Forces in World War II. These eight volumes have been out of print for a long time and it is a matter of great satisfaction that the efforts of Dr. Reva Dhanedhar, Director History Division, Ministry of Defence, to reprint these volumes, have borne fruit. M/S Pentagon Press have done a creditable job in printing these volumes nicely and in pricing them moderately.

I had occasion to peruse through these books during my service with the History Division, years ago. Though I have forgotten much of the content, I can confidently vouch for the great effort that has gone into the compilation of these histories. The narratives are written in a lucid and captivating style and for this credit goes to Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad, the then Director, and his team of scholars.

I would like to make a few observations here. These volumes were compiled during the late forties and early fifties. It needs no evidence to say that at that time many vital and sensitive records related to the War had not been declassified and made open to consultation by the British or the Indian Governments. Further, after the war, many countries like Britain, America, Australia, Canada, etc., have published their detailed accounts of World War II. Meanwhile, many more publications, which may be placed in the category of original sources, have been published. These include the Transfer of Power volumes edited by Nicholas Mansergh and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Perhaps, the histories compiled by the Historical Section some 60 years ago need some updating in the light of the source material that has become available since then. Some young military historians may like to consider this matter seriously.

Further, the Great War seems to have had a great impact on Indian society as a whole. In a way it might have shaken the very basis of the Indian social fabric. The need for a large number of recruits for the army opened up avenues of employment to all strata of Indian Society, as the martial race theory could not be adhered to in the changed circumstances. The exposure of the youth from the villages to the outside world might have changed his outlook, thinking and life style and this might have also influenced his family and his surrounding.

The remittances from the field may have revolutionized the life style of the village folk. Briefly speaking, all this might have contributed in shaking the old edifice of the Indian caste system, particularly untouchability.

The industrial development necessitated by war has been described in detail in the volume "Ordnance Services". But the extent to which this might have influenced the post war industrial development like aviation, railways and the entire transport system of India needs to be looked into. Perhaps, the roots of many industries in India may have emerged out of the necessities of World War II.

It is generally believed that the presence of the Indian Army in the Middle East prevented the Axis advance into India through Egypt, Iran and Afghanistan. This aspect of the war has not been investigated thoroughly. In the first place it has to be proved whether the Axis powers had any plan to invade India from the west. Incidentally, in the seventies in a lecture at the National Archives of India, one Russian scholar claimed that it was the Russian intervention in the Middle East which prevented the march of the Axis powers on India.

It is my hope that some students of Military history research into these aspects of war, which have not invited the attention of scholars so far.

In the end, I invite your attention to a dictate of Napoleon, also mentioned in the inner leaf of the pamphlet, enclosed with your invitation card and I quote "Read and re-read the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Eugene and Fredrick; take them for your model: this is the only way of becoming a great captain to obtain the secret of the art of war." Perhaps, a perusal of the campaigns launched by the Indian Armed Forces in various theatres during the Second World War would provide enough food for Indian Generals to chew and digest as well.

While concluding, I am reminded of an incident in a remote village of Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand) in 1946. I was then seven years old, climbing up the hill on my way to school, holding the hand of my father. I saw a group of young women working in the fields, some in shining sarees and some in dull white sarees and bereft of all ornaments. The contrast aroused my childish curiosity. My father explained that those were the widows who had lost their husbands in War. He was indeed referring to Second World War. Though I did not then understand the gravity of the War, the faded looks of young widows touched my tiny heart. It was indeed the epitome of Indian soldiers' contribution in World War II.

Dr. U.P. Thapliyal is Former Director of the Ministry of Defence's History Division.

Reclaiming Our Legacy

RTS Chhina

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the MoD History Division for this excellent initiative in reprinting these eight volumes of the official history of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War. While all volumes are now out of print and unavailable, some of the earlier ones have been unavailable for a very long time and are scarcer than the proverbial hen's teeth. These reprints will therefore be greatly welcomed by scholars and military enthusiasts all over the world. I do hope that the remaining volumes will also be similarly reprinted in the future. Along with these laudable reprints I also take this opportunity to urge the History Division to publish not only the long pending official history of the INA, something that is so intricately tied up with the history of the second world war, but also the official histories of the remaining post-independence campaigns that have not yet seen the light of day due to bureaucratic constraints.

To come to the books being currently released, I have two small points for the publishers before I get down to giving an overview of India and the War. First: Request them that for future editions/prints, they should edit and clean the scans, The page of the publisher's website advertising the publication of these volumes has twelve images or photographs to illustrate the set. Eight of these images are of American and Soviet military forces. At a very basic level, this gaffe provides ample justification, if justification be needed, for the *raison d'être* behind republishing these volumes: to eradicate the high levels of ignorance about India's sterling and pivotal role in that global conflict – a role that then set it firmly on the path to a hastened independence and which, reclaimed today after 67 long years, will help strengthen its claim to being a major player on the global stage.

