In Lower Assam, in spite of the recent additions to the First Sebundies raising its strength to 1000 sepoys, the Corps remained barely sufficient for all the duties of that part of the province. The whole of its strength was required for the numerous outposts and to provide reliefs to them. In the winter of 1839 when Grange had to undertake a second expedition against the Angami Nagas, Jenkins found that there was no disposable force for the purpose. The Assam Light Infantry could provide none and the second Sebundy Corps was yet to be complete. Instead of postponing the expedition for want of troops, Jenkins authorised Bigge, the Principal Assistant of Nowgong, to raise the strength of the Shan detachment in his district to one subadar, one jemadar, five each of havildars and naiks and a hundred sepoys. In addition Bigge had to detach a party of the Assam Militia to advance by the line of the river Dhansiri and keep up a line of communications with Morung and Saunareenat and

* He had been informed by T.C. Robertson that 'It has been on by all the Members of Government that every thought of expeditions against Garrows, Nagas and hill tribes must for the ensuing season be laid aside in order that all the means at your command may be diverted towards the only quarter where danger seems really to be apprehended, namely the eastern extremity of the valley of Assam. F.P.C. 18 September 1839: No. 157.

1. F.P.C. 20 October 1839: No. 39; Jenkins to Bigge, 5 September.
to be ready to move up to Orange's aid should their assistance become necessary. In October 1939, when the two companies of the Sebundies were transferred to Upper Assam, Jenkin not unnaturally protested against the measure. He pointed out that in supposing that two companies from the Second Sebundy Corps would always be available for the lower part of the valley during emergencies, the authorities had overlooked the practical problems in moving troops in a province like Assam where communications were extremely difficult. He further added that once the Assam Militia was disbanded the whole of the Second Sebundy Corps would be so absorbed in Upper Assam that it would be unable to spare any detachments for Lower Assam.

While on the one hand the insufficiency of troops determined the organisation of Grange's second Angami expedition, on the other, the reduced strength of the First Sebundy Corps prevented action being taken against the refractory Garos. In January 1840 the Agent to the Governor-General informed the Government that as a result of the reduction of the First Sebundies it was found impossible to send even the smallest detachment to the Garo hills to apprehend the murderers of two Assamese women. The strength of the corps had fallen down to 735 men and if it were to be kept up at 640 men, or eight companies of

1. F.P.C. 22 January 1840: No. 57.
2. F.P.C. 27 April 1840: No. 142.
do men each, as instructed by the Government, there would be no prospect of being able to muster a sufficient force against the Garos or any of the hill tribes. Shortly after this, in April 1940, a further inroad of the Dussani Garos upon certain dependent Garo families came to light and Jenkins lost no time in urging upon the Government a reconsideration of its decision. The strength of the corps, he wrote, should immediately be raised to at least 100 men per company making a total of 300 men. Unless this was done no military expeditions could be sent against the troublesome Garos.

FRONTIER POLICY CHANGED

At this time the policy of the Government of India towards the hill tribes on the North-East Frontier underwent a radical change. The new policy was decidedly conciliatory with a marked aversion towards punitive expeditions. Military expeditions were objected to on the ground that the innocent suffered along with the guilty. The desired objects were seldom secured; while, on the contrary, they not unoften provoked retaliation on the part of the hill tribes. In disapproving of

1. Ibid.
the Sub-Assistant of Lakhimpur, Driver's severe measures against the hill Miris in March 1840, it was observed to the Local authorities that while the defence of British subjects and the punishment of those guilty of wanton aggression were duties incumbent upon the Government, yet it was to be hoped that something might be effected by kindness and conciliation.

As regards Jenkins' proposed expedition against the Garos he was informed that,

"The indiscriminate use of military force on these distressing occasions may inspire the barbarian inhabitants with the dread of the British Government but its exhibition should be reserved for great and rare occasion which may justify the adoption of measures of general retribution."

Since the expedition was disallowed the Government of India saw no reasons for increasing the strength of the First Sebunay Corps. Jenkins was accordingly informed that no alterations would be made to the military establishment fixed for assam.

