After the conclusion of the first Anglo-Burmese War 1824-25, the East India Company gained paramountcy over the Assam region but the Honourable Company certainly had no wish of bringing the entire area under its direct administration. Accordingly, the Agent to the Governor-General, who was responsible for Assam affairs, Mr. David Scott, was instructed to hand over the Upper Assam region from Golaghat to Dibrugarh, known as 'Muttock', to the last Ahom ruler, Purundar Singh, who had accepted British suzerainty. Purundar Singh was to be protected against further invasion by the Burmese by the retention of the area east of his dominion, namely the Sadiya and Rangapara tracts, where the Assam Light Infantry was stationed for the purpose. This arrangement continued till the time of Hmar-Karuti-Singpo rising in 1839 when the Sadiya garrison headed by Colonel White lost their lives. The Ahom ruler, Purundar Singh was suspected to have a hand in the incident and this was thought sufficient grounds for annexing Upper Assam under direct British rule.

THE CACHAR LEVY AND JORHAT MILITIA

After 1830 there had been a gradual reduction in the number of troops stationed in Assam. By 1840 the total force was brought down to four regiments of the Military. The 1st Assam Light Infantry was stationed at Gauhati, the 2nd Assam Light Infantry at Sadiya and, the Sylhet Light Infantry at Sylhet and a Bengal Infantry Battalion at Silchar. Along with the reduction of troops there was gradual rise in the strength of the Police. Certain semi-Military bodies like the 'Cachar Levy' and the 'Jorhat Militia' also evolved simultaneously. The 'Cachar Levy' was first raised in 1835 by Mr. Grange.
in Civil-charge of the Nowgong district, with a strength of 750 all ranks, including Inspectors, Head Constables and Constables. The 'Cachar Levy' held armed police posts at Barpathar, Dimapur, Mohur Digao, Mahurmukh, Maibong, Hosang, Hajoo, Guilon, Gumaigajoo, Hangrung, Baladhan, Asaloo and Jinghat at the South-East and of the North Cachar Hills. (The author had the opportunity of visiting most of these places, where armed police posts continue till this day, while commanding the 1st Assam Police Battalion in 1964-65). The 'Cachar Levy' was thus the earliest embodiment of the para-military type of police forces. The 'Jorhat Militia' was raised 3 years later in 1838 to guard the eastern frontier of Assam. In individual districts there was simultaneous increase in the strength of the Armed Civil Police. In the Garo Hills, the Naga Hills and the K.& J.Hills where there was no Civil Police all duties were performed by the Frontier Police. By 1852, centralized control of the long line of frontier outposts became difficult and first the 'Jorhat Militia' was merged into the 'Cachar Levy' and later the entire force was split up into the Frontier Police of Nowgong and North Cachar Hills district respectively. This led to the emergence of the Frontier Police from the para-military levies.  

At the time of the constitution of the Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874, the duties of guarding the frontiers of the Province were performed by the Civil Police and no separate Military Police existed for the purpose. While forwarding the 'Report on the Police Administration of the Province of Assam, 1874' to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, Mr. H. Luttman Johnson, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, mentioned that - "When the Chief Commissioner took charge of the administration, the question of organizing a frontier police apart from the Civil Police
was pending. Many most important questions of Police Administration have been postponed until the question of organizing a Frontier Police should be decided. A separate organized Frontier Police, as a branch of the Civil Police, however, existed in the Sylhet and Cachar districts, and the Police in the Naga and the Garo Hills were already organized upon a somewhat Military pattern.

**S DISTRICT FRONTIER POLICE**

According to the Report for the year 1877 by Captain W. J. Williamson, Inspector General of Police, there was no Civil Police in the Garo and the Naga Hills and the Police in these districts were organized as Frontier or Semi-Military Police. The duties pertaining to Civil Police in these districts were performed by the village headman. In Sylhet and Cachar, on the other hand, both Civil and Frontier Police existed and the Frontier Police there was a well-drilled and disciplined body of useful and reliable men. The Naga Hills Police was composed of hardy, vigilant body of men who had time and again proved their worth against the tactics of the Nagas. The Garo Hills Police, raised in 1866, was also an efficient and useful body of men and detachments from it had often served in Naga Hills or elsewhere with the Survey parties.

The distribution of duties of the 203 officers and 1809 men of the Frontier Police in the Province was as follows in 1878:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guards over Jails etc.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier Outposts</td>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve etc.</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
<td><strong>1809</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next year certain Frontier Outposts in Lakhimpur district were abolished and certain other new ones were opened. The Frontier outposts maintained in North Lakhimpur during 1879 were located at
Dajmoor, Bepi Tekari, Pobahmukh, Rukong, Nizamghat, Bishamnagar, Dikrangi and Diphu. It was hoped that when the lines of communications between these outposts improved it would be possible to withdraw the guards from Dikrangi and Diphu. In Sibsagar no charge was proposed in the existing location of Frontier Outposts. In Darrang, the three Frontier Outposts were located at Helem, Balipara and Daimara. It was proposed to abolish the outpost at Daimara and to shift the one at Helem to Singlijan. A number of changes were proposed in Sylhet and Cachar.6

It was felt that further change in the location of frontier outposts might be necessary in Cachar if the proposed Sub-divisional headquarter of North Cachar was established at Assaloo (even at present armed police from Assam maintains a platoon post at Assaloo to guard against depredation by Naga hostiles in North Cachar). There were 44 frontier outposts manned by 607 officers and men by 1880. The two outposts in Darrang and 8 in Lakhimpur protected the frontiers of the Province against Bhutias, Akhas, Daflas, Abors and Mishmis. On the south-eastern frontier of the Assam Valley 1 outpost in Lakhimpur and 5 in Sibsagar protected against Singphos and Nagas. On the south-east frontier of Sylhet there were 4 posts for protection against Hill Tipperah and the Lushais. The two posts in the east and south-east of Cachar were against Manipuris and Lushais. In North Cachar there were 8 posts against the Angami Nagas. Besides these, there were 10 outposts in Garo Hills and 4 in Naga Hills. In the neighbourhood of Sadiya and on the southern Frontier of Cachar, the frontier protection work was shared by the regular army. Besides this, the regular army was also deployed annually every winter at Udalguri in Darrang, when the Bhutias visited the Plains for trade purposes.
The sanctioned and actual strength of the Frontier Police was as follows in 1881. The Frontier Police was short of 3 Head Constables, 136 Constables and 6 buglers, the Naga Hills Police alone being short of 3 Head Constables, 101 Constables and 6 buglers.

