

DURBAR Volume 7, No.4, Winter 1990

MEADOWS TAYLOR – A NAME FORGOTTEN?

Tim Ash

"Meadows Taylor was never, properly speaking, in the Civil Service of the East India Company or the Crown, nor did he hold any military appointment in the British Army. He was through life an Officer of the Nizam (of Hyderabad)". So wrote Henry Reeve in his preface to *"The Story of My Life"* by Colonel Meadows Taylor, published after his death.

Meadows Taylor was born in Liverpool in 1808, the son of a then reasonably successful merchant who later fell upon hard times. He received a somewhat mediocre education at various establishments before being apprenticed to a West India merchant in Liverpool. Neither at school nor in this employment did he find much happiness or satisfaction. In 1824 his father became acquainted with an apparently prosperous Bombay merchant with the result that Meadows Taylor was offered a post with the merchant's business, and thus at the close of his fifteenth year he landed at Bombay after a voyage of four months.

It was soon apparent that the Bombay merchant was, in fact, far from prosperous, but fortunately Meadows Taylor had arrived with a letter of introduction to his mother's cousin, William Newnham, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, who took pity on the boy's plight and obtained for him a commission in the Nizam's Army. So, after several disappointing starts to his life, but still at a very early age, Meadows Taylor found a career that was to occupy him fully for the next thirty odd years.

All this is recounted in *"The Story of My Life"*, a narrative of compelling-reading. Possibly the period that he spent at Shorapoor from 1841 to 1853 was to give him the greatest satisfaction and happiness but also, eventually, the greatest grief.

Shorapoor was a tiny Hindu state in the Nizam's dominions. On the death of the Rajah in 1840 it was much in debt to the Nizam and the heir to the throne was but an infant. Meadows Taylor was deputed to Shorapoor where he had to cope with the schemes and plots of the Rani, the mother of the infant Rajah, her lover, and the boy's uncle, Pid Naik, to mention but three of the major protagonists in the dramas of the following years. This Meadows Taylor accomplished with great tact, kindness, courage and political skill and when the young Rajah became of age and ascended the throne Meadows Taylor was able to hand over the state in good administrative order and with a full treasury.

The Rajah, without Meadows Taylor's guiding hand, fell into a life of dissipation. He became