DEFENCE OF THE ANGAMI FRONTIER

The defence of the Angami frontier was also adversely

1. F.P.C. 28 April 1840: No. 35.
2. F.P.C. 27 April 1840: No. 143.
3. Ibid.
effected by the insufficiency of troops. Hitherto the protection of the Nowgong division was undertaken by a detachment of one subadar, three havildars, three naiks and sixty sepoys from the local corps. On its withdrawal to Upper Assam following the Khamti insurrection in 1839, the duties of the division, like those of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar, fell on the First Sepoos. The jemadar's party of 32 sepoys one havildar and two naiks provided from it proved wholly inadequate. The transfer of North Gauchar to Assam during Grange's first expedition further increased the requirements for troops.

On the termination of his second expedition Grange, in March 1840, permanently stationed a Shan detachment of 43 sepoys, two havildars and naiks under a jemadar at Dimapur for the protection of that part of the frontier. In addition there was a party of one havildar; a naik and 15 Shans at Semzar. This small force proved insufficient for the protection of the frontier. Moreover Jenkins had already made up his mind to withdraw these Shans most of whom had become old. Bigge, the Principal Assistant, wrote on 7 April 1840, that the duties of the frontier could not be efficiently performed by any troops less than two companies of eighty or eighty five men each.  

1. F.P.O. 25 May 1840: No. 11d; Bigge to Jenkins, April 7.  
2. Ibid.
Bigge further pointed out that during emergencies he was often obliged to withdraw all the burkundas guards on civil duties for frontier work since Major Simonds could spare no troops from his First Sebundies for Nowgong. He therefore, suggested to the Agent that two companies of sepoys should be raised for the frontier drawn principally from the Gurkhas\(^1\). Such men placed under a few smart instructors would, if attention was paid to their discipline by the magistrate, in a few months form a body of soldiers fully capable of resisting any enemy they may be called upon to oppose. Bigge at the same time suggested that the magistrate should be invested with military command over the troops in his district. Jenkins agreed with Bigge so far as the strength of the troops required was concerned\(^2\). North Cachar could not again be abandoned to the cruelties of the Angamis. The improvement of over 2,500 square miles of a very fine country would definitely be postponed unless protected by adequate military detachments. He observed that the defence of these frontiers would have been adequately provided for had not the reductions in the First Sebundies been made\(^3\). He hoped that the government would not hesitate, considering the progress already made in checking the forays of the Magas and restoring confidence in the ryots, to authorise the

\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) F.P.O. 1 June 1840: No. 66.

\(^3\) Ibid.
the small expenditure necessary for the defence of North Caonar.

Bigge's proposal to raise two additional companies was ignored by the Government of India; on the contrary he was severely censured for bringing up schemes for investing civil officers with military command. Jenkins therefore had to retain the services of the Shan for the protection of the frontier. In addition to the posts at Dimapur and Semkar another post was established at Mohungdijua consisting of one subadar, one havildar, two naiks and 20 sepoys. At Nowgong a smaller party of 16 sepoys, one havildar and one naik were entertained to guard over the Naga prisoners.

STRENGTH OF FIRST SEBUMDI: S RESTORED

The distracted and anarchical state of affairs in Bhutan resulted in a complete lapse of law and order in the duars. Towards the early part of 1841 the Bhutias committed a series of aggression on the frontier. Revenue officers were forced to seek shelter in the Company's territories; forcible occupation of large tracts of land was made and reports were also received that the Bhutias had fortified themselves at

1. Ibid: No. 67.
Daymara. These successive acts of aggression finally led to the question of attaching the remaining duars. Immense was the problem of the military occupation of the duars; in his letter on 27 June 1841 Jenkins wrote that,

"The great obstacles to the military occupation of the Dooars is the deadly nature of the country to the strangers and as we should be obliged to maintain posts in the Dooars it would I fear be most distressing to have to garrison such posts with others than sepoys of the Assam Sebundy or some similar Reg(imen)t and of the corps here, there are no detachments to be spared".

Jenkins at the same time added that,

"The deficiency of our troops the nature of the Country and the unknown consequences of military occupation render it I deem very desirable to avoid this course".