**Strength of the Frontier Police in 1881:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanctioned</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Deficiencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inspectors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sub-Inspectors</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Head Constables</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Constables</td>
<td>2,299</td>
<td>2,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Buglers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,483</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,338</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The employment of this force on various duties was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. On guard and miscellaneous duties at HQrs.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. On guard and miscellaneous Sub-divisional HQrs.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. At Frontier Outposts</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. On escort and other miscellaneous duties in the district</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reserve and recruits</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sick, leave vacancies etc.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>255</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excepting the abolition of guards at Asalu and Ninglo in North Cachar Hills and their removal instead to Gailong and Hungrum in the same area, there were no other changes in the location of Frontier Outposts in the Province. During the year a number of extra duties were imposed on the Frontier Police. A detachment was sent from Goalpara to assist the Garo Hills Police in restoring law and order around Bangulkhata in that district. A strong detachment from Kamrup Police had to be rushed to Dibrugarh. Detachments from Darrang and Garo Hills were also later sent to Lakhimpur district in connection with the forward movement made from Sadiya to Nizamghat and subsequently...
to help garrison the outposts at Bomjor and Nizamghat which had been occupied in advance in order to prevent the Abors from crossing the Dibong river and settling on its left bank.

THE KUKI MILITIA

In addition to the existing 100 Kuki militia meant for the defence of the North Cachar Frontier towards Naga Hills, an additional strength of one Jamedar, 12 Havildars and 150 scouts was sanctioned in 1881. However, only 25 scouts could be enlisted. The Kuki militia gave a poor account of itself when the Cacharis attacked Gungjong in January 1882 and the men of the militia who were present ran away instead of putting up a fight. The same story was repeated at Maibong when a Kuki sentry left his post and ran away on seeing the Kacharis. In fact, after the Maibong debacle the Kuki scouts refused to hunt for the rebels except when large parties were provided for the purpose. It was alleged that being local people the Kuki militia had neither given any warning of the Cachari rebellion nor assisted later in putting down the insurgency. At this, the Chief Commissioner of Assam finally ordered that the Kuki Militia should be disbanded from the 1st April, 1882.

THE ASSAM FRONTIER POLICE REGULATION 1882

In 1883, according to the revised scheme for re-organization of the Police submitted by the Chief Commissioner of Assam and approved finally by the Government of India, 'Armed Civil Police' was created to relieve the Frontier Police detachments in the plains districts of miscellaneous duties pertaining to guards and escorts. The Frontier Police was made solely responsible for defence of the Frontier of the Province and for this purpose it was decided to give it a more distinctly military character. The Assam Frontier Police Regulation had already become law in November, 1882. Under Section 10 of the Regulation all officers and men of the Frontier Police were required
to sign a declaration accepting the nature of duties and terms and conditions of service. Personal who refused to sign this declaration were either transferred to the newly-created 'Armed Civil Police' or permitted to resign, and in a few cases dismissed from service.

In the Annual Police Administration Report for 1883, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. T. J. Murray, C.S., claimed that the Regulation had succeeded in raising the tone of the force by making all concerned understand that they now belonged to a Military body and were subject to as strict a discipline as the military. A tightening of the discipline took place all round. In Darrang, 9 sepoys were punished under the Regulation for being drunk on sentry duty. In Lakhimpur, 6 officers and 32 men received punishment for irregularities while on guard duty and absented themselves without leave. One Havildar was straightaway sentenced to 3 months' rigorous imprisonment for disobedience of orders. The Regulation was certainly a far cry from the disciplinary rules of the Civil Police. A new uniform was prescribed, for the subordinate officers and men. The 'Full-dress' of the Subedar was to consist of a Patrol Jacket of Khaki serge, edged with mohair braid, chevron cuffs relieved with scarlet and silver shoulder-cords. The 'Head-dress' was to consist of khaki serge forage cap, with silk oak-leaf band and scroll on top, relieved with scarlet, bronze bugle ornament in front. The Head-dress of the Havildars and sepoys was to consist of round cap, similar to that worn in the Gorkha regiments of the Army, but Khaki in colour instead of black, and a bronze ornament in the shape of bugle in front.

REFORMS OF 1884

The organization of the Frontier Police underwent an important change in 1884 owing to the introduction of the company system on military lines. The Frontier Police belonging to the various districts was now organized into Battalions, each divided into a number of companies. The Cachar Frontier Police now known as the Surma Valley
Battalion was divided into six companies, the Gosa Hills Battalion into three, the Naga Hills Battalion into four and the Lakhimpur Battalion into six companies. Each of these Battalions was also divided into two 'wings' each demarcating the Frontier line held in each into the left wing and the right wing. A Native Adjutant with a staff allowance of Rs.10/- per month was appointed in each Battalion (excepting the Garo Hills Battalion) and each Battalion was also provided with a Pay Havildar carrying a staff allowance of Rs.5/- per month and a Drill Naik at a staff allowance of Rs.2/8 per month. The company system could not, however, be introduced in the Sibsagar and Darrang Detachments since their strength was too small for the purpose. A kit allowance of Rs.20/- per recruit was granted to all the Battalions and Detachments as a special boon by the Chief Commissioner of Assam during the year. The authority of the Commandants of the Battalions over the force was clearly defined and their position was strengthened by the appointment of a regular staff of native officers and non-commissioned officers. Rules were also framed for the examination of sepoys for promotion to the rank of Havildar.

The new Inspector General of Police, Mr.A.C. Williams who had taken over in July 1885, had mentioned in the Report for 1886 that the sanctioned strength of the Darrang detachment, 67 in all ranks was insufficient to guard the district against the depredations of Bhutias and Daf Las even with the help of the military detachment at Tezpur and the military guard at Udalguri. At the time the district was swarmed by hillmen and the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, Colonel Campbell, had also remarked on the insufficiency of the existing Frontier Police - "I consider the district starved as regards Police at a time when it is overrun with Daf Las and Bhutias and, may be, Akas." To enable the Frontier Police to cope properly with the situation as well as be able to replace the military guard at Tezpur.
and Udalguri the Inspector General of Police had estimated that an additional force of 133 officers and men of all ranks would be needed. The Chief Commissioner of Assam, however, thought that the Deputy Commissioner, Colonel Campbell, had exaggerated matters and there was no imminent danger of the district being overrun by the Daflas or any other hill tribe. The hill people did not visit the plains during the rainy season, and when they did visit in the cols season there was the military detachment of 55 men at Udalguri and another military detachment of 50 men at Tezpur to take care of any emergency. Together with the 67 Frontier Police attached to Darrang district this force was more than sufficient to keep both Daflas and Akas in order. The Frontier Police attached to Lakhimpur district could be easily sent in relief at short notice whenever necessary. As to the suggestion by the Inspector General of Police that if the strength of the Frontier Police Battalions was increased to make each battalion complete it would become impossible to reduce one military regiment from Assam, the Chief Commissioner remarked that the principles upon which the present organization of the Frontier Police was based never contemplate substituting Frontier Police for the military; the intention was to relieve the military of outpost duties and then to retain certain military centres in the Province.

In keeping with this policy, the Chief Commissioner thought the time was not yet ripe to reduce the number of military centres in the Province. Even the withdrawal of the regiment from Cachar had to be postponed due to operations in the Kubo Valley in which the Assam Regiments took a prominent part during the year.

