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A Russian View of the Indian Army

Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. Wavell ^a
^a 41st Regiment
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"The movements on the Lauter, and those of five squadrons
 "head of the column before Reidseltz, were productive of loss o
 "and of a needless halt, while, on the other hand, the whole div
 "after having crossed the Lauter, engaged in the pursuit of a
 "squadron of the enemy, and thus advanced further than w
 "tended.

"The advanced posts were, like the bivouacs, organized too
 "on the model of those required for the detachments in peace m
 "vres, and were not suitable to the exigencies of the peculiar po
 "in which an isolated large body of cavalry finds itself."

The author does not mean to imply that these faults will alwa
 committed at the opening of a campaign, but if these are not
 mitted others of a similar nature will be, which only experience g
 on service will correct, and which can only be guarded again
 reflection, by study, and by practice, in time of peace.

In conclusion, I cannot do better than finish this very imp
 sketch of General v. Verdy du Vernois' interesting work th
 quoting his own words, which are as follows:

"The opinions which in the foregoing studies have been set
 "are only the individual views of the author, and they make (le
 "be here repeated once more) no claim whatever to infallibility
 "however, they only rouse and fix the student's attention upo
 "many points that are worth considering in reference to thi
 "portant and difficult phase of cavalry service, and cause h
 "exercise his own judgment thereupon, then the object of this
 "will have been fully attained."

A RUSSIAN VIEW OF THE INDIAN ARMY.

Contributed by Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. WAVELL, 41st Regim

"VOENNI SBORNIK," St. Petersburg. Published monthly, annua
 scription 7½ roubles.

In the September number of the above publication is a pa
 summary of which, as it gives a Russian view of our Indian
 may prove interesting.

The writer has obtained his material from the following c
 papers:—

"Correspondence on the subject of the Organization of the I
 "Army," presented to both Houses of Parliament by comma
 Her Majesty, 1877.

"Statistical abstracts relating to British India from 1865 to 1
 He commences as follows:—

"To form a body of mercenary troops from among the natives
 "conquered country, whose sole functions are to keep order in

"country, is indeed a strange experiment. We do not find a parallel to it in the history of ancient Persia, who employed Greek mercenaries; nor in that of the Roman Empire, whose legions were latterly recruited from Germans and other barbarians. Neither the Persians nor the Romans employed these mercenaries against their own countrymen, nor did the motley hordes of Timour and Genghis Khan furnish examples of auxiliaries, drawn from a conquered nation, employed in keeping it in subjection. Russian military history, it is true, supplies instances of peoples who have been brought into subjection taking service in the ranks of the Russian Army, as for instance, the Tartars of Siberia and several tribes of the Caucasus; but they did not form a part of the regular Army, and the duty of maintaining the authority of Russia among their fellow countrymen was not intrusted to them. To form a regular Army from the natives of a subjugated country, and to confide in them to keep down their fellow countrymen has been achieved by England only and by her only in India."

The writer does not propose to trace the causes which have rendered this possible, but briefly attributes it to an astounding want of patriotism on the part of the natives of India, and to the fact that the tyranny of native rajas is more insufferable than the British yoke, and further, that men are tempted into the ranks of the Army, (1) by good pay and the comfortable conditions of life in the Army, (2) through the fact that the soldiers belong or did belong mostly to a caste whose trade is war. "The history of the English wars in Hindustan furnishes many examples where the Sepoys have fought better for British interests than even the British soldiers. In the Mutiny of 1857, a large number of the native regiments remained faithful to the British Government. In 1868 the Expedition to Abyssinia was partly composed of native regiments; and small expeditions against the Lushais and Dufflas have been furnished entirely from the native Army." Notwithstanding this, the writer gathers from the reports and correspondence under review, that of late days, complaints of the deterioration of the native army have been heard, and that a growing disinclination has been manifested on the part of British Officers to join the Indian Army, resulting in a lack of subaltern Officers, especially in the Madras Presidency.