In a subsequent letter, in reply to an enquiry made by the Government regarding the amount of troops that would be required in the event of the annexation of the duars, Jenkins wrote that it would be immediately necessary to raise the strength of the First Sebundy Corps to 800 men or 100 men per company. Until the recruits completed their drill and training, a detachment of

1. F.P.C. 26 July 1841: No. 81.
2. Ibid.
3. F.P.C. 6 September 1841: No. 69; Jenkins to Maddock, 19 August.
100 sepoys from the Sylhet Light Infantry would have to be placed at his disposal. In addition a large police establishment would be required for the thanas and phareas. Since it was already determined upon to annex the duars as the only means of preserving its security the Governor-General in Council sanctioned the several measures indicated by the Agent. Thus a partial restoration to the strength of the First sebundies was made; but this was still 200 short of its strength before the transfers to the 2nd Corps.

SECOND SEBUNDY CORPS FAILED

In the meantime in Upper Assam the Second sebundy Corps proved a dismal failure. It could neither relieve the A.L.I. from its outpost duties nor enable the disbandment of the Assam Militia. As military posts increased, particularly on the Naga frontier, where as many as five extra posts were required, the burden invariably fell upon the A.L.I. Thus in March 1841 when guards had to be posted on the eastern Naga duars of Terro and Kapung, in consequence of an attack by these hillmen upon the plains, Jenkins had to call upon Captain

1. Ibid.
S.P. Hannay, the Commandant of the A.L.I., to provide the detachments from his corps. Captain Mainwarring was unable to furnish any from his Second Sebundies. Two months later, in June, Captain Vetoh, the Political Agent of Upper Assam, reported to the Agent that as the latter corps had failed to take the duties of the Jorhat division it would be necessary to retain part of the Assam Militia to make up the numerical deficiency of the Sebundies. In spite of its earlier resolution to disband the Assam Militia the Government of India had to sanction the retention of 100 men for the posts of Borhat, Teroo, Dhopabur, Konghowduar, Geleki and for the thanas at Jorhat, Hangpur and Jaipur.

Above all, the composition of the corps underwent a complete change. It was intended, at the time of the formation of the corps, to draw the bulk of the men from the Doanneans, Moomarias and other bordering tribes. These had not shown themselves well qualified for military service and consequently their recruitment was stopped. The class composition return of the corps, for May 1842, shows as follows:

1. P.P.C. 19 April 1841: No. 78.
2. P.P.C. 30 August 1841: No. 73; Vetoh to Jenkins, 30 June.
3. Ibid: No. 74.
4. P.P.O. 24 May 1843: No. 85; From Mainwarring, 10 May 1842.
Recruits from Upper Assam
Jurwae and others of Lower Assam
Sylhetees and Manipuris
Hindustanis and Gurkhas

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<th>Recruiting Force</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<td>Recruits from Upper Assam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jurwae and others of Lower Assam</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhetees and Manipuris</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustanis and Gurkhas</td>
<td>34</td>
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600 Privates

Captain Mainwarring, the Commandant, reported on 10 May 1942 that the recruits from Upper Assam would further 'speedily diminish'. The recruiting ground of the corps had shifted to Lower Assam and the western provinces.

PROBLEM OF RECRUITMENT

The Hindustani and even the Jurwae of Lower Assam were obtained with great difficulty. The principal reason for this was the absence of the privilege of furlough. Unlike the Local Corps the Sebundies, as civil irregular troops, were not entitled to the benefits of furlough and pension. No Hindustani or Jurwa could ever hope to revisit their houses while in service. The existing Regulation had caused considerable dissatisfaction among these classes.

1. Ibid,
received several applications for discharge. The men expressed their regret at being compelled to quit their colours or else see their family affairs go to ruin in their absence. Mainwarring wrote that under the circumstances it would be 'very difficult to obtain any but the inferior description of recruits who are the Natives of Upper Assam, from whose want of energy and misconduct much detriment .... might eventually be incurred as this corps occupies the most exposed outposts of the frontier of Upper Assam'\(^1\). The problem of recruitment was not confined to the Second Sebundy Corps alone. Captain Thomas Fisher, Commandant, First Assam Sebundy Corps, bitterly complained that he had not been able to maintain the desired proportion of Hindustanis and Gurkhas in his corps. Of the 195 recruits entertained since 1841, including the additions lately sanctioned, he was able to get only 16 Hindustanis and 6 Gurkhas\(^2\). It may be recalled that on its formation a proportion of one-forth of the corps was fixed for Hindustanis and Gurkhas.

