

## THE DAWN OF THE STAFF COLLEGE



*The Key to Gandhi Hall*

The special train left Ambala Cantonment on 4th November 1947 and reached Mettupalaiyam on the 8th. The Madras Regimental Centre (MRC) arranged reception and placed all its resources under Col Verma. Initially, the Staff College to make do with improvised buildings for most of their requirements, but it was essential to have a hall of some kind with an auditorium, and a model room. It was decided to convert a small dining room and kitchen into a model room (the present Mountbatten) but the hall had to be built ab-initio.

The Assistant Garrison Engineer (AGE) had neither the authority nor the plans for the construction of a new hall. Col Verma - now promoted Brigadier and appointed Commandant - entreated him to make a start without waiting for the sanctions. Thus came up Gandhi Hall (later to be named Sardar Patel Hall). When the hall was finally completed just before the opening ceremony on 5 April 1948, it possibly had the then state-of-the-art acoustics.

When setting up an institution, every minute detail has to be looked into, be it cutlery, cups, tables, chairs, silver or even paintings to adorn the walls. To collect, assemble and then place each in its own rightful place was no easy task, and the credit for much in the Staff College of today goes to Brig Verma. Constant appeals and persuasion resulted in numerous books, trophies, silver, crockery and cash as donation for the new College. This helped immensely in accumulating other essentials like cutlery, furniture, etc. Every paisa had to be accounted for. A cash crunch meant limitations and a lot of persuasion on the part of Brig Verma to get

non-essentials like horses sanctioned from the government.

Other requisites for the courses like exercises, books, précis, maps, Directing Staff notes, etc, were being compiled and prepared; some from the already existing material from Quetta and the rest through extensive research of the resources at hand.



*Two views of Officers' Mess Wellington 1948*





*Gandhi Hall in 1948 (later renamed as 'Sardar Patel')*