**MILITARY POLICE : 1888**

In the 'Report on the Police Administration of the Province of Assam for the year 1888', the Frontier Police was shown redesignated as the Military Police for the first time. The number and classes of
h millennials who passed the Frontier Outposts in different districts during 1888 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Surma Valley</th>
<th>Lakhimpur</th>
<th>Sibsagar</th>
<th>Darrang</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angami Nagas</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipuri Nagas</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nagas</td>
<td>1621</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2481</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kukis</td>
<td>2208</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cacharirs</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digaru Mishmis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charak Abors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dafflas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutias</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4063</td>
<td>4063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7578</strong></td>
<td><strong>3044</strong></td>
<td><strong>2481</strong></td>
<td><strong>4619</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,722</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus nearly 18 thousand hillmen from the Naga Hills and NEFA areas crossed into the plains for commerce and other purposes. In the extent of commercial and social intercourse then existing between the tribes in Naga Hills and NEFA areas, undoubtedly, the Nagas constituted the single largest group and this is proof of the friendly relations, generally prevailing between the peoples of the Naga Hills and the plains in Assam.

The formation of the Mokokchung Subdivision in the Ao Naga country in 1889 resulted in the addition of one Jamedar, 10 Havildars and 108 Sepoys to the Naga Hills Battalion. On the other hand, in consequence of the formation of Civil Police in the Garo Hills district, the strength of the Garo Hills Battalion was reduced by one Jamedar, 14 Havildars and 58 Sepoys. Similarly increase in the Armed Civil Police of Sibsagar resulted in the reduction by 2 Havildars and 32 Sepoys in
the Lakhimpur Battalion. The 2485 strong Military Police (as the Frontier Police was redesignated in 1888) cost Rs. 4,94,116/- during 1889. There was a few changes in the officers of the force during the year. The Commandant of the Surma Valley Battalion, Mr. Daly, was promoted and transferred to Bengal as Deputy Inspector General of Police. Mr. Daly, however, returned to Assam after an absence of five months, the reasons for which were not stated. The Commandant of the Garo Hills Military Police also changed and on his appointment to the Khedda Department Mr. Savi was succeeded by Mr. Rivett-Carnac. Operations were mainly undertaken by the Surma Valley and the Naga Hills Battalions. Four detachments of the Surma Valley Battalion took part in operations against the Lushai depredators and as supports for the southern line of outposts at Chattacherra, Doarbund, Longai and Rabibazar. An expeditionary force of 200 rifles from the Naga Hills Battalion accompanied the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills against the trans-Dikbu Nagas for their attack on a village under British protection. The expedition was successful but for an ambush at Mozeng Jami in which one man was killed and another wounded. During the year, the Kohima-Nichuguard road was patrolled for the first time in view of an increasing thefts and robbers. The steam-launch 'Cygnet' made available to the Lakhimpur Military Police did commendable work during the year, carrying 2230 maunds of rations, 1469 Sepoys, 341 women and children and a number of treasures. It was examined by an Engineer of the India General Steam Navigation Company who recommended certain improvements. In the Surma Valley Battalion also a regular boat establishment was maintained.

REGULATION IV OF 1890

The Regulation IV was enacted in 1890 to provide for the maintenance of proper discipline and to fix the terms of service in the Assam Military Police. It received the assent of the Governor-
General on the 16 May 1890. A "Military Police Officer" was defined in Section 1 as "any persons appointed to the Assam Police Force under Section 7 of Act V of 1861, who, at the commencement of this Regulation, is posted to the Military division of that force." Apart from defining various heinous and less heinous offences by members of the Military Police and punishments thereto, the Regulation provided corporal punishment in the form of whipping, not exceeding thirty stripes. The administration of the Military Police was to be vested in the Inspector General of Police, Assam, and, as in the case of the Civil Police, he was to be its Chief controlling authority. A person joining the Assam Military Police was required to sign a statement in the presence of the Commandant or the Magistrate to the effect that after having served for 3 years in the Military division of the Assam Police force he could, at any time, when not on active service, apply for discharge which could be granted after 2 months from the date of application, unless the discharge was likely to cause the vacancies in the Military Police to exceed one-tenth of the sanctioned strength. When on active duty, however, a person had no claim to a discharge and he was to remain and do his duty until the necessity for retaining him on the Assam Military Police ceased. It was a useful and practical way of getting rid of the perpetual 'light duty' services who are no less a problem in the Armed Police Battalions even today. On the 15 of every month the Inspector General of Police was required to submit to the Deputy Adjutant General, Bengal, a disposition list of the Military Police force in Assam. The appointments of Commandants and Assistant Commandants in the Assam Military Police were to be treated as quasi-military appointments and the officers holding such appointments were to come from regimental duty and revert to it after a lapse of five and two years respectively. Their leave and acting and leave allowances were to be regulated by their military service and leave rules. Officers appointed to be
Commandants of Military Police battalions of Assam were required to possess an 'extra' certificate of qualification in musketry.

THE ASSAM MILITARY POLICE

According to the revised scale authorised by the Government of India in 1890, the serialised strength of the newly designated 'Assam Military Police' was as follows in 1891:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commandants</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Commandants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subedars</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamadars</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havildars</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepoys and Buglers</td>
<td>2256</td>
<td>2256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,532</td>
<td>2,585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from above, the difference in the revised scale lay mainly in the sanctioned number of native and non-commissioned officers. The number of Subedars was increased by two, but at the same time the number of Jamadars was reduced by three. Four more Havildars were allowed over the previous sanction. The number of sepoys and buglers remained unchanged.

The sanctioned strength of the Military Police remained unaltered during 1895 and 1896 at 4 Commandants, 2 Assistant Commandants, 27 Subedars, 31 Jamadars, 278 Havildars and 2,599 sepoys and buglers - total 2,941. The actual strength entertained at the end of 1896 was 2,868 and the actual cost involved for the maintenance of this force was Rs.8,59,197/- excluding the cost incurred on Police buildings by the Public Works Department which amounted to Rs.10,620/-.

In the 'Resolution' on the Report for 1897, the Chief Commission observed that the Frontier Outpost which had originally been established to protect the tea industry in Cachar against the depredation of the Nagas had by now lost jurisdiction for existence since it was nearly
18 years now since the Khonoma Naga raid on Baladhan Tea Estate in 1880 and the Lushai raids on southern tea gardens such as Monierkhal, Baruncherra, Alexandrapore etc. With the establishment of a Military Regiment at Kohima and with the existence of the Naga Hills Military Police Battalion at the headquarters and scattered in various outposts in the hills it was impossible to conceive of a Naga insurgency now on the previous scale. The guard maintained at Baladhan for defensive purposes was hardly necessary any more. The serious raid on Baruncherra Tea Garden in 1892 had taken place when the whole of Lushai Hills was aflame and the Lushai Chiefs had not been subdued as yet. However, since then the British power had been consolidated in the Lushai country and a thousand strong battalion of Military Police had been permanently stationed there. The protection of the Cachar Tea Gardens was therefore guaranteed by this force and a Lushai raid into Cachar was now no more within the sphere of probability than a Naga raid into Sibsagar, when all the frontier outposts formerly maintained had already been withdrawn. The Deputy Commissioner, Cachar was accordingly asked to contact the tea planters along the Northern and Southern frontiers and to submit a report through the Inspector General of Police. The Indian Tea Association and its local Branch Association in Cachar was asked directly by the Chief Commissioner for their opinion.

