

= The Lives of a Bengal Lancer (film) =

The Lives of a Bengal Lancer is a 1935 American epic @-@ adventure @-@ drama film loosely adapted from the 1930 autobiography of the same name by British author Francis Yeats @-@ Brown . The film is a Paramount picture directed by Henry Hathaway and written by Grover Jones , William Slavens McNutt , Waldemar Young , John L. Balderston and Achmed Abdullah .

The plot of the film , which bears little resemblance to Brown 's book , tells the story of a group of British cavalymen and high @-@ ranking officers desperately trying to defend their stronghold and headquarters at Bengal against the rebellious natives during the days of the British Raj . It stars Gary Cooper as Lieutenant Alan McGregor , Franchot Tone as Lieutenant John Forsythe , Richard Cromwell as Lieutenant Donald Stone , Guy Standing as Colonel Tom Stone and Douglass Dumbrille as the rebel leader Mohammed Khan , who utters the frequently misquoted line " We have ways to make men talk . "

Production and planning of the film began in 1931 and Paramount expected the film to be released that same year . However , due to a film stock crisis in which most of the location footage deteriorated due to the high temperatures , the project was delayed for four years . The motion picture was released in American cinemas in January 1935 .

The film 's release was met with positive reviews and good box office results . The film was nominated for seven Academy Awards , winning Assistant Director , with other nominations including Best Original Screenplay and Best Picture . It grossed \$ 49 million (2008 equivalent of \$ 1 @. @ 5 million in the 1930s) at the box office . Historian John Reid has described the film as " one of the greatest adventure films of all time " .

= = Plot = =

On the northwest frontier of India during the British Raj , Scottish Canadian Lieutenant Alan McGregor (Gary Cooper) , in charge of newcomers , welcomes two replacements to the 41st Bengal Lancers , Lieutenant John Forsythe (Franchot Tone) and Lieutenant Donald Stone (Richard Cromwell) , the son of the unit 's commander , Colonel Tom Stone (Guy Standing) . Lieutenant Stone volunteered to serve on the Indian front solely in the belief that his father specifically sent for him , while Lieutenant Forsythe , an experienced cavalymen and somewhat of a teasing character , is simply sent off as a replacement for an officer who recently died . After the formal introduction , Lieutenant Stone realizes his father never actually sent for him during a heated argument , a discovery that breaks his heart . In attempt to show impartiality , the colonel treats his son very coldly , which is misinterpreted and causes frustration and resentment in the young officer .

Lieutenant Barrett (Colin Tapley) has been disguised as a native rebel in order to spy on Mohammed Khan (Douglass Dumbrille) , and reports that Khan has been preparing an uprising against the British and is planning to intercept and steal a future military transport of two million rounds of ammunition . When Khan discovers the British regiment knows of his plan , he orders his beautiful slave to seduce and then kidnap Lieutenant Stone , in an attempt to extract sensitive information about the ammunition caravan from him . When the colonel refuses to attempt his rescue , McGregor and Forsythe , appalled by the " lack of concern " the colonel has for his own son , leave the camp at night without orders . Disguised as common natives trying to sell blankets , they are recognized by the beautiful slave , who has met the two men before at a civil event , and are captured . During a seemingly friendly interrogation , Khan says " we have ways of making men talk " and proceeds to have the prisoners tortured ; their nails are ripped off and the sensitive skin underneath is burned . While McGregor and Forsythe , despite the agonizing pain , refuse to speak , Stone cracks and reveals what he knows . As a result , the ammunition is captured .

After receiving news about the stolen ammunition , Colonel Stone prepares his regiment for battle . From their cell , the captives see the outmatched Bengal Lancers deployed to assault Khan 's fortress . They manage to escape and ultimately destroy the ammunition tower , and young Stone redeems himself by killing Khan with a dagger . With their ammunition gone and headquarters in

ruins as a result of the battle , the remaining rebels surrender . However , McGregor , who was mainly responsible for the destruction of the ammunition tower , is killed in the assault . To recognize their battlefield bravery and military effort , Forsythe and Lieutenant Stone are awarded the Distinguished Service Order and McGregor posthumously receives the prestigious Victoria Cross , with McGregor 's horse awarded the medal on his behalf .

= = Cast = =

Gary Cooper as Lieutenant Alan McGregor , a highly experienced officer in his mid @-@ thirties , who has spent a long time with the regiment . McGregor is portrayed as a charming , open character who befriends most officers , but is repeatedly refused promotion and a say in military matters because of disregard for his superiors .

Franchot Tone as Lieutenant John Forsythe , an educated cavalryman in his mid @-@ twenties from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst . Forsythe is presented as the funny guy of the main characters , and becomes notable for his Sandhurst @-@ style in military exercise , something that earns him countless compliments from his superiors .

Richard Cromwell as Lieutenant Donald Stone , a recent graduate and very young officer . As the son of a colonel with a famous name , he is treated respectfully , but becomes frustrated and morose because of personal issues with his father .