It was hoped that their presence would instil among the Jurwaa, from whom the bulk of the corps was ordinarily drawn, a sense of military spirit and bearing. It was with this object that the two companies, composed of these classes, were transferred to it from the A.L.I. Their numbers in 1835 amounted to 133;

\(^1\) Ibid.
\(^2\) Ibid: Fisher to Jenkins, 6 May 1843.
It subsequently fell to 94 sepoys and 26 men in the native officer grade. This was far below the desired proportion and Fisher reported that their numbers would further diminish so long as the furlough Regulations operated to their disadvantage. It would be undesirable, Fisher went on to say, to recruit its entire strength from the Jurwas. Though these had many of the qualities of good soldiers and possessed the ability to resist the deadly climate in which many of the posts were located, Fisher found them less civilized and on the whole less intelligent than the Hindustanis. Moreover, they had shown little attachment to the service. Regimental records had shown that since 1835, no less than 105 had taken their charge, 49 were Court-martialled and 74 deserted—a total of 224 which was one-third of the regiment on its original strength. The Commandants of both the Sebundy Corps, therefore, strongly recommended to the Government of India that furlough should be allowed to their corps. The advantage of this would be: 1. Increased attachment to the service on the part of the men generally; 2. Facility in obtaining good recruits from among Hindustanis and Gurkhas; 3. Inducement to the steady and experienced to remain in service; 4. Increased means of maintaining discipline by the greater dread which the men will attach to dismissal as a punishment. After a thorough examina-

1. F.P.C. 5 August 1843: No. 132.
tion of the problem the Governor-General in Council agreed to make a departure from the rules and the benefits of the furlough Regulations were extended to the corps to the extent of a man per company. The extension of furlough to the Sebundsies to obtain a better class of men not only marked a change in the recruiting policy but also brought about a complete alteration in the character of the corps and paved the way for further changes.

SINGPHO INSURRECTION: FRONTIER DEFENCES RE-EXAMINED

On 10 January, the Singphos, numbering a few hundred, rose in open revolt and simultaneously attacked the three frontier posts of Beesa, Kuju, and Mingroo. The Beesa post surrendered after holding out for four days; the jemadar of the post and a havildar were tied to a tree and hacked to pieces while nine of the sepoys were sold as slaves to Hukwang and Borkham-ti. The post of Mingroo was surprised and met with a severe loss, while Kuju was saved by the timely arrival of reinforcements under Lieutenant Lockett.

The insurrection, like that of the Khanties in 1859,

led to a re-examination of the frontier defences and to a complete change in the location of troops. The immediate problem before the local authorities was the reconsideration of the line of defence, the respective distribution of the Sebundies and the Local Corps and the question of the command of the frontier. There were three possible lines of defence to be considered: starting with the common point at Saikhowa on the left, to Beesa to Ningroo on the right, was the most advanced line; the next was Saikhowa-Kuju - Ningroo line established in 1839-40 in the wake of the Sadiya tragedy; and lastly, the Saikhowa-Jaipur line. The advance to Beesa was made in consequence of the complaints of the inhabitants that the existing posts were not sufficiently advanced for their protection. The post of Kuju being found extremely unhealthy, Vetch availed himself of an application from the local inhabitants for protection to place a guard at Beesa, nineteen miles in advance. The guard at Tazes was also removed to the mouth of the river Noadihing to cover up the villages of that side. The local authorities agreed that Beesa was too far advanced and unnecessary and was accordingly abandoned. The choice therefore lay between the retention of the old Saikhowa-Kuju-Ningroo line and the withdrawal to Jaipur.