War is usually a harbinger of social and political change. Its effects are felt out of all proportions to the tactical events that shape it. Like the ripples in a pond, the events set into motion through the medium of human conflict reverberate through the decades, sometimes longer. To cite but one small example: the modern Middle East was carved out of the corpse of the Ottoman Empire in a World War I campaign in which the bulk of the forces were Indian. In many ways, the world is still coping with the consequences of those actions; and fighting battles because of events set into motion nearly a century ago.

In post-colonial India, the State has always had an uneasy relationship with war. The roots of this unease can be traced back to our colonial past. It has been very rightly said that war is a continuation of politics by other means; nowhere is this Clausewitzian maxim better amplified than in the relationship between war and the politics of the Indian freedom struggle.

The Indian political response to the First World War was very different to that which it exhibited upon the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1914 Indian aspirations were limited to attaining the status of a self-governing dominion within the larger framework of the British Empire. As such, all hues of political opinion were united in their support of Indian involvement in the war effort. However, the failure of the colonial authorities to adequately satisfy Indian political aspirations after the end of the Great War led to a hardening of political postures culminating in the demand of complete independence. The outbreak of the Second World War therefore saw a complete reversal of political opinion from 1914. Indian political parties refused to support the war effort on the ground that it was an imperial war in which India was not involved. Mahatma Gandhi went a step further with his philosophy of non violence, declaring that he would counter a Japanese invasion of India only by non-violent means. Indian participation in the war was used as a major bargaining chip by Indian politicians, who were not morally averse to taking part in the conflict, provided the British were ready to meet their demands at the end of it. However, between support for Britain's enemies and support for the Allies, the latter were considered the more acceptable alternative.

It was in the midst of this immense political churning that India raised an army of some 2.5 million men - each man a volunteer, forming the largest volunteer army ever raised in the history of human conflict. There are many fascinating facets of Indian participation in the war that remain largely unknown. For instance, it is not often known that the Indian Army had also participated in the 1940 campaign in Europe, culminating in the retreat and evacuation at Dunkirk. Divisions of the Indian Army won lasting renown in the campaigns in North Africa, in the Western Desert, Eritrea and Ethiopia, in the Middle East, Italy, Greece, and in Burma and the Far East.

While Indian Divisions were becoming household names in many parts of the world, Indian soldiers were involved in another venture that had an enormous political impact in India and on the freedom movement. The threat posed to the colonial state by the raising of the INA and to a lesser extent the German Legion, and their impact on the colonial psyche far exceeded anything thrown up by direct political agitation on the home front. The INA trials, the post-war RIN Mutiny and RIAF 'Strikes' were all forceful indicators to the British that the writing was on the wall and that the time was ripe to begin their retreat from empire.

Apart from its impact on the Indian freedom struggle, in purely military terms the war contributed immensely to hastening the process of Indianisation of the officer corps, the rapid expansion of the IAF and the RIN, and the overall establishment of technical arms in the Indian military as well as laying the foundations of defence production in the country.

Therefore, although India played a key military and economic role in the strategy of the Axis and Allied Powers during the Second World War – as a long-range goal of Japanese operations in South-East and East Asia and of German advances in the Soviet Union and

in Northern Africa, as a base of defence and supply of the Anglo-American forces east of Suez, as a springboard for their counter-offensives in South-East Asia and as a base for an airlift to China – for many years this role has been negated if not positively disowned by certain sections of the Indian political establishment as well as the intelligentsia ostensibly because this “was not our war”.

Whilst this assertion may have had a certain resonance in the years immediately following independence, it is no longer valid today when we have progressed far down the road not just in time and space but also in our national objectives. As a resurgent India seeks to be a major player on the world stage, it behoves it to discard its narrow post-colonial world view and step up to reclaim the role that its armed forces played out on a global scale not so long ago. As the publisher blurb on their website exhorts potential customers not to forget: that the “blood on the foreign soil was Indian”, I would heartily recommend that we lay claim to that legacy in our own larger national interest. We would do well to remember that those that do not record their history stand the danger of being written out of history altogether. Over 90,000 of our countrymen fell in the fight against fascism. They were instrumental in restoring world peace and in establishing a new world order. We owe it as much to their memory, as to our future generations to honour the monumental achievements of this forgotten army in order to reinforce our claim to being one of the pillars in the edifice of the new emerging world order.

Sqn. Ldr. (retd.) RTS Chhina is Secretary and Editor of the United Service Institution of India Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, and Vice President of the Indian Military Historical Society, UK.

Summaries of the Eight Volumes

Amit Kumar

1: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: India and the War (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

During the war years, all classes and territories in India contributed towards recruitment for the armed forces. A total number of 2,581,726 men eventually volunteered to serve in the Indian armed forces during this period. The war accelerated the pace of Indianisation of the armed forces; from a figure of about 1,500 officers in 1939 the number remarkably rose to about 15,000 in 1945. The Indian armed forces were expanded and trained and served in many regions and fought in various theatres, thereby contributing both to the defence of India against invasion as well as to the victory of the United Nations over Nazism and Fascism. The Indian army's total casualties in the war came to 175,000 officers and men, of which those killed in action numbered about 20,000. During the war years India's industrial output reached impressive dimensions and sustained the supply side of the war very efficiently. Thus, despite political unrest in India, India played a very important role in the ultimate victory of the Allied powers.