In 1902, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. A. W. Davis, I.C.S., reiterated his confidence in the ability of the Military Police Battalions - "I consider the standard of efficiency of our Military Police Battalions is a very high one. They are a thoroughly workman-like body ready, to the extent of their rather small reserves, to turn-out for service at the shortest notice." 19 The Inspector General of Police remarked, however, that their mobility for any lengthened period depended upon transport and since coolies were the only reliable transport in most hilly areas the necessity of having a reliable coolie corps was paramount. Among other requirements of
the Military Police the ones needing to be met urgently were the appointment of an Assistant Commandant each for the Lakhimpur and Naga Hills Battalions; the increase of the recruits' kit allowance from Rs. 30/- to Rs. 50/- to enable a recruit starting his service to begin without a burden of debt; the abolition of the old deductions for pension which had already been permitted to the Civil Police in 1899; the increase of pay for sepoys in the Silchar and Lakhimour Battalions; and the grant of six month's leave on full pay on the lines of the Burma Military Police. In the 'Resolution' on the Report for 1902 the Chief Commissioner considered these requirements but remarked that the entire matter was connected with the larger question of the necessity of retention of so large a body of Military Police in the Province and he had decided to defer taking any action till the recommendations of the Police Commission had been received.

THE EASTERN-BENGAL AND ASSAM MILITARY POLICE: 1905

Although the Eastern Bengal and Assam Military Police Act came into operation only in 1902, just before the partition of 1905 was undone and the old Province of Assam received under a Chief Commissioner, the name of the 'Assam Military Police' was changed in 1905 to Eastern-Bengal and Assam Military Police to suit the new circumstances. The sanctioned strength of the Military Police for the newly constituted Province of Eastern-Bengal and Assam in 1905 was 309 officers and 2,459 men. As against this, the actual strength at the end of 1905 was 312 officers and 2,411 men. The armament of this force consisted of 2,799 rifles and 54 revolvers. The entire force was divided into 6 Battalions, namely the Silchar, Lakhimour, Garo Hills, Naga Hills, Jushai Hills and Dacca Battalions. The proportion of the strength of the Military Police for the newly constituted province to the area and population of the Province was 1 to 8.7 square miles and 1 to 1367.9 persons respectively. The total cost of maintaining this force was a little over seven and a half lakh rupees.
The total sanctioned strength of the Military Police for the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the year 1906 was 317 officers and 2,451 men, and as against this an actual strength of 317 officers and 2,382 men was entertained during the year.

This force, fully officered, was equipped with 2,833 rifles and 54 revolvers, there being no more smooth-bored muskets, and was stationed in parts at Silchar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Naga Hills, Lushai Hills and Dacca. The total cost of the Military Police was Rs.7,58,838/- in 1906 as against Rs.7,68,787/- during 1905.

Except for an incident in the Lakhimpur Battalion in an outpost in North Lakhimpur when a sepoy fired at a Jamedar in the latter’s residence but unfortunately killed his daughter and later himself committed suicide, and except for another incident in the Lushai Hills battalion when a sepoy of the Champai Outpost shot dead two sepoys and wounded a Havildar, no other serious infringements of discipline came to notice. All the battalions competed with each other in various sports and tournaments. The standard of shooting was high, the best in this respect being the Naga Hills battalion in which there were simply no third class shots, only 3 second class shots, 450 first class shots and 208 marksmen. In the Lakhimpur battalion although the number of marksmen decreased, the number of first class shots increased. Both the Naga Hills and the Garo Hills battalions practised field firing with ball ammunition during the year. The Inspector of Army Signalling praised the signalling standard in the Naga Hills and Lakhimpur battalions. The signallers of the Naga Hills battalion established communication between Kohima and Manipur.

The total strength of Military Police for the year 1908 stood at 2,892, the break-up rank-wise being 5 Commandants, 7 Assistant Commandants, 56 native officers (Subedars and Jamedars).
Havildars and Naiks, and 2,555 sepoys (including buglers). The total annual cost of maintaining this force was Rs. 10,58,145/-. The superintendence and command of this force was done by Police as well as army officers. Thus, while Mr. F. Boxwell, Superintendent of Police, was in-charge of the Silchar Battalion and was later during the year relieved by Mr. P.R. Ngr Hughes, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Captain E.S. Gale was in-charge of the Naga Hills Military Police battalion and Captain E.G. Bromhead was Commandant of the Dacca Military Police battalion. Again, while Mr. N.B. Haynes, Superintendent of Police, was in command of the Garo Hills battalion, Major A.J. Strange was in command of the Lakhimpur battalion. The Naga Hills battalion was inspected by the Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam on 7th February, 1908. The Lt. Governor conveyed his pleasure at the smartness and efficiency of the force.

During 1909 the strength of the Dacca battalion was raised by 1 Subedar, 1 Jamedar, 12 Havildars, 114 sepoys and 2 buglers. The relative total strength of the battalions including officers and men was now as follows:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battalion</th>
<th>Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silchar</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga Hills</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lushai Hills</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacca</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although each detachment was termed as a battalion, it would be seen from the above that this was hardly the case in the real sense of the term. Thus, the Silchar 'battalion' consisted of barely two companies, and the Garo Hills 'battalion' was an assortment of some three companies of armed force. To a very large extent this
goes to explain the fact that some of these 'battalions' were commanded by senior officers like Lt. Col. Loch of the Lushai Hills Battalion, while the Garo Hills battalion was commanded by an officer of the rank of Captain only.

The enlistment percentage of Gorkhas fell from 75.9 in 1908 to 38.4 only in 1909. The main reason for this was the recruitment of a large number of Jharuas for the newly sanctioned company of the Dacca battalion. 153 Jharuas were recruited by the Commandant himself from the Goalpara district in Assam. However, 103 Gorkhas were also recruited in the same year to the other battalions. Malarial fever and diseases of the respiratory system chiefly accounted for health problems. The number of admissions to the hospital was the greatest in the Lakhimpur battalion, while the smallest number was noticed in the Silchar battalion. However, out of total 37 deaths only 4 were due to malaria and this was in the Lakhimpur battalion.

MERGER OF SILCHAR AND GARO HILLS BATTALIONS

The year 1910 saw the sanctioning of the personal bodyguard for the Lt. Governor. This escort consisting of 1 Jamadar, 2 Dafadars, 1 bugler and 16 'Sowars' (Cavalry men) was attached to the Dacca battalion. In the same year, the Silchar and Garo Hills battalions were amalgamated with the Dacca battalion. At the same time, the strength of the Lushai Hills battalion was reduced by one company. By the end of the year the overall sanctioned strength of Military Police remained short by one Assistant Commandant and 75 N.C.Os and men. Some deterioration was noticed in the standard of efficiency of the Dacca battalion but it was hoped that with the end of the Dacca Conspiracy Case it would be possible to relieve the force of the heavy guard duties and to improve the training. A movable column consisting of 150 men from the Lakhimpur battalion was specially trained in hill fighting and savage
warfare. This column, trained under Captain Dunbar, was later utilized in operations on the North-East Frontier (N.E.F.A.) consequent on the murder of the Political Agent, Mr. Williamson, and his party in the Abor Hills. The results produced by this specially trained column in punishing the Abor tribesmen were found to be very satisfactory by Sir Charles Boyley, Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam.  