As regards numbers, an analysis of the figures contained in the Parliamentary Report is given, and the conclusion arrived at, that about two-thirds of the British force in India are natives of the country. As regards the composition of this force, *divide et impera* is the guiding principle of regimental organization, so that in one company are found Hindustanis, Sikhs, Pathans, Jats, &c. "English statesmen opine that people of different descent and political and religious sympathies are not likely to combine in a political conspiracy, and on the other hand, it is easy to arouse among them a spirit of competition for distinction in the Service, and thus to form from the mass an obedient tool for furthering British interests. There are, however, weighty objections to be considered on the other side. The calculation may prove fallacious if the

“leaders have not sufficient skill and tact to subordinate these conflicting national sympathies and aspirations to the furtherance of British interests. Can the British rulers place thorough reliance on the influence which Englishmen can exert over this heterogeneous mass of soldiers? The experience of former years, when India was conquered by Sepoy soldiers, is apparently on their side. Now comes a weighty consideration. Formerly in Sepoy regiments in each company there were some European Officers—their ranks were in the second rank—now it is not so—not only is there not a sufficient number of English Officers, but the Government obviously has no hope of obtaining more. Companies are therefore, been doubled, and the double company placed under the command of an Englishman; the majority of the Officers in a regiment are, therefore, natives. One English Officer is considered sufficient to control the British patriotism into 118 natives. Most English general commanders in India report that the native Officers of the present day are satisfactory as a class, and that weakening the Indian element in Sepoy regiments need not be a source of danger; they are, however, sceptics on this point, but their voice is hushed by the all-powerful consideration of money. European Officers in India are so costly.”

Regarding class regiments the reviewer says, “Besides regiments of mixed castes there have long existed regiments composed only of Sikhs and Goorkhas, who have distinguished themselves by their bravery; only it must be remembered that their glory was chiefly gained at a time when the European element was numerous. One English Officer to twenty men. Now, this is no longer the case. The native Officers, into whose hands has fallen not the appearance but the real command of the companies, although subjects of the British Emperor, the Padishah of India, are still natives of India and not British. On the alleged difficulty experienced by the authorities in obtaining Officers for the Indian Army, the reviewer says, “It is obvious that strenuous efforts must be made by the British Government to attract British Officers to fill these vacancies. But how to do this? In France or with us the vacancies in the subaltern ranks are filled by promoting capable non-commissioned Officers, but in India social prejudices are so sharply defined that this is impossible. A native who has once worn the soldier's uniform will never wear that of an Officer, even if he should display the genius of a Napoleon. The rank of sergeant must be the limit of his ambition; under such circumstances some other method of filling the ranks of Officers must be discovered.” Pay alone, we are informed, would not be a sufficient inducement, and the steps taken by the authorities to accelerate promotion are detailed, viz., limiting the tenure of commands to five years—increased retiring allowances, &c. The concluding remarks on this portion of the subject are as follows:—“These measures really attained the desired result—a constant increase of subaltern Officers? We cannot answer. It may, however, be doubted, if we reflect on the fact that military service is not so popular with the English people, and that in England there

