

THE PARTITION AND THE DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENTS

The partition of India was discussed openly but the Defence Services kept out of the controversy and went about their job as usual. After the failure of the Cripps Mission in early 1946, all mayhem broke loose and the British Government decided to leave India by June 1948.

Lord Louis Mountbatten took over as the Viceroy of India on 24 March 1947 and announced on 3 June 1947 that the sub-continent would be divided on 15 August the same year.

Indian officers and men were offered the choice of service in the Armed Forces of either of the two Dominions or to serve neither. British officers were also given a similar choice. The Service headquarters and training establishments were split.

Division of Assets

Col SD Verma was posted to Staff College, Quetta, in early 1947 to instruct a Division of 60 officers. On 'Partition,' a mixed Indian-Pakistani-British board was assembled to divide the assets of the College in the ratio of two to India and one to Pakistan. Col SD Verma and Maj Zaheer represented Indian and Pakistani interests respectively. The Quetta library stayed with Pakistan and India got the Defence library located at Delhi. Other items included mess property, crockery, cutlery, cups, silver trophies and oil paintings. The division of the other assets posed little problem and the process was completed quite smoothly, except for the Camberley Owl.

CREST OF STAFF COLLEGE, QUETTA



CAMBERLEY OWL

There was a dispute about one particular piece of silver, the Camberley Owl, presented by Gen Sir H Rawlinson, Commandant at Camberley, when he visited the Staff College, Quetta in 1906. Fortunately, the inscription on the trophy stated quite clearly that it was presented by the Staff College, Camberley, to the Indian Staff College'. Since the Staff College Quetta was no longer to be the Indian Staff College, the Trophy now adorns the Officers' Mess of Staff College, Wellington.



A view of the Staff College, Quetta, 1941



Vehicles ready to drive across rugged country, Staff College, Quetta, 1941