For the first time in many years the recruitment of Gorkhas became secondary to another community. The break-up of 336 men recruited to the different battalions was as follows. A much greater number of 'Jharuas' were recruited to the Dacca battalion, especially to the newly raised detachment located at Barisal. The Naga Hills battalion also recruited some 'Jharuas'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENLISTMENT</th>
<th>1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gorkhas</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharuas</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cacharhs</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>336</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM MILITARY POLICE ACT

The Eastern Bengal and Assam Military Police Act was enacted just before the partition of Bengal was annulled and Assam was separated from East Bengal. It dealt with the appointment, discharge, disciplinary action against members of the Military Police and also defined the powers and privileges of the Commandants and Assistant Commandants. All through, the Act admitted the essentially police characteristics of the force and its provisions were closely governed by the powers, privileges and liabilities of policemen under the Police Act V of 1891, The Code of Criminal Procedure 1861 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
THE ASSAM MILITARY POLICE : 1912

On April 1st, 1912 once again the Province of Assam came into being as a separate administration. As a result the Silchar and Garo Hills detachments of Military Police being furnished so far by the Dacca Battalion were transferred from Bengal to Assam from 1st November 1912. Both the detachments were maintained independently under an Assistant Commandant each.

The scheme for the re-organization of the whole Military Police force into four uniform battalions of equal strength received the provisional sanction of the Government of India pending the approval of the Secretary of State during 1913. The Garo Hills detachment, taken over from the Dacca Battalion on the formation of the separate Province of Assam in 1912, was now amalgamated with the new battalion being raised for the North-East Frontier.

The new Military Police Battalion raised in the previous year was christened as the Darrang Military Police Battalion in 1914 and the Silchar detachment was also merged with it.

For the purpose of facilitating the despatch of volunteers to the Army the Government of India sanctioned the enlistment of additional recruits to the Military Police battalions in Assam in 1915 to the extent of bringing up the strength of each battalion to one thousand rifles. Apart from the 800 volunteers who offered for service with the regular Army in the previous year further draughts were sent up during 1915 and by the end of that year the total number of Assam Military Police personnel serving with the Gurkha Regiments consisted of 1,889 all ranks. It was hoped to continue the despatch of draughts at the rate of 200 men every other month. The contribution of the Assam Military Police to the war effort was therefore considerable. Regular regiments of the Army stationed in Shillong and Manipur were withdrawn during the year and their place was taken
up by Military Police detachments. On the withdrawal of the 123rd Outram's Rifles from Manipur the Darrang Military Police Battalion under raising at Dibrugarh was shifted to Manipur. Since the Darrang Battalion was not yet of full strength it was reinforced from the Lushai Hills and Naga Hills Battalions. A detachment of the Lushai Hills battalion and the band of the Naga Hills battalion were also posted to Shillong for furnishing the Government House guards and other protocol duties. A number of frontier outposts had to be kept under strength during the year owing to the despatch of a large number of volunteers to the Army. An important development was the sanction of the Government of India to the provision of Mounted Infantry and Transport for the Naga Hills and Darrang Battalions, although the sanction was executed only when funds could be provided.

The strength of each Battalion was maintained at approximately one thousand rifles during 1916 to facilitate the regular despatch of draughts of two hundred volunteers to the Army every two months. As a result, training activity was heavy in all the battalions and no Military Operations of any sort were undertaken during the year. Several escorts were supplied to the Political Officers on their tours into the interior. The number of dismissals, discharges, desertions and deaths recorded a comparative increase. The increase in dismissals was attributed to the number of deserting recruits who were arrested and tried and then dismissed after conviction under the Military Police Act III of 1912, while the increase in discharge was reported to be due to the inferior type of recruits unlikely to become good soldiers who were discharged after a little training on medical grounds. On the other hand the number of resignations decreased as the acceptance of these was discouraged on account of the War.
THE ASSAM RIFLES 1917

The year 1917 was the year of birth of the 'Assam Rifles' when with the concurrence of the Government of India the designation of the Military Police in Assam was changed to that of 'Assam Rifles'. Initially a Deputy Inspector General of Police was sanctioned for the duration of the war and till six months after its close. Colonel L.W. Shakespeare took over as the first Deputy Inspector General of Police in the month of November. There were a number of changes in the officer ranks during the year and generally the place of officers reverted to their regiments in the Army was taken either by those wounded in the war or those belonging to the Indian Army Reserve of Officers. The need to rechristen the Military Police had in fact been deep-rooted in the urge to place the Military Police battalions, as far as possible, on the same footing as men of the Regular Army and following the rechristening a number of references relating to the grant of free rations and free kit, the improvement of pensions and the rearming of battalions with better weapons than the existing Martini-Henry Rifles were soon taken into consideration.

In the first year of existence the strength of the four battalions of the Assam Rifles was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BATTALION</th>
<th>Total strength (including Commandants and Assistant Commandants) sanctioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion</td>
<td>.................................................. 705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 2nd (Lakhimour) Battalion</td>
<td>.................................................. 850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 3rd (Naga Hills) Battalion</td>
<td>.................................................. 674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 4th (Darrang) Battalion</td>
<td>.................................................. 820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.................................................................. 3,049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE ASSAM RIFLES ACT 1920

The year 1920 was notable for the enactment of the Assam Rifles Act which was published in the Assam Gazette on 23rd June, 1920. Containing 12 Sections in all, the Act defined various ranks constituting the force, from the 'Commandant' down to the 'Rifleman' and
dealt with rank classification, appointment and discharge, disciplinary matters and the various heinous offences, minor offences and punishments, powers and privileges of the Commandants and Assistant Commandants, and the powers finally of the Chief Commissioner of Assam to make rules. According to Section 12 - "The Local Government may, as regards the Assam Rifles, make such orders and rules consistent with this Act, as it thinks expedient, relative to the several matter respecting which the Inspector General of Police, may, as regards the Police Force, frame orders and rules under Section 12 of the Police Act, 1861". The essentially Police characteristic of the force was stressed again and again in various sections of the Assam Rifles Act, 1920. Thus Section 10 dealing with the powers of Commandants and Assistant Commandants for enquiring into offences committed by members of the force stated - "Notwithstanding anything in the Police Act 1861, or in any other enactment for the time being in force, the local Government may invest any Commandant or Assistant Commandant with the powers of a Magistrate of any class for the purpose of enquiring into or trying any offence committed by a rifleman and punishable under the Police Act 1861, or this Act, and any offence committed by a rifleman against the person or property of another rifleman and punishable under any Section of the Indian Penal Code or of any other Act in force in Assam".