1. F.P.O. 18 November 1843; Nos. 159-159; Vetch to Jenkins, 6 May.
Captain Hannay had at first advocated the retention of the Saikhowa-Ningroo line. Under no circumstances, he wrote, should there be any petty posts in advance of it. He proposed to divide the disposable force between these posts keeping up a constant communication. A subsequent tour of the frontier, however, altered his opinion on the feasibility of the Ningroo post, and he then recommended the withdrawal to Jaipur. He found that Ningroo could easily be turned in the direction of Makum, seven miles lower down the Buridihing. Secondly, the post was isolated and in the midst of a desolate country without inhabitants and therefore without resources for its support. Under these circumstances its retention throughout the year was bound to entail a considerable expense. On the other hand Jaipur appeared more suitable; militarily it could not be easily turned, was within the resources of the Assamese population, and a good point to form a base during an offensive with the open rear affording a free communication with the Jornat division. Hamilton Vetoh, the Political Agent, strongly recommended the retention of the Saikhowa-Kuju-Ningroo line. The importance of Kuju was obvious from the fact that the post, although defended by an European officer, was twice openly attacked by the Singphos with the undoubted object of forcing

1. Ibid: Hannay to Jenkins, 6 March 1843.
2. Ibid: Hannay to Jenkins, 28 April.
3. Ibid: Vetoh to Jenkins, 30 May.
a passage into Muttook. Although Mingroo could be turned yet it had the advantage of being able to expose or cut off any enemy attempting to do so. With the command of the Brahmaputra river and the Saikhowa-Mingroo line intact a force could always be concentrated with comparative ease behind an invading enemy. Had not Mingroo intervened, Vetch observed, there would have been nothing to stop the Singphos from plundering all the villages above Jaipur and the place itself would probably have had to sustain the attack that fell on Mingroo. As regards the Muttook territory the withdrawal of the posts of Kuju and Mingroo would enable the enemy to penetrate deep in that quarter and expose the ryots to plunder and slaughter. The Agent to the Governor-General supported Vetch's policy of maintaining the advanced line from Saikhowa to Mingroo. These posts had given great confidence to the inhabitants of Muttook and Jaipur and its neighbourhood. Although these were attacked and one no ryots left their lands. Jenkins also advised against retrogression on account of the extension of the tea cultivation towards the frontier. He further added that the withdrawal of post from Sadiya to Saikhowa following the tragic event of 1839 had already given the Khazis and exaggerated opinion of

1. Ibid: No. 158, Jenkins to Davidson, 12 June.
2. Ibid: Jenkins to Davidson, 12 June.
their capacity and it was important that the Singphos too were led to similar ideas of self-importance. Finally, Jenkins drew the attention of the Government of India to the inability of the Executive Engineer to commence the frontier roads and fortifications from the want of labour for more than two years past. He therefore strongly urged that his proposal of January 1842 to raise a local company of pioneers should be again considered.

The defence of the frontier by mixed detachments from the Sebundy and the Local Corps and the want of a single officer in command over them proved to be a defective arrangement during the late disturbance. The posts were not only held independently of one another but often the detachments from the two corps were indiscriminately mixed. At the time of the insurrection the three advanced posts on the South-East Frontier were thus held:

Beesa : Detachment from Second Sebundy Corps consisting of one Jemadar, one havildar, one naik and 21 sepoys.
Kuju : Detachment from second Sebundies consisting of one havildar and 15 sepoys.
Ningroo : Detachment from the second Sebundies consisting of one subadar, two havildars, one naik and 30 sepoys; and a detachment from the A.L.I. of one

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
subadar, one Jemadar, four havildars, four naiks
and 82 sepoys, the whole under the command of
Lieutenant Holroyd of the Sibundy Regiment.

The regiments being under independent command it was found
inconvenient to make separate arrangements with their respective commanding officers. To do away with this anomalous
position Jenkins proposed to the Government of India the with­
drawal of the Sibundy Corps, which had already proved a complete
failure, from the frontier and the removal of its headquarters
from Rangagora to Sibsagar\(^1\). The corps would henceforth be
employed in all the civil duties and the less important outposts
of the Sibsagar and Lakhimpur divisions. The A.L.I. being the
superior corps from its greater privileges and better equip­
ment and training, would be moved up to take the important
posts of Saikhowa, Ningroo and Jaipur to watch over the passes
into Ava and restrain the restless and warlike Khamtis, Ang­
phos and Kakoo\(^2\). If this was determined upon, the headquarters
of the Local Corps should be removed from Dibrugarh to any of
these posts on the advanced line. By this an extra post would
be reduced and so lessen the number of detached duties which

1. Ibid. The dispersion of the Moamaria chiefs and the settle­
ment of their territory had also relegated the impor­
tance of Rangagora which had formerly been their capi­
tal.

