

Letter to the Editor

KOREAN ARMISTICE – 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Sir

A propos to an article on "50th Anniversary Korean War Armistice Commemoration" by Maj Gen HB Singh, PVSM (Retd) in the *USI Journal* of July-September 2003.

Certain relevant facts on the subject need to be brought out so as to present a wholesome picture of the military history and sequence of events of the function. These are based on written reports submitted by Brigadier Justice DM Sen, former Judge Advocate General of the Army, and the Korean newspapers.

During the custody of Korean prisoners of war for repatriation, Lt Gen KS Thimayya, DSO, was the chairman of Neutral Nations Repatriations Commission (NNRC) and Lt Gen SSP Thorat, DSO was the Head of Custodian Force of India. Both these General Officers played a very significant role in custody of Korean prisoners of war for repatriation which was acclaimed to be a very successful operation.

On behalf of the Indian Army, Brigadier Justice DM Sen, who was a legal Advisor to the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), organised by the UN, carried the framed photographs of Lt Gen KS Thimayya (Retd) and Lt Gen SSP Thorat (Retd) to Korea. Presentation of these photographs was sanctioned by the Army HQ. These photographs were formally presented to Lt Gen Park (Retd), President of War Museum, Seoul on 02 December 2003 in a ceremony by the Indian Ambassador Shri PS Ray. The importance of these photographs was such that these were accepted and a "Gift deed" signed by the President of War Memorial of Korea duly executed. The same is under custody and display at the Institute of Military Law, Kamptee (Nagpur).

Lieutenant Colonel B S Panwar

The War Unfinished*

Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd)**

Operation Parakram was one of the longest mobilisations in the history of any nation. Although Lieutenant General VK Sood (Retd) and Pravin Sawhney – the two authors – state that we came close to war on two occasions, that was probably the only time Parakram generated any adrenaline in the field formations. When it was called off, it had failed to culminate into the purpose normally ordained for mobilising an army. It is entirely to the credit of the two authors that they have tackled a formidable subject with lucidity and clarity. National security encompasses a kaleidoscope of intertwining subjects and, therefore, lay public and public servants alike often miss the wood for the trees. The authors have been able to weave diverse subjects like national and international politics, strategy, operational planning, nuclear capabilities, diplomacy and personalities into a fine mosaic.

In the final analysis, the genesis of Operation Parakram was due to Operation Badr and the attendant rise of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. The planning, preparation and execution of Operation Badr by Pakistan has been covered in very good detail. It was a strategic masterpiece especially in the use of Northern Light Infantry units by Pakistan that deceived India. It is inconceivable that the fire support available initially in Kargil sector was just one 105mm field regiment, one 120 mm mortar battery and one 130 mm medium battery. Pakistan's elaborate electronic deception plan also added to the confusion. As a consequence, the Indian Army suffered reverses, in the initial stages.

As per the authors, the inept handling of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir was a boon to the terrorists. A diffused and 'soft / hard' approach resulted in emboldening the terrorist groups who then began to attack with impunity important civil and military targets. The rise of militancy and the reactions of the Central and State Governments have been extremely well analysed and covered in detail. The role of ISI in fomenting trouble in Jammu and Kashmir and aiding militancy, however, has been mentioned *en passant* though the authors have talked of the pan-Islamic dream of Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, ex-chief of ISI. Surprisingly the authors seemingly support the statement of Cherie Blair, which justifies Palestinian suicide bombers by stating that it "applies to Muslim militants world wide". Again, the Author's perception (after Mullah Omar declared his support for jihad in Jammu and Kashmir) that "*this was enough for militant elements*

*Operation Parakram : The War Unfinished. By Lieutenant General VK Sood (Retd) and Pravin Sawhney (New Delhi : Sage Publications, 2004), pp. 205, Rs. 280.00, ISBN : 81-7829-246-7.

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everywhere in the world to embrace Kashmir as their cause", appears an exaggeration. The credit of tackling the scourge of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, as per the authors, goes to General SF Rodrigues and he was successful in this venture towards the end of 1992. General BC Joshi, ever innovative, raised Rashtriya Rifles (RR) battalions for internal security operations. The plan involved raising 30 battalions of RR from within army's own resources in one year by 'milking' Arms and Service units! That such a disparate group could be effective immediately against hardened militants was proved naïve in the extreme. Worse, RR was neither funded by Ministry of Home Affairs, nor given its full dues by the Ministry of Defence. Thus, things began to drift at a heavy cost for Counter Insurgency (CI) operations. The implications of Unified Headquarters (UH) and Unified Command (UC) to tackle militancy have been analysed most convincingly. While the authors credit General BC Joshi for advocating a proactive policy in Jammu and Kashmir, others, notably General KV Krishna Rao, hold a different opinion altogether.