"found that small noblesse which furnishes the German Army with its sub-lieutenants." The growing expense of the Army we are told disturbs the Indian Government. The expense of living has increased enormously: in places where, in 1848, a man could keep himself and family for 6 rupees monthly, he now requires 11 rupees. In Cawnpore the price of rice has increased from 1860 to 1875 in the proportion of 7:15. "This growing expenditure cannot be checked by cunning schemes for promotion and retirement, and the British Government has been compelled to resort to the expedient of reducing the personal establishment. This has been done of late years as far as is possible, especially in the matter of Officers; but the rank and file cannot be further reduced without endangering the security of the country, and here the Indian Minister in England has to face a question the solution of which is possibly beyond human capacity. Even now the ranks of the Sepoy Army are not filled by men of the Kshattriya or warlike caste, as was the case in the days of the 'Honourable Company,' but men of the lowest castes are enrolled who are less exacting, but at the same time probably less to be relied on. Not long since there was a talk of sending 50,000 troops from India to Egypt to occupy that country, from whence they might operate in Syria, or on the shores of the Hellespont; but beyond this the natives of Hindustan could not be employed in Europe; the cold of Pekin was found unbearable by them. It is true there are in the Sepoy ranks Afghans and Beloochees, who are better suited to stand a vigorous climate than the inhabitants of Bengal and the Carnatic; but their number is not large, and if they were sent out of the country the Anglo-Indian Government would not be in a position to make a forward movement in the north-west beyond the frontier towards Candahar and Herat." In the Parliamentary papers extracts are given from the confidential reports of general Officers on the different regiments of the native Army on the difficulty or otherwise of obtaining recruits, and on the general efficiency as regards drill, discipline, &c., of the various corps. Some of the latter reports being by no means favourable, the writer of the article quotes a number of these extracts and remarks; "Reports on the condition of particular regiments, whether in praise or blame, however strongly expressed, are not to be relied on to furnish us with a stand-point from which to judge the value of the Sepoy Army as a large and important Government institution. The causes from which these conditions arise may be of a temporary nature. Far more weighty are the recorded opinions of men who have spent a great portion of their lives in service in the East. In this category are to be placed the interesting reports of Generals Brownlow and Blake. The former of these Officers, while approving of the present organization of the Sepoy regiments, disapproves of the way in which they are recruited. He opines that taking soldiers from among the lower classes of the people has lowered the dignity of army service, and that soldiers of the type of those who fought under Wellesley and Clive no longer exist. Even now, however, much might be done if only the leaders were up to the mark. Among

“ Asiatics, says Brownlow, the personal influence of the command
 “ of paramount importance. Obviously native Officers are in a
 “ tion to exercise this personal influence, acquainted as they are
 “ the character and inner thoughts and feelings of their fellow com
 “ men. Brownlow, therefore, invites the particular attention
 “ Government to the question of the Subadars and Jemadars.
 “ approves of the system of making them virtual company
 “ manders, but is silent on this point—how are the new Cap
 “ situated as regards their European brother Officers? The an
 “ to this question is important, for it is easy for these latter, li
 “ apart from the native Officers and raised above them, to be dec
 “ by an apparent zeal and a knowledge of regulations, and to fa
 “ penetrate their real political feelings and sympathies which Asi
 “ know how to conceal with treacherous facility. General F
 “ reports favourably on the native Officers, especially those who
 “ served a long time in the same corps; but this long service, alth
 “ it tends to keep up *esprit de corps*, has this objection, that
 “ Officers become old men and block the way of the younger o
 “ Of the pay of the native Officers the writer says it is now as go
 “ that of the Officers of most European armies, and concludes his p
 “ with the following remarks:—“ All these reports having been a
 “ tively considered by the highest military authorities in India,
 “ worked into the shape of a project for the organization of the S
 “ Army by Lord Napier of Magdala. The result is that the En
 “ Government has decided that the Subadars shall henceforwar
 “ considered the immediate commanders of the Sepoys, whils
 “ British Officers are reserved the higher posts in the regiment.
 “ pay of the native Officers has been raised, and the condition of
 “ Sepoys improved.

“ The result has been an increase of the military budget to
 “ extent of 12 lakhs of rupees; but the Government has not gr
 “ this expenditure, and the budget has been squared by a redu
 “ of expenditure in other directions. It is obviously an acknowle
 “ fact that henceforth the Empress of India must maintain her
 “ over the country, and guard it from external enemies by the a
 “ ance of the people of India itself. British regiments in India
 “ still of prime importance, but there is not between them and
 “ Sepoys that gulf which existed in former days. If the pol
 “ considerations on which this reorganization of the native Arr
 “ based prove correct, we may congratulate England on having so
 “ a problem whose solution has hitherto been beyond the force of
 “ nation. But is their calculation to be relied on?”