2. Ibid.
usually interfered with the discipline of the regiment. The separation of these two regiments would also be attended with the benefit of preventing the mixture of men on different scales of pay which always led to discontent in the one on inferior pay.

Jenkins further recommended that the senior of the two officers commanding the Sebundies and Local Corps should be invested with the command of all the troops in Upper Assam. This would place such an officer in a position to make all the arrangements for detaching parties to outposts or any other service whether from his own or any other troops that might be in Upper Assam. It would enable prompt action, for reference to the Political authority would become unnecessary, and give a unity of command and superintendence to the frontier which at all times was indispensable. Jenkins at the same time pointed out that the arrangement could not be extended to Lower Assam for if the senior officer happened to be there the delay in referring to him during emergencies in Upper Assam could prove disastrous. But all the troops in Lower Assam, he suggested, might be similarly placed under the control of the senior officer of either the First Sebundies or the detachment of regulars at Bishnath.

1. Ibid.
With a view to establishing uniformity in the organisation of the two corps and a unity in the command of troops having to act together the Commander-in-Chief, General Gough, recommended that the A.L.I. and the Second Sebundy Corps should be of the same strength and assimilated in every respect. The latter corps should be upgraded and the men given the same pay, pension and every other advantage enjoyed by the Local Corps. No invincible distinctions should exist between corps so constantly called upon to act together for it was unreasonable to expect cordial cooperation between them when such differences existed. The two corps thus assimilated should be denominated First and Second Assam Light Infantry. General Gough also recommended that the senior officer of the two in command should be appointed commandant in Upper Assam and vested with power to regulate and control all military arrangements for the defence of that part of the Province.

The First A.L.I. General Gough recommended should be stationed at Jaipur and the second at Dibrugarn. From the regiment at Jaipur two companies would be stationed at Salkhowa with a few guns from the Local Artillery, under the command of an European officer; two at Ningroo also under an European

1. Ibid: No. 16d, Commander-in-Chief to Governor-General, October, 1843.
2. Ibid.
Officer, and between Kuju and Tasea another company should be divided. The Bessa post, the Commander-in-Chief agreed with the local authorities, was too far in advance to be retained. Instead an additional post was recommended on the small river Dum Dum about halfway between Ningroo and Saikhowa. In addition to the Artillery one of the gunboats was to be placed at Saikhowa to keep up the communication between that place and the small post that had still been kept up near Sadiya. From the second corps one company would be placed at Sibsagar to take the duties of the civil station and furnish a small guard of 12 men for Jorhat. Another company would be placed at Lakhimpur which, together with the armed police proposed to be raised by Vetch should be sufficient for the protection of that frontier. To give confidence to the remaining population around Rongagora and to encourage others to settle in that neighbourhood as well as to support the advance line of defence Gough recommended two full companies should remain at the regiment's former headquarters. On the completion of the reorganisation of the Second Corps the two light infantry battalions would periodically relieve each other at the outposts and at the stations.

After outlining the organisation and distribution of the regiments the Commander-in-Chief dwelt upon the importance

1. Ibid.
of fortifications and of opening good roads linking all the frontier posts with each other and the principal military stations. In particular, small forts should be erected at Jaipur and Dibrugarh to serve as places of arms which should be defensible by small garrisons. Similarly fieldworks should be thrown up at the frontier outposts in order to enable the detachments to hold out when attacked until reinforcements arrived from the rear. All these posts should be connected by all-weather roads so that reinforcements and supplies could be freely moved. Since these had already been sanctioned but which could not be completed owing to the want of labour, General Gough urged upon the Government for a reconsideration of Jenkins' proposal for a company or two of Pioneers or Sappers and Miners to be employed under the Executive Engineer.

ORDERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

On 18 November 1843, the Government of India passed orders on the several measures proposed by the local authorities and the Commander-in-Chief. No change was made in the organisation of the Sebundy Corps as was recommended by General Gough. Nor did the Governor-General in Council consider it

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid: No. 169; Currie to Jenkins, 11 November.
necessary to vest the command of the two regiments in one individual. Each corps continued to be under the control of its own commanding officer who was responsible for its discipline, conduct and efficiency. But if combined operations became necessary or any emergency arose requiring active field service the senior officer in the province was required to take command of the whole and with him rested the direction of all operations.

On the question of the line of defence, the distribution of the regiments and the strength of the detachments, the decision of the Governor-General in Council did not materially differ from the recommendations of the Commander-in-Chief and the Agent on the North-East Frontier. The Saikhowa-Ningroo line of posts was retained together with the intermediate posts of Kuju, Tasee and the additional one at Dumama as proposed by General Gough. Jenkins was authorised to take measures for the erection of stockades at Ningroo, Dum Duma and Saikhowa, and for small posts at Jaipur and Dibrugarh. The defence of this line was entrusted entirely to the A.L.I. with its headquarters at Jaipur. The strength of each post was fixed on the recommendations of the Commander-in-Chief. Similarly, the Second Sebundy Corps was withdrawn to Sibsagar and distributed on the

1. Ibid.
lines already proposed. At the same time Jenkins was informed that all duties of a strictly military character shall fall on the Local Corps, and those of the civil station on the Sebundies.

REDUCTIONS AND READJUSTMENT

Meanwhile the state of the finances of the Government of India following the first Anglo-Afghan war was so strained that every practicable economy had to be effected in the administration. On the North-East Frontier sharp retrenchments had to be made in both military and civil establishments. Accordingly, about two months after he had submitted his proposal for the defence of the South-East Frontier, Jenkins took up the question of reducing the military expenditure of the province. After a careful review of its defence requirements he submitted to Maddock, Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, on 23 August 1843, a plan for reductions and readjustments in the Local Corps and irregulars. The plan envisaged the following changes.

1. Disbandment of the Second Assam Sebundy Corps.
2. Abolition of the troopers, cattle and commissariat establishment of A.L.I.

1. Ibid.
2. F.P.O. 6 April: No. 180, Jenkins to Maddock 23 August 1843.


5. Readjustments in the strength of the A.L.I. and First Sebundy Corps.

In his letter, mentioned above, Jenkins wrote that one of the chief objects of the Second Sebundy Corps was the prevention of any insurrection amongst the Moamarias and it was intended to have been composed of the Moamarias and Muttooks; it was also hoped that by the employment thus given them a number of the most warlike families of the tribes would be attached to British interests. The policy failed when the men had withdrawn or were discharged and were replaced by Jurwas and Hindustanis. There was therefore no reason why such an expensive corps should still be kept on foot. In the A.L.I. the 30 ponies attached to it to mount as many troopers had proved to be a considerable source of expense and the mounted men too weak for any offensive operations. The public cattle and the commissariat establishment were also an unnecessary expense and were solely required during emergencies. Similarly the Gunboats at Sadiya could also be safely dispensed with. Of the the Shan Militia and the Aseam Militia, only the former was required to control Angumis and other Magas. They were employed

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
in unhealthy areas where other corps could not be safely detached, and their presence was already fast restoring peace to the disturbed tract. To balance the distribution of the troops in the province following these reductions, readjustments had to be made in the strength of the Local and Sebundy Corps. Jenkins accordingly proposed that the strength of the A.L.I. should be raised to 1000 privates since all the duties of Upper Assam would fall upon it when once the Sebundy Corps were disbanded. The extra 100 men required would be provided from the disbanded corps. Similarly, the two companies transferred from the First Sebundy Corps to the Second in October 1839 should be reattached to it. By the addition the corps would be raised again to 1000 men, which number Jenkins always thought necessary for the duties of Lower Assam. With the additions thus made the two companies of the 23rd N.I. stationed at Bishnath as a reserve for emergencies and to keep a watch over the Daflas could be withdrawn.