The heightened militancy resulted in an attack on Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, and on 13 December 2001 the Indian parliament was attacked. It would appear that Operation Parakram was ordered on 18 December 2001 without much thought. The authors are of the opinion that Indian polity lacked vision as to what was required to be accomplished by mobilising the armed forces. General S Padmanabhan, along with the Air and Naval Chiefs, was told to prepare for a war with Pakistan but were not given any specific purpose for mobilising. Interestingly, the authors mention that the objectives for Operation Parakram were conceived and set by Northern Command! A plan was, thus, formulated to carry out multiple forays across the Line of Control (LoC) and destroy terrorist training camps in Jammu and Kashmir. An important caveat was to restrict operations to POK and hopefully capture important areas eg Bugina Bulge, Lipa Valley etc. A general mobilisation – Operation Parakram – was of use in that it ensured that India was ready for a riposte. Three mountain divisions, which had been dual tasked, were moved to the western theatre from the east. During early January 2002, the US satellites photographed 2 Corps elements poised close to the border and opposite Fort Abbas. Lieutenant General Kapil Vij was made a scapegoat for the *faux pas* and replaced by Lieutenant General BS Thakur! It is the authors' belief that thereafter the limited objectives suggested by Northern Command, ie. capture of territory in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) to inhibit infiltration, no longer looked attractive and a changed political and military thinking resulted in the move of 1 Corps to the desert! The attack by terrorists on army camp at Kaluchak on 14 May 2002 proved to be the proverbial straw on camel's back. D-Day was set for 15 June 2002, as it would have given us 15 days prior to the monsoon. The grand design now, as stated by the authors, was to launch a powerful attack by our strike corps in the southern half of Pakistan to secure territories across the border. This would have

forced Pakistan to commit not only their Army Reserve South but also Army Reserve North in order to contain the combined might of India's three strike corps. India's mechanised forces would then have inflicted heavy losses on Pakistan's mechanised forces. A major change in politico-military objectives is worth pondering! In the event, Pakistan test-fired two nuclear capable missiles in May 2002 and the Indian military were left at the starting blocks again. It is noteworthy, write the authors, that during the period when we had given up our offensive plans, Pakistan following their doctrine of 'offensive-defence' captured Loonda Post in Machal in July 2002 which was later recaptured by us on 2 August 2002. Repeated entreaties by the Army after 10 months of mobilisation, to get back to the barracks did not find immediate favour. It was only after a meeting of the National Security Advisory Board on 16 October 2002 that the Government ordered a readjustment of formations for a 'strategic relocation'. Parakram cost the nation Rs. 8000 crores, apart from Rs. 300 crores paid as compensation.

The authors believe that India conducted its nuclear tests in 1998 without fully considering the consequences. Be that as it may, Pakistan replied by carrying out nuclear tests and later used the bogey of deterrence to its advantage. The authors are of the opinion that going nuclear has helped Pakistan achieve a balance of power since the 'button' is with the military. The general situation as regards nuclear readiness is that India is not a nuclear weapon state but a state with nuclear weapons, and the difference is considerable. In the author's perception, as regards the operational aspect of nuclear weapons – readiness, command and control, delivery systems – our military is out of the policy making group and so would find it difficult to plan for nuclear weapons including Theatre Nuclear Weapons (TNW) since they do not know what we can bring to bear on the enemy.

The authors have discussed with insight the use of ballistic missiles with improved Reconnaissance Surveillance and Target Acquisition (RSTA), the new operational philosophy including pivot and deep strike concept in the conventional battlefield. Better air-land battle capability for the army, bi-service and tri-service commands are thorny issues that the three Services have to resolve, states the book. Modernisation of operational logistics and slippages in the Air Force are other two areas of concern.

The book is a minor classic in the realm of strategy and higher direction of war. The authors have carried out a painstaking study of an amorphous subject to reach arguably sound conclusions. Indeed the authors have shown considerable ingenuity and perspicacity to write on a subject that affects our national security. This is an extremely interesting, informative, thought provoking and hard-hitting book. A tantalising question remains unanswered – was there any other purpose of Operation Parakram than war? Anyone with an interest in matters military will find the book absorbing.

Gallantry on the North West Frontier 1849-1947*

Lieutenant General SL Menezes, PVSM, SC (Retd)**

At the very outset it can be said that currently no more knowledgeable person than the author could have written this book on such a fascinating region for regimental / corps historians of the Indian Army, and even the nascent Indian Air Force. Published privately, it is a labour of love by an individual with a passion for the region in question, now very much in the World news, featuring most regiments and corps of the undivided Indian Army. Unfailingly evocative with some revealing vignettes of the area and its people, it is also often emotive. Educated at the Imperial Service College, Windsor, and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, he was severely injured while on the Unattached List of the Indian Army. He went on to join the Guides Infantry (12th Frontier Force Regiment), but when his injuries proved too much of a handicap, he opted for transfer to the Indian Political Service in 1939. His first posting was to the Hazara District, then to Kohat, and thereafter to the Khyber Agency. While there, he helped to raise the First Afridi Battalion in World War II, and served with it. He later served in Waziristan till the creation of Pakistan.

As we know, the undivided Indian Army was engaged in three Anglo- Afghan Wars and many, full-scale expeditions in the North West Frontier (NWF), but as the ambit of this book on the NWF commences with 1849 after the British defeated the Sikhs, inevitably the First Anglo Afghan War (1838 - 42) does not feature in detail. The NWF up to the Indus had latterly been ruled by the Duranni Kings of Afghanistan, whereafter it had been wrested by the Sikh Kingdom. The Second Anglo Afghan War (1878-80), by circumstance, also cannot be mentioned in much detail, as the area of operations was mainly in Afghanistan. The Third Anglo Afghan War(1919) is gone into some detail, as the NWF was the main theatre of operations.