The privileges and basic position of the Commandants and Assistant Commandants in the eyes of the law was to be the same as Police Officers. According to Section 11 - "A Commandant or Assistant Commandant shall be entitled to all the privileges which a Police Officer has under Section 42 and 43 of the Police Act 1861, Section 125 of the Indian Evidence Act 1872, and any other enactment for the time being in force; and shall, subject to such rules as the Local Government shall from time to time make in this behalf, exercise all the powers of a District Superintendent of Police within the
meaning of the Police Act 1861*. However, the appointment and
discharge of the riflemen was to be governed by certain conditions
not included in the Police Act V of 1861. According to Section 4(1)
before a police officer appointed under Section 7 of the Police
Act 1861 was appointed as a rifleman he was required to sign a
special statement in the presence of a Magistrate, Commandant or
Assistant Commandant. According to this statement, a rifleman when
not on active service could apply for discharge after serving for
3 years in the Assam Rifles. According to Section 4(2), a rifleman
was not entitled to be discharged, notwithstanding Section 9 of the
Police Act 1861, except in accordance with the terms of the special
statement signed by him.

One more battalion was sanctioned for the Assam Rifles in 1920,
bringing the total number to five, and the raising of the 5th
Battalion was commenced at Lokra in the Balipara Frontier Tract.
The older battalions were retained at 16 platoons each under the
Reorganization Scheme also sanctioned in 1920 and the existing
excess was utilized for forming a nucleus of the new battalion.

REARMAMENT OF 1921

The question of rearmament of the Assam Rifles engaged atten-
tion during 1921. Although the .303 rifle had been introduced in
1919, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions were armed with the obsolete .303 long Rifle non-charger loading with safety catches.
The first Battalion did not even have a full quota of these and
most of its armament was still mere obsolete consisting of the
non-charger loading weapons without a safety catch. The entire
armament of the 5th Battalion also was of this last pattern. In the
meantime the Army Ordinance had intimated that spare parts for these
obsolete type of rifles would not henceforth be available from the
Arsenal, and the likely result of this would be that any rifle
which formerly could be mended by the battalion armourer would now have to be returned to be replaced by another. Although it had been proposed to rearm battalions with the Short Rifles, which would have been better suited to the stature of men generally composing the Assam Rifles, the proposal had to be abandoned for want of funds.

**THE ROLL OF HONOUR: WORLD WAR I**

For splendid services rendered in World War I and the Kuki Operations a number of decorations besides certificates of honour were awarded as follows to the men of the Assam Rifles:

- Indian Distinguished Service Medal - 15
- Meritorious Service Medal - 12
- Indian Order of Merit - 3
- Order of the British Empire - 1
- King’s Police Medal - 1
- Afghanistan North-West Frontier 1919 Medal - 1
- Jangi-Inam - 76
- Khan Bahadur - 1

The Subedar Major of the 2nd (Lakhimpur) Battalion, Jangbir Lama, received the title of 'Sandar Bahadur' in the following year. A number of Indian Officers, N.C.Os and men were awarded certificates of 'Mention in Despatches' for services in World War I. Their number consisted of 3 from the 1st Battalion, 6 from the 2nd Battalion, 3 from the 3rd Battalion and 4 from the 4th Battalion. The names of the Indian Officers were Subedar Bhowan Singh of the 1st Battalion, Subedar Major Hari Ram Mech and Subedars Hangsabal Limbu and Nain Singh Mall of the 3rd Battalion and Rai Bahadur Subedar Major Hitman Rai and Subedars Birman Thapa and Satal Singh Kachari of the 4th Battalion. Indian Officers whose work was brought to the notice of the Government for good work at the close of the year included Rai Bahadur...
Subedar Major Mansur Fai, I.O.M., (Indian Order of Merit) of the 1st Battalion and Khan Bahadur Subedar Major Jamaluddin Bahadur of the 3rd Battalion. Undoubtedly the British knew how to win the loyalty of their Indian comrades-in-arms by the lavish conferment of titles, medals and rewards.

**POST-WAR REDUCTION**

The year 1923 was the year of economy, when an attempt was made to curtail the increase in expenditure on various branches of police administration. As a temporary measure of economy all the battalions, excepting the 1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion, were kept 2 platoons below the sanctioned strength throughout the year. The 1st Battalion was permanently reduced by 4 native officers and 210 other ranks by orders of the Government. But these measures of economy were considered risky and the Governor in Council remarked in the Resolution on the Report for 1923 that it was indeed fortunate that no military operations were required during the year. At the same time difficulty was being experienced in getting suitable British Officers for Assam Rifles. The pay and allowances were not sufficiently attractive to induce Junior Army Officers to leave their regiments and to serve as Assistant Commandants in the Assam Rifles. Only very few applied for these posts and out of those who joined scarcely any asked for extension. Inspite of the reduced strength adopted as a measure of economy it had become difficult to have the requisite number of British Officers in the battalions. Whether necessitated by the economy drive or otherwise a unified system of rations was adopted for all the battalions in the year. All the battalions were also rearmed with the 8 MLE I .303 low Velocity charger-loading magazine rifle. Greater attention was also paid to the Clothing Rules, Reorganization of Battalion Transport and Mobilization Stores. The Assam Rifle Manual, the compilation of which had been under consideration for some years past, also received due attention and an
AFFILIATION TO ARMY REGIMENTS

By the order of the Government of India, the five battalions of the Assam Rifles were affiliated to various Gurkha groups of the Indian Army in 1924. The innovation was intended to facilitate exchange of the right type of officers and to promote 'esprit de corps'. A constant touch with the regular Army was also expected to improve the efficiency of the force. However, the status of the Assam Rifles as a Military Police force under the control of the Government of Assam was to be in no way affected. The Army affiliations were as follows:

1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion to II Group.
2nd (Lakhimpur) Battalion to V Group.
3rd (Naga Hills) Battalion to I Group.
4th Battalion to IV Group.
5th Battalion to III Group.

In spite of these affiliations to the various Gurkha Groups of the Indian Army considerable difficulty was being experienced in getting the fighting class of Gurkhas for the Assam Rifles. The Nepalese settlers in Assam and their descendents were unable to provide the proper Gurkha element of the fighting castes. According to the Inspector General of Police, Mr. W.C. Dundas, the settlers in Assam underwent a very rapid physical and moral deterioration and recruitment from these settlers tended to lower the morale and efficiency of the battalions. Yet, the Government of Assam was pledged, in the interests of the Nepal Government, to restrict recruitment of Gurkhas to those who had settled in Assam. Although 61.70 per cent of the total number enlisted in 1924 were Gurkhas scarcely few of them were of the
desired type. Inspite of the prohibition against employment of Gurkhas of the fighting castes by commercial agencies, unscrupulous employees of labour and their agents often enticed away the right type of recruits by offering higher wages and by doing false and malicious propaganda regarding the conditions of service in the Assam Rifles. The Assamese too, were becoming increasing difficult to obtain and although 25.78 per cent of the total enlistment in 1924 went to the Assamese, the fact that a man from the Assam Valley could earn a living without much difficulty and the stiff competition the Assam Rifles had to face from other Military Police formations, who offered more attractive conditions of service and took away a large number of recruits were factors reportedly responsible for coming in the way of getting sufficient numbers of suitable recruits from this community. Most of the local hill tribes, of whom much had been expected once, had ultimately proved to be unsuitable sources of recruitment. The only exceptions to this were the Lushais and the Kukis and a larger enlistment was expected to be done from these in the future.