2: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: Campaign in Western Asia (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

In the Second World War Western Asia was a major battlefield for the European powers vying for control over rich oil resources and vital sea-lanes of communication. The protection of its interests became the paramount principle of British policy, which had dominated the region throughout the 19th century. Iraq became the epicentre of the war in Western Asia and the Government of India (GOI) took an important initiative at a very critical juncture when the British government was undecided between active military interposition and appeasement. This initiative assumed the form of an offer by GOI to divert troops that were intended for Malaya to Basra. The GOI's offer was motivated by the realisation that continued British control over the Persian Gulf and the Suez area were vital for the defence of India. The bulk of the Allied forces deployed in the region during the course of the war came from the Indian Army. And the Commander-in-Chief of India remained in control of operations in Iraq and Iraq until the creation of a separate command directly under the British War Office.

3: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: East African Campaign 1940-41 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

East Africa was not a primary theatre of operations, but the campaign there had immense

significance in determining the fortunes of the Allies and extricating Britain from a difficult situation wherein Britain's vital geo-strategic interests in Egypt came under serious threat from Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia. The campaign won laurels to two Indian divisions, the 4th and the 5th, which played very important role in the eventual collapse of Italian and German military power in the region.

4: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: The North African Campaign 1940-43 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

Hitler's efforts to limit the zone of war became futile when Mussolini's ambitions brought the war to the North African region. Italy was eventually defeated and it had an important bearing on the fortunes of the war. In North Africa Indian troops were called upon to fight alongside the Commonwealth forces in defence of Britain's key interests in Egypt. Though the campaign covered the whole of North Africa, the participation of Indian forces was limited to Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

5: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: Campaigns in South-East Asia 1941-42 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

Japan's aggressive militarism and imperial expansionism in eastern Asia resulted in the Pearl Harbour attack, which brought the USA into the war and eventually culminated in Japan's destruction and surrender. The story of the Anglo-Japanese conflict in these regions, in which the Indian armed forces along with those of the Commonwealth countries (Great Britain, Canada and Australia) participated, is described in this volume. It is a tale of defeats and disasters, which were the inevitable consequence of imperfect planning and inadequate preparations.

6: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: The Arakan Operations, 1942-45 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

Japan's conquest of Burma in 1942 was detrimental to both China and India, and consequently the interest of the Allies. The Allies were desperate to regain the Burmese territory, particularly the British who wanted to recover their imperial possession and secure India from the Japanese threat. The three Arakan offensives between 1942 and 1945 were important but not instrumental in the re-conquest of Burma. Nevertheless, the victories in Arakan had the effect of sealing off an exposed frontier of India which at one time had become vulnerable. The victories here also had a morale boosting impact on the Allied forces and gave them hopes of a final victory in the east. The imperative of coordinated command and the important role of air power were also established in these operations. The Indian forces comprised the 5th, 7th, 14th, 25th and 26th Indian Divisions, which were engaged in Arakan at one time or another and played a very important role.

7: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: Post-War Occupation Forces: Japan and South-East Asia (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

Following their victory, the Allied Powers engaged themselves in the management of chaos that unfolded in the territories of the Axis Powers. Different occupation strategies were adopted for the three major defeated powers – Germany, Italy and Japan. Complete disarmament and demilitarisation were the primary tasks of military occupation of Japan, an effort led by USA under the supreme command of General MacArthur. The British Commonwealth Occupation Force also later joined the US led occupation forces. But with no influence over policy matters, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force which had elements of the Indian Armed Forces played only a secondary role.

8: Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisation 1939-45 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Defence/Pentagon Press, 2012)

Britain harnessed Indian resources in men and material to fight the Axis Powers in far-flung theatres of war, against the declared wishes of the main political parties of India. The compulsions of the war saw the expansion and modernisation of the Indian armed forces. All classes and territories in India contributed to the armed forces, and the grand total was 2,581,726 (2.58 plus million or 25 plus lakh) men. Significantly, for the first time, a small nucleus of Indian officers was formed, though mostly in lower ranks. The expansion of the armed forces and the increasing demands of a total war influenced the growth of the controlling organisation and the Armed Forces Headquarters had to expand itself. However, much of the organisation was temporary and had cropped up haphazardly to meet the immediate requirement and could not therefore develop as an integrated entity and hence proved of little value for future administration.

Amit Kumar is Research Assistant at IDSA.



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg,
Delhi Cantt., New Delhi - 110 010
Tel. (91-11) 2671-7983, Fax.(91-11) 2615 4191
E-mail: contactus@idsa.in Website: <http://www.idsa.in>