The book chronologically is divided into 36 chapters encapsulating:- The origin of the early years of the British defence of the NWF; expeditions in 1849-1857; the Close Border policy 1857-78; the Forward Policy 1880-

* The Story and Gallantry of the North West Frontier 1849-1947. by R V E Hodson (2002), 21 Birchwood Close, Corsley, Warminster, BA12 7WD, pp. 412, £ 20 Plus £ 4 postage and packing to India by sea mail, and £ 8 by airmail. ISBN : 0-9542650-0-9

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95, and demarcation of the Durand Line 1893-96; the Hunza and Nagar Campaign 1891; the Siege of Chitral 1895; the Pathan Revolt 1897; the Tirah Campaign 1897; the Mahsud Blockade of 1900-1902, and the creation of the North West Frontier Province(NWFP); the Zakha Khel and Mohmand Campaign of 1908 ; the War Years 1914-1918; the Third Anglo Afghan War 1919 and its consequences; the Waziristan Campaign 1919-20; the events on the NWF 1919-1930, and the Afridis invest Peshawar; the years 1931-33 and 34-35 on the NWF; Revolt in Waziristan 1936; Waziristan Campaign 1937, and the pursuit and hunt for the Faqir of Ipi, the latter surviving; thereafter till the last years of British rule.

There is detailed information of the actions that led variously to the award of the Victoria Cross and Distinguished Service Order to Britons, and the Indian Order of Merit and the Indian Distinguished Service Medal to Indians. Even from the point of view of hindsight it is not clear why many Indian personnel should not have been awarded the Victoria Cross from the description of some of the actions, particularly since Indians were made eligible from 1911 onwards. A reader may well argue of what interest this narration is today in relation to a region no longer part of India, but courage by the personnel of the undivided Indian Army is still courage, whatever the circumstances, region or period in which it is displayed, and must be lauded. One such action of the many in this narration will establish what I seek to say :-

"The company (2/1 GR) descended into the basin led by a platoon under CHM Bhimbahadur. Tribesmen were then trapped between the densely wooded spurs. Some of them were Afghans, who feigned death and shot down two Gurkhas in the back after they had been overrun. In hand to hand fighting 26 tribesmen were killed with bayonets or kukris. Five rifles, some ammunition, knives, were brought back. The Gurkhas saw red, and John Masters wrote in his book " Bugles and a Tiger", ' Hav Balbir still ran forward sobbing in his fury and stumbling along the side of the slope with a dripping kukri in his right hand and five Pathan heads in his left.'

Many local proverbs are quoted, and are illustrative as to the Pathan's psyche :-

"There can be no law and order without force"; "A Pathan's enmity smoulders like dung fire"; "Although the mountain be high there is a road to the top"; "A tiger is a tiger even inside a cage".

The author rightly praises Sir George Cunningham, Governor of the NWFP at the time of Partition, who had served long and arduously on the Frontier. A noble man, his memoirs listed in the bibliography are revelatory

as to the Pakistani collusion leading up to the invasion of Kashmir, though the Governor of the NWFP was not in the loop for the planning of this invasion. Separately, the author postulates the conventional British view of the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and his "Red Shirts", as a law and order problem. Nevertheless, posterity in India will always remember the Frontier Gandhi as a very great nationalist, and a giant of a man, both physically and intellectually. The NWFP even had an elected Congress government in July 1947. As the option for the referendum in the NWFP was only "Pakistan" or "Hindustan" as "Pakhtunistan" was excluded by Lord Mountbatten, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan thereafter pronounced a boycott of the referendum. The boycott was successful inasmuch as only 50.49 per cent of the total electorate voted for Pakistan.

The situation was too charged for very many to vote for India. (I was then deployed with my company between Thal (in Kurram) and Hangu in aid of the civil power at that time). Lord Mountbatten, with this result, despite the boycott, ruled the majority of the electorate was in favour of Pakistan. Sequentially, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was later to write that he had been "Thrown to the Wolves", which he was in the *real politik* of the time. The result would have been different if Pakhtunistan had been included as an option. It can also be said there should never have been Partition.

Here therefore is the fascinating story up to August 1947 of this violent area. A splendid read as to heroism in a region that had a strange romantic aura. No area of comparable size to the NWF has seen so much military action, bloodshed, intrigue, gallantry, savagery, devotion, and sacrifice, and still continues to feature in the World news. Both virtues and vices feature on an heroic scale. Alexander the Great, Babar, Akbar, Hari Singh Nalwa, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck are some of the many who figure historically in this region. Those who sweated there will not readily forget the aggregation of some 200 campaigns and punitive expeditions, not to forget the thousands of bloody forays, and will always also remember the words of Lord Curzon in 1904, "No man who has read a page of Indian history will ever prophesy about the (NW) Frontier". This is an unique account of a region whose every mention strikes a chord in many memories.