Guy Standing as Colonel Tom Stone , a long @-@ serving colonel who left his home in Britain for the Indian front , and explains to his son in the film that the " service always comes first ... something your mother never understood . " He is considered to be a diehard by @-@ the @-@ book colonel who suppresses his feelings and never does anything without orders .

C. Aubrey Smith as Major Hamilton , an old , but very experienced major who serves as Colonel Stone 's right @-@ hand man and Lieutenant Stone 's second father and friend . He , along with his chief , planned and coordinated the big assault on the Muhammad Khan 's fortress .

Kathleen Burke as Tania Volkanskaya , a beautiful and seductive young woman who is Khan 's slave . She is used as Khan 's secret ace , who seduces young men and tricks them into capture when needed . It was her who , with considerable ease , outwitted first Stone and then McGregor and Forsythe .

Douglass Dumbrille as Mohammed Khan , a known and wealthy prince of region , but also the secret rebel leader who fights for Bengal independence against the British . He is portrayed as the films villain and is responsible for the death and torture of many people .

Colin Tapley as Lieutenant Barrett , a close friend of Lieutenant McGregor who has been ordered to infiltrate Khan 's group of bandits and delivers vital information about the rebels ' location and movement .

Lumsden Hare as Major General Woodley , the man in over @-@ all command of the whole regiment . He is disliked by most of the regiment 's officers , especially McGregor , because his orders usually involve training exercises with pigs . He thought of , and approved , the attack on Khan 's stronghold .

= = Production = =

= = = Stock crisis = = =

Paramount originally planned to produce the film in 1931 and sent cinematographers Ernest B. Schoedsack and Rex Wimpy to India to film location shots such as a tiger hunt . However , much of the film stock deteriorated in the hot sun while on location , so when the film was eventually made , much of the production took place in the hills surrounding Los Angeles , where Paiute Native Americans were used as extras .

= = = Filming = = =

Among the filming locations were Lone Pine , Calif . , Buffalo Flats in Malibu , Calif . , the Paramount Ranch in Agoura , Calif . , and the Iverson Movie Ranch in Chatsworth , Calif . For the climactic half @-@ hour battle sequence at the end of the film , an elaborate set was built in the Iverson Gorge , part of the Iverson Movie Ranch , to depict Mogala , the mountain stronghold of Mohammed Khan .

= = Release = =

= = = Box office = = =

The film was released in American cinemas in January 1935 . It was a big success at the box office and kicked off a cycle of Imperial adventure tales , including The Charge of the Light Brigade (1936) , Another Dawn (1937) , Gunga Din (1939) , The Four Feathers (1939) , and The Real Glory (1939) . The film grossed \$ 49 million worldwide (2008 equivalent of \$ 1 @.@ 5 million in the 1930s) .

= = = Critical reception and influence = = =

Laura Elston from the magazine Canada wrote that The Lives of a Bengal Lancer did " more glory to the British traditions than the British would dare to do for themselves . " In response to the film success , Frederick Herron of the Motion Picture Association of America wrote " Hollywood is doing a very good work in selling the British Empire to the world . " Historian John Reid noted in his book Award @-@ Winning Films of the 1930s that the film is considered " one of the greatest adventure films of all time " and highly praised Hathaway 's work by saying " the film really made his reputation . " It also received a praised review in Boys ' Life magazine , starting off the review with the words " You will be immensely pleased with The Lives of a Bengal lancer " and went on to compare the style and class of the three main characters to that of The Three Musketeers . The film holds an overall approval rating of 100 % on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes , based on 9 reviews , with a rating average of 8 out of 10 .

German dictator Adolf Hitler told British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax in 1937 that one of his favorite films was The Lives of a Bengal Lancer , which he had seen three times . " I like this film because it depicted a handful of Britons holding a continent in thrall . That is how a superior race must behave and the film is a compulsory viewing for the SS . " Besides Hitler 's enthusiasm , the film also became popular in Nazi Germany where all forms of entertainment were censored . The Nazis are believed to have liked the rule @-@ Britannia , pro @-@ imperialist adventure film because it embraced the " leader principle " which mirrored the " Führer principle " . In his book The Collaboration , Ben Urwand wrote about the film 's impact in Germany :

The Lives of a Bengal Lancer had drawn in massive crowds , but it had not emphasized the present need for fascism ? it had hearkened back to an earlier era . The next Hollywood film that delivered a National Socialist message would be both popular and contemporary , and as a result , it would set a new standard for future German production . The film was called Our Daily Bread .

= = = Plot discrepancies = = =

The film plot of The Lives of a Bengal Lancer bear little resemblance to the plot of the book . Reid noted in Award @-@ Winning Films of the 1930s that " None of the characters in the book appear in the screenplay , not even Yeats @-@ Brown himself . The plot of the film is also entirely different . "

= = = Home media = = =

The Paramount picture was distributed to home media on VHS on March 1 , 1992 and on DVD on

May 31 , 2005 . It has since been released in multiple languages and is included in several multi
@-@ film collections .

= = Awards = =

The film was nominated for the following Academy Awards , winning in one category :