The year 1926 was significant in that three battalions of the Assam Rifles, viz 2nd, 3rd and 4th, were inspected by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief in India in the month of November. In the inspection note on the 2nd (Lakhimpur) Battalion, the Commander-in-Chief remarked - "Though I have served for over 41 years in India, I have had no previous opportunity of seeing or inspecting a Battalion of the Assam Rifles and I must honestly confess I had not expected to find anything nearly so smart as the very fine body of men which I found on parade.............. The handling of their arms would have been done credit to any single Battalion of the Army in India". The Commander-in-Chief also appreciated the smartness and efficiency of the 3rd and 4th
Battalions, which was all the more remarkable for the very small number of British Officers available with these battalions. The Commander-in-Chief noted that by speaking to a considerable number of pensioners everywhere he had gathered that a grievance existed in the disproportion of pay and pensions compared with the Indian Army and even the Assam Civil Police. The Provincial Government was requested to look into the matter.

**The Assam Rifles Manual 1927**

The much awaited Assam Rifles Manual was at last published in 1927. The Manual laid down the Constitution and Organization, duties and responsibilities of various ranks, dress regulations, discipline, punishments and rewards and various matter regulating the internal administration of the force. Before enumerating the duties and responsibilities of various ranks, the Manual laid down the following directive principles for all ranks, as reproduced from the official training manuals of the Army in India:

(a) "It must be the aim of all ranks throughout a battalion to fit themselves to carry out efficiently the duties of the rank next higher than their own".

(b) "The efficiency of a unit depends largely upon its general health. The preservation of health and the prevention of disease is therefore incumbent on every officer and soldier".

(c) "The virtue most to be cultivated is ENERGY. To do nothing is to do something definitely wrong".

(d) "Troops thrust into battle without the resolve to fight to win, and to win by fighting, will lose and lose with heavy loss".

The "Organization" part of the Manual laid down that the 1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion was to consist of 9 Service and two HQrs platoons. The rest four battalions were each to consist of 12
Service and 2 Headquarters platoons. The Headquarters platoons were to consist of recruits and the administrative staff, while the strength of a Service Platoon at field service strength was fixed at 1 Indian Officer, 5 N.C.Os, 44 Lance Naiks and Riflemen and 1 Bugler — in all 51. The peace strength of a Service Platoon was fixed at 1 Indian Officer and 60 'other ranks'. A Service Platoon was to be commanded by an Indian Officer and to consist of 4 sections, each commanded by an N.C.O. Each section was further subdivided into two squads under the command of an N.C.O., Lance Naik or a selected rifleman. The numbering of the squads was not to be by sections but by platoons, that is the 8 squads in a platoon were to be numbered 1 to 8. The following of the force were divided into two heads:— (a) Public Followers and (b) Private Followers. The public followers were to consist of menial establishments, whether temporary or permanent who were paid by the Government. The term 'Private Followers' included barbers, dhobis and all individuals paid by private subscriptions by the Indian ranks of the battalion.

The members of the Assam Rifles were to be appointed under Section 7 of the Police Act V of 1861 and their services were to be regulated by the Assam Rifles Act, 1920. The allocation of the Assam Rifles was to be detained from time to time by the Provincial Government and no change of a permanent character in the distribution of the force was to be made without sanction of the Provincial Government. The administration of the force was to vest in the Inspector General of Police, Assam, who was to be the Chief Controlling Authority and competent to pass orders and issue instructions on all matters regarding arms, accoutrements etc, the maintenance of registers, the keeping of accounts and the submission of returns and reports. As regards
the appointment of British Officers to the Assam Rifles, as far as practicable each battalion was to obtain its British Officers from its affiliated group of Gurkha Rifles in the Army. Service with the Assam Rifles was to be divided into two periods. In the first instance an officer was to be appointed for a period of two years, which could be extended to 4 years, and the first appointment was to be in the rank of Assistant Commandant. During this first period no officer was eligible for the post of the Commandant. At the expiry of the first period all British Officers were to revert to regimental duty for a minimum period of 3 years. Once an officer had earned these qualifications he was eligible for appointment as the Commandant of a battalion without restriction as regards rank in the Army or total length of service. The provision was obviously intended to attract younger officers.

**ECONOMY DRIVE 1931**

As a result of the economy cut in 1931 the strength of the Assam Rifles was brought down to four instead of five battalions in 1932. The total force of 3,240 rifles was now organised platoonwise into the following battalions:

1st Battalion .... 11 platoons.
2nd Battalion .... 20 platoons.
3rd Battalion .... 12 platoons.
4th Battalion .... 12 platoons.

Total:- 55 platoons.

Each platoon consisted of 60 men. Only the 1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion had so far been armed with high velocity rifles. The rest three battalions continued to be armed with low velocity .303 rifles. The 1st Battalion had its Headquarters at Aijal which was described as 7 days by bridle track from the Cachar plains. A permanent detachment of the Battalion was stationed at Lungleh, which was described as 8 marches away from Aijal. Garrison detachments of the 2nd Battalion protected Assam's frontiers from
adjoining Bhutan on the West to the Lohit Valley in the extreme North-east. The Battalion Headquarters was at Sadiya. The 3rd Battalion was stationed in Naga Hills with Headquarters at Kohima. The 4th Battalion stationed in Manipur had its Headquarters at Imphal.

**REVIEW OF ROLE IN PEACE**

Mr. T. P. M. O'Callaghan, I.R., Inspector General of Police, Assam reviewed the background, role, training, objectives and service conditions of the Assam Rifles in the Report for 1932. The force had developed from the old Frontier Police units raised from time to time to meet local needs on the North-East Frontier, commencing with the 'Cachar Levy' in 1839. Subsequently it came to be known as the 'Assam Military Police' and its four battalions sent as many as 3200 volunteers of all ranks to fight with the Gurkha battalions of the Army in World War I. Some 16 per cent of these volunteers were killed or wounded in the War. In recognition of war service the force was redesignated as "Assam Rifles" after the War and its battalions were affiliated to various Gurkhas regiments of the Army in order to facilitate exchange of officers and build up 'esprit de Corps'. Rule I in Chapter XII of the Assam Rifles Manual (Part I) of 1927 laid down that the two main duties of a battalion of the Assam Rifles were (a) the protection of the frontier of Assam, and (b) the internal defence of the province. Mr. O'Callaghan felt that this definition of the rule was only partly correct and required amplification to ensure that the "raison d'être" and role of the Force were properly understood. Accurately put the required role of the Assam Rifles was -

(a) A highly efficient Armed Hills Police Force

(b) A reinforcement to the plains Police in Civil disturbances

It seemed that after the War more emphasis had begun to be placed on the military aspects of the force and a correct picture
of the roles was being lost sight of in the training objectives. The role of the Assam Rifles as reinforcements to the regular Army was only contingent and although the force had to be ready at all times for the performance of such a role the other more important all-time role as reinforcement to the Civil Police could not be ignored. The Assam Rifles was essentially a Police and not a Military force; it was 'Man Power' as opposed to 'Fire Power'. British Officers joining straight from the Army had to reorientate their outlook in order to clearly understand the basic concepts underlying the training objectives. The Force must be trained to have full knowledge of procedure in dealing with Civil disturbances, i.e. riots, strikes, political agitations and mass demonstrations. In other words, apart from being specialist in 'Jungle Craft' which was required by the first role of keeping peace on the frontiers of Assam, the force must also be specialists in dealing with outbreaks of widespread Civil disturbances which threatened to get beyond the control of the Civil Police.

