

NATIONALISATION OF ARMED FORCES

ARMY - Rarely in peace-time has a fighting force suffered such great vicissitudes during so short a period as the Indian Army in the last six months of this year. Following the decision to partition the country, the Army had to be divided and the reconstitution which began immediately meant the breaking up of Battalions, Regiments, Installations, Training Institutions etc. Very few realise how complicated a job this was and the difficulties entailed as it had to be done in the short period at our disposal. In addition to the difficult job of reconstitution, the Army had also to take up the responsibility of the evacuation problem in the Punjab. The magnitude of this task was tremendous and it has been magnificently handled. In all, nearly 5 million Muslims were evacuated from India to West Pakistan and a little over 4 million Hindus and Sikhs from Western Pakistan to India. No army of any country in the world had to tackle a problem of such magnitude ever before.

We had hardly finished the evacuation problem when all of a sudden we had to send a troops to protect the people of Kashmir. Enormous effort had to be put in a short period and thanks again to the efforts of the Armed Forces the Indian Union territory in Kashmir is being well protected against the savage attacks of the raiders.

The most important task of nationalisation also had to be carried out inspite of the great difficulties. This has not only proceeded well, but has gathered such a momentum during the last few months that, almost all the important posts will in the near future be held by Indians.

This rapid progress towards complete nationalisation has naturally necessitated a large number of transfers and each change inevitably involves a series of consequential changes. As the mere physical movement of officers from one post to another requires a certain amount of time, and as care must necessarily be taken to ensure that efficiency is not impaired in the process of transfers,

the completion of the whole programme of transfers has had to be spread over a period of months.

The position today is that by the 1st of January, Indian Officers will be in command of all operational formations and units. Before the 15th of August the United India Army had over 10,000 British Officers. On the 15th of August this number fell to a little over 1200 for India. After the 1st/^{of}January 1948 that number will be further reduced to less than 300.

On the 15th of August 1947, less than 10 per cent of the battalion Commanders and Regimental Commanders in the case of the Armoured Corps were Indians. On January the 1st 1948, the position will have been reversed, and about 95 per cent of the Commanders including those of such Gurkha battalions as are to remain in our Army, will be ^{Indians.} The British Officers who still continue, will be in command of Regimental Training Centers. By April the 1st, 1948 all Commands in the Lieut-Collonel level will be held by Indians.

Again, on August the 15th, 1947, only 5 per cent of Brigade and Sub-Area Commanders were Indians. On January the 1st 1948, all Brigades will be commanded by Indians and only three out of thirteen Sub-Area Commanders will be British. There was no Indian Officer commanding a Division or an Area on August the 15th, 1947. By January the 1st, 1948, only 2 Area Commanders will be British, all other Area Commands and Divisional Commands being held by Indians.

In the Technical Arms such as Artillery and Signals no Indian held the rank of Brigadier on August the 15th, 1947. It must be remembered that there is a great deficiency of the Indians in this Branch. By the 1st of January 1948, 60 per cent of the posts will be held by Indians and by the 1st of April 80 per cent. Lastly, on August the 15th, 1947, there was only one Indian Major General holding a Staff Appointment out of a total of 8 Senior appointments. All the GOC-IN-Cs of the Eastern,

Southern, and D.E.P. Commands will be Indians by the middle of January and 5 posts of Major General on the Staff will be held by Indians.

It is clear thus that a great measure of Nationalisation will have, in fact, been effected on the first of January. It was originally hoped that it would be possible to effect even more changes by that date, but the problems of nationalisation had inevitably to be subordinated to the problems arising from internal disturbances, protection and movement of refugees and evacuees, and operations in Kashmir.

It was not until the 20th of November that it became possible, as a result of successful negotiations with H.M.G. in the United Kingdom, to announce terms for British Officers whose services the Government of India wished to retain. The response from British Officers has been satisfactory although it has been greater in certain Arms than in others and there may be many vacancies left in the officer cadre of purely technical arms, such as Engineers. We hope to find suitable candidates in India with the necessary engineering and other technical qualifications to fill these vacancies. In some special categories however it will still be necessary to secure the temporary loan of certain number of specialist technical officers from the United Kingdom.

Stated briefly, the policy of the Government of India for the future is to retain a certain number of British officers as Advisers, staff officers and Instructors as Commandants of certain Training Units and Establishments and in certain Technical Units. I attach the greatest importance to Training Establishments, and every effort will be made to get the best possible Instructors. The total number of such British Officers is likely to be between two and three hundred.

From 1st January General Sir Rob Lockhart is, for reasons of health, vacating the appointment of Commander-in-Chief. His place will be taken by Lieutenant-General F.R.R. Bucher, at present Chief of Staff, Indian Army. General Bucher will be relieved on 1st April 1948 and an Indian Officer will then occupy the highest office in our Army. General Bucher will continue thereafter, however, as

the Chief Adviser. His other colleagues as Advisers will be Lieutenant-General D. Russell, Major-Generals H. Stable, Pert and O. Lentaigne.

NAVY - Naval training is a lengthy process and experience is a factor of great importance in the Sea Service. The pre-war R.I.N. was very small and although development during the war was rapid, the regular entry was not appreciably increased. The result is that the most of our naval officers have only 5 to 8 years' service. Out of a total cadre of 620 commissioned officers only 9 have more than 10 years' service.

Government is pursuing a policy of developing and modernising the Navy. We are acquiring new types, a cruiser and three destroyers which India has never previously possessed, and have decided to set up modern naval training establishments.

Rapid progress is, nevertheless, being made in nationalisation. On the 15th of August 1947, there were 200 British Commissioned and Warrant Officers serving in the R.I.N. out of a total cadre of 850. During 1948 the total number of British Officers, who will be needed to assist in our programmes for the development and modernisation of our Navy, will be about 60 Commissioned and 70 warrant officers out of a total cadre of 620 Commissioned and 209 warrant officers. Indian officers are being appointed to responsible positions as early as possible. All our ships are at present commanded and officered by Indians as are also several of our shore establishments. Of the Naval Headquarters staff of 75 officers all except 9 are Indians.

AIR FORCE - Before the 15th of August the Indian Air Force was mixed with the R.A.F. and there were some 100 R.A.F. Officers and 500 R.A.F. Airmen working in the R.I.A.F. Units. Today there are only six R.A.F. Officers. These Officers will continue to serve on in India for a further period. The Government of India attach the greatest importance to the development of the Air Force and are anxious to make every possible provision for their development. All the training institutions

that are necessary to train our officers and men have now been sanctioned and steps are being taken to get them going as early as possible. Due to the partition, some training institutions were left in Pakistan and arrangements are in hand to build up these institutions in India.

The Government of India are also obtaining on loan the services of 7 more R.A.F. officers for posts requiring specialised knowledge.

This in brief is the comparative position before the 15th of August and now. Nationalisation, it will be seen, has progressed at a rapid pace in spite of great difficulties that we had to face. Due care has been taken that the efficiency of the Armed Forces is not impaired. The results achieved are very satisfactory and by the 1st of April 1948 our Armed Forces will be officered almost entirely by Indians. The Government of India are anxious to bring our Armed Forces in line with our new national status and I have every hope that Indian officers who take up now responsibilities will not only maintain their previous proud record but will better it and show to the world that the nationals of this great country are capable of shouldering the heavy responsibility of management and command of our Forces.