In March 1844, when the arrangements sanctioned by the Government of India for the defence of the South-East Frontier were complete, Jenkins once again brought the question before the authorities. There was little apprehension for any open attacks so far as the hill tribes were concerned and the

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
reductions earlier contemplated could, therefore, still be carried out. But Jenkins at the same time pointed out that the experience of sudden revolts on the part of the Khamtis and Singphos made it necessary to take measures to ensure the efficiency of troops holding the frontier line. These posts were situated in such unhealthy localities and where provisions were so difficult to obtain that the efficiency of the men could be seriously impaired. It was therefore of great importance to have the means of relieving the A.L.I. at the advanced posts at regular intervals. In order to be able to do this Jenkins proposed to convert the First Sebundy Corps into a local corps. The corps would be put on the same footing as the A.L.I. in respect of pay and privileges, and redesignated the Second A.L.I., the older corps remaining the First regiment. The two regiments could then relieve each other every two or three years; the services of the second regiment would be made available for all parts of the province instead of confining it to the narrow limits of Lower Assam. The corps, though a civil one, had been performing all the military duties of Lower Assam embracing an area of 11,000 square miles and a frontier 400 miles long, and no practical difficulty would be met in upgrading it into a local corps. Jenkins proposed a redistribution of the two corps, vis.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First A.L.I.:</th>
<th>Jaipur</th>
<th>4 companies and headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saikhowa</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mingroo</td>
<td>1 company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dum Duma</td>
<td>1 company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second A.L.I.:</td>
<td>Gauhati</td>
<td>4 companies and Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tespur</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>1 company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sibseagar</td>
<td>1 company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of the withdrawal of the Regulars, the Commander-in-Chief, General Gough, concurred with the Agent on the expediency of these measures. The Regulars at Bishnath, he pointed out, formed a link between the troops in Upper and Lower Assam and was essential as a reinforcement for Upper Assam. The nearest convenient station where Regulars were placed was Jamalpur, some 356 miles below Bishnath with a tedious upward navigation. The proposal to convert the Sebundies into a local corps so that the two corps could mutually relieve one another could not but be welcomed by the Commander-in-Chief.

In reviewing the disposition return of the First Sebundy Corps for the month of September 1843, in which some of the detachments were shown to have been absent from headquarters for more than

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1. Ibid.
four years for the want of reliefs, he had observed that men so situated would before long deteriorate into inefficient soldiers and provide no defence against the marauding hill tribes. On his recommendation the Governor-General in Council accorded his sanction to the several measures proposed by the Agent.

These changes marked a reversal of the policy adopted in 1839, in the wake of the Sadiya tragedy. It was then determined to withdraw the Local Corps from the advanced positions on the frontier and concentrate it in the year to render it disposable for emergencies and to support the irregulars thrown more forward. The frontier was to be held by the irregulars composed of men who could withstand the deadly climate of the frontier and for whom it was considered good policy to provide employment. The disbandment of the Second Sibunay Corps placed on the Assam Light Infantry the burdens of the advanced posts; and the conversion of the First Sibundies into a local corps extended the system to Lower Assam. The rigours of the climate, the multiplication of the frontier posts and the necessity of maintaining at all times a large disposable force soon proved the new system to be impracticable.

1. F.P.C. 16 November 1843: No. 16d.
2. F.P.C. 24 August 1844: No. 51; G.G. by the Governor-General in Council, No. 234 of 1844.
APPENDIX A

Average monthly expenses of Local Corps and Irregulars during 1843-44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corps</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Assam Sebundy Corps</td>
<td>Rs. 8,598-13-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Assam Sebundy Corps</td>
<td>Rs. 6,314-11-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam Light Infantry</td>
<td>Rs. 14,762-4-½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Artillery Company</td>
<td>Rs. 1,238-12-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Boat Establishment</td>
<td>Rs. 208-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan Militia at Howgong</td>
<td>Rs. 484-12-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam Militia</td>
<td>Rs. 490-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan Militia at Northern dyary</td>
<td>Rs. 77-0-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: Rs. 29,174-5-2½

1. F.P.O. 6 April 1844: No. 182