CENTRALIZATION OF ASSAM RIFLES : 1937

Under the new constitutional reforms introduced by the Government of India Act 1935 the Assam Rifles were treated as a "Federal Force". The entire force was centralized with effect from 1st April 1937 and in its new status as a Central Force only 3/11th of its cost was to be met from the provincial funds and the rest of the cost was to be borne by the Central Government.

The Army system of clothing was introduced in the 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Assam Rifles as an experimental measure for a period of four years from 1st April, 1938. The Jungle Warfare Training Manual, the 'Equipment Tables' and the 'Scale of Mobilization Stores' were also received. The first had already been printed and the other two were reported to be under print. In order to disseminate items of interest concerning the force to all officers
and Battalions as well as to various units of the Gurkha Brigade of the Army to which the Assam Rifles battalions were affiliated, an experiment was made by issuing a 'New-Letter' from the Headquarters of the Force. Proposals relating to the retention of Subedar Majors for a specified period in that post and the provision of wireless transmitting and receiving sets for Battalion Headquarters and posts were still under the consideration of the Government, though scarcely any progress at all was reported to have been made with regard to the second proposal.

While World War II broke out in Europe in September, 1939, in Assam the year was marked by intense labour unrest. The strike by the employees of the Assam Oil Company at Digboi and Tinsukia lasted for five months from April to September, till the entire area was declared 'protected' under the Defence of India Act 1939 and regular troops were despatched. The employees of the Steamer Company also struck work in sympathy with the workers of the Assam Oil Company within the same period. There were widespread labour troubles in the tea gardens in Lakhimpur, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Cachar and Sylhet districts. Detachments of the Assam Rifles under British Officers had to be furnished from time to time to provide protection at the Oil-fields and the Railways and as many as 13 platoons had to be moved in this connection. Communal tension in the Surma Valley also necessitated the employment of Assam Rifles. The Force went through all these tasks calmly and successfully despite the ceaseless campaign of columny directed against it both by the Press and the platform. The only untoward incident occurred at Digboi where a small patrol party in a lorry was surrounded and attacked and was compelled to open fire in self-defence, resulting in the death of 3 persons.
In view of World War II, the training of the Assam Rifles was reoriented during 1940. Anti-gas training and Lewis gun handling was undertaken in various battalions. Jungle warfare training was also stepped up and all Indian Officers and N.C.Os of the 1st Battalion attended a special course in "Aid to Civil power and anti-terrorist operations". However, the war did not affect the strength of the Assam Rifles for the time being and the reductions affected previously in the interest of economy continued to be in force. There were no military operation during the year but a number of important escorts were provided to the Political Officers and their Assistants on a number of occasions. The Lokra detachment of the 2nd (Lakhimour) Battalion sent out a number of patrols to Pupa in the Aka country to watch the Minji Akas.

The war years 1941-44 were a period of great stress and strain in Assam. The victorious Japanese armies ran over South-East Asia and Burma were knocking at the gates of Assam by the middle of 1942, concentrating on a two-pronged drive aimed at Kohima and Imphal. The fall of Burma caused the gigantic flow of refugees into Assam. The Bengal Famine of 1942 resulted in another influx of famine victims into Assam where conditions were already bordering on chaos with the approach of the Japanese forces and the subsequent air raids. The Japanese also attempted parachute drops of sabotage agents in early 1943 with a view to cutting off the military lines of communication. To cap all this, the Indian National Congress started its "Quit India" movement in 1942 which soon degenerated into violence and resulted in widespread attacks on Government property in Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Sylhet districts. Nowgong District which was the worst hit in this respect could be restored to normalcy only after combined military and police operations. To guard vital installations, lines of communications,
aerodromes etc. and for various other types of duties such as
civil movement control cordons the Assam Rifles were employed in
full strength during the period. The detachments at Tura and
North Lakhimpur had been replaced by platoons of the District
Armed Police in 1941. The entire force was relieved of all
unimportant duties and concentrated on the war front under direct
control of the Army.

By the end of 1944 the sanctioned strength of the force
consisted of 1 Commandant, Six Assistant Commandants, 33 Sub-
Inspectors, 140 Head Constables and 1742 Constables—total
1922 all ranks.

**CREATION OF I.G. ASSAM RIFLES**

After World War II ended in 1945 the entire force continued
to be under military control for some time. The final break came
in 1947 when the administration of the Assam Rifles was completely
separated from the Police with the creation of a new post of
Inspector General Assam Rifles from the middle of September that
year. Mr. H.G. Bartley, I.P., who had been Inspector General of Police
Assam, now took over as the first Inspector General Assam Rifles with effect from 17th September, 1947, on relief by Mr. J.E. Reid, I.P.,
who took over as the Inspector General of Police, Assam, from the
same date. The officer cadre of the Assam Rifles on 1st July 1947
consisted of one Inspector General of Police, 5 Commandants of
Battalions and 15 Assistant Commandants. Excepting four Indian
(Gurkha) Assistant Commandants, all the rest of the posts were
held by British Officers.

Thus ended the long association of the Assam Rifles with Assam
Police, through its entire course of evolution since 1874—first
as the District Frontier Police, then in the shape of the Assam
Frontier Police from 1883 to 1890, then as the Assam Military
Police from 1891 to 1904, then as the Eastern-Bengal and Assam Military Police from 1905 to 1912, and finally as the Assam Rifles after the enactment of the Assam Rifles Act after World War II in 1920. The role played by the two world wars in the history of the Assam Rifles was indeed significant. Whereas World War I resulted in imparting distinctly military characteristics to the force, it continued still to be a part and parcel of the total police administration of Assam. All this was to go after World War II, when the force finally separated from Assam Police and became a separate entity under its own Inspector General.

The role which the Assam Rifles might have played as the parent body of the State Armed Police after Independence was thus denied to it. In fact the first Assam Rifles Police Battalion was to take its birth not from the existing Assam Rifles force, as would have been the logical sequence, but from the 'Rail-force' which had been formed during the war for the protection of railways and was transferred en bloc in 1946, when all the rest of the wartime temporary forces were abolished, to form the newly sanctioned Reserve Police Battalion, which later became the 'Assam Police Battalion' after Independence in 1947, and is nowadays known as the 1st Assam Police Battalion, one of the nine armed police battalions in Assam today.
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