

2. *Changes in Order of Battle of the Forces in India.*

The Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia Command began to function from midnight of the 15/16th November. From this date the Fourteenth Army and the Ceylon Command (including the anchorages of Addu Atoll, Diego Garcia and Cocos) came under his command, except for certain administrative and training matters which my headquarters continued to handle until the newly formed 11th Army Group headquarters staff was in a position to take them over.

Earlier, various important changes took place of which the most important were:—

(a) The splitting of the Eastern Army on the 15th October into the Eastern Command (under Lt.-General A. G. O. M. Mayne) and the Fourteenth Army under General Sir George Giffard).

(b) The disappearance of the Indian Expeditionary Force and its redesignation as the 33rd Indian Corps.

With regard to (a) the boundary between the two was the River Meghna from its mouth to the north as far as its junction with the Assam-Bengal boundary at Lakhai, and thence the Assam-Bengal boundary. The Fourteenth Army was an operational headquarters under the new organisation of the South East Asia Command, while the Eastern Command was a static formation under the India Command.

As regards (b) the Indian Expeditionary Force Headquarters (I.E.F.) had been formed in February 1943 under the orders of the Governor General in Council, and was designed to take charge of all overseas operations launched against the Japanese from India. Its original Commander was A/Maj.-Gen. T. J. W. Winterton, but General Sir George Giffard, was appointed to succeed him on the 31st March, 1943.

Early in September the I.E.F. was redesignated the 33rd Indian Corps.

3. *Long Range Penetration Groups (L. R. P. Groups)—Their Expansion and Organisation into a "Special Force."*

Lord Wavell's last Despatch gave an account of the experiment in long range penetration carried out in the spring of 1943 by the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade under Brigadier (later Maj.-Gen.) O. C. Wingate.

The success of this Brigade in traversing North Burma (being maintained entirely by air supply and what they could purchase locally), and the inability of the Japanese to obliterate it, opened up new possibilities.

One of the features of this operation had been that the Brigade had adopted an entirely new organisation for its raid, and had undergone much special training with particular equipment prior to embarking on it.

Briefly, under this new organisation, the battalions of the Brigade had been broken up and re-organised into a number of columns. The Brigade itself had been termed a "Long Range Penetration Brigade" and there were seven columns, each about half a battalion strong, in it. Each of these columns was a self-contained unit under its own commander, with its own facilities for receiving supplies by air, and for intercommunication. Each was more-over organised and trained to fight as a highly

mobile tactical unit in the jungle. The Brigade had no artillery or motor transport, but units had medium machine guns and mortars. It moved on foot through the jungle with the minimum of pack transport, and aimed at disrupting the rearward organisation of the enemy. To effect this it relied on its great mobility and its complete independence of any fixed line of supply.

When the detachments of 77th Brigade came out of Burma it was collected at Imphal and officers and men were sent on leave. Major-General Wingate came to New Delhi and, after discussing with me and my staff the lessons to be drawn from his recent operations in Burma, went to England where he was again able to explain his ideas. These were examined prior to, and at the Quebec Conference, and it was finally decided to make a greatly extended use of long range penetration forces. My views on the employment of these forces were sent to the Chiefs of Staffs on the 9th August.

I considered that the timings and areas of employment of L.R.P. Groups, are governed by the activities of the main forces. Without exploitation by the main forces concerned, operations by L.R.P. Groups are unjustifiably costly against a first class enemy and achieve no strategic object. These Groups are not capable of achieving decisive results against organised forces of all arms. Their role is not to fight, but to evade the enemy and by guerilla tactics to harass him. I emphasised that unless the main forces can take advantage of the situations created by these Groups, the latter's efforts are wasted. In addition subsequent Japanese retaliation against Burmese who have helped these Groups, only made them less willing to help in the future.

4. It was now decided to form a L.R.P. force of six brigades in the first instance for Burma operations and to increase these to eight later on. Each brigade was to be organised in two "wings" and to consist of eight columns, each three hundred and forty strong—a total in all of some 1,000 officers and 25,000 men. There was to be a Force Headquarters whose functions were in the first instance to deal with policy and to organise and train the "L.R.P." or "Special Force" as it was now called.

By the time these decisions were taken the leave of the original 77th (L.R.P.) Brigade was over, and it was reformed near Jhansi in August.

Meanwhile, a second long range penetration brigade (111th Indian Infantry Brigade) had been forming in the same area.

5. It was now decided to transform the 70th British Division, which was in Bangalore at the time, into the Special Force, and it was moved to Nowgong early in October for this purpose.

The 77th and 111th Indian Infantry Brigades were increased from six to eight columns each, by the addition to each of an extra British infantry battalion. The 3rd West African Infantry Brigade, which arrived at Bombay on the 4th November, joined the Special Force in mid-November.

An American L.R.P. Brigade (5307 Provisional Regiment) arrived in India and moved to Deogarh near Lalitpur early in November for training, but was not incorporated in the Special Force.