

suffered acutely, and here, at the request of His Excellency the Viceroy for military aid in relief of famine distress in Bengal, I approved, on the 1st November, the following plan for the employment of military resources:—

(a) An organisation under command Maj.-General A. V. T. Wakely, in the appointment of Director of Movements Civil Supplies, working under the Bengal Government.

(b) A second organisation under command Maj.-General D. Stuart, Commander 303 L of C Area, reinforced by additional troops to be drafted into the area.

Lt.-General A. G. O. M. Mayne, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, was appointed Supreme Military Liaison Officer between the Bengal Government and the military authorities.

The duty of Maj.-General Wakely's organisation was to transport food-grains and other supplies from Calcutta and other outside sources to main distribution centres in the distressed areas by the maximum use of all available transportation methods.

Maj.-General Stuart's command reinforced by—

- One Indian motorised brigade.
- Five Indian Infantry battalions.
- One Indian General Hospital.
- Two field ambulances.
- One Casualty Clearing Station.

and certain engineer and supply units assisted the civil organisation in the transportation and distribution of foodstuffs forward of main distribution centres and in medical relief.

By the night of the 15/16th November reinforcements were already operating in the Dacca area, and more were due to arrive on the 19th November and subsequent days. Advanced parties were already on the ground carrying out detailed reconnaissances.

Prior to the arrival of these additional troops, the transportation of food-grains commenced under Maj.-General Stuart's organisation using transport and internal security troops already available in Bengal.

In addition to the provision of units, medical assistance was provided in the form of 101 medical officers, of whom 11 were specialists in hygiene. These officers commenced to arrive on the 15th November and they were sent immediately to distressed areas.

On the 15th November, within a fortnight of the inception of the project, military aid had already achieved very satisfactory and promising results. The output of relief supplies from Calcutta to the districts had been doubled, public confidence in the efficacy of relief measures had been partially restored and, in consequence, the price of food-grains in the districts had been substantially lowered.

This relief work, both economic and medical, was still in progress at the end of the period, for the emergency in Bengal had by no means ended by then.

33. *The North West Frontier of India*

The tribal areas of the North West Frontier continued quiet, and except for occasional acts of kidnapping, sniping, etc., by gangs of bad characters, there was no hostile activity on our side of the international frontier.

As regards the general outlook across the frontier, with the removal of the threat (from the Caucasus) to Persia and the North West Frontier, and the turn in the Allied fortunes in Europe, our policy underwent a change. The role of the land and air forces in North West India was restricted to exercising tribal control. The forces available for this were those normally allocated to Frontier Defence and Frontier Defence Reserve; but at the same time I warned the Commander of the North Western Army that it might be necessary to draw on them for commitments in the East of India.

With this reservation therefore, I directed that the general policy was to maintain our existing position in the tribal areas, and that action taken in pursuance of it should as far as possible be designed to avoid the creation of situations demanding the employment of forces additional to those at the disposal of the Commander of the North Western Army.

PART III—ORGANISATION, TRAINING AND ADMINISTRATION ORGANISATION.

1. *General.*

During the period covered by this Despatch much attention was given to the organisation of the Army in India. Many of the changes and innovations were the result of experience gained during the fighting of the previous dry season, and some were far-reaching in character.

In the re-organisation of the composition of divisions the following principles were observed—

The existing composition was to be disturbed as little as possible.

Vehicles with less mobility than the 15 cwt. four-wheel-drive truck were generally to be eliminated.

The number of vehicles was to be reduced to the absolute minimum, and those kept were to be for the carriage of essential fighting equipment only.

A Divisional Headquarters battalion was introduced. This had the same War Establishment as other infantry battalions, and replaced divisional defence and employment platoons and brigade defence platoons.

The need for the closest possible support of infantry by artillery in country where the normal 25 pounder artillery regiment could not operate was met by providing 3.7" howitzers and 3" mortars.

In light divisions the brigade light reconnaissance battalions were to be replaced by one divisional light reconnaissance battalion.

The most far-reaching and revolutionary of the innovations however, was that initiated by my predecessor in the form of long range penetration (L.R.P.) groups. These are dealt with separately in the paragraphs which follow, and their expansion formed a major feature of the re-organisation that took place.

In the lower formations and units various changes affecting the artillery, motor battalions, infantry (both British and Indian), Indian machine gun battalions and Royal Indian Army Service Corps were introduced. These affected types and weight of equipment as well as the number and grouping of personnel and the ranks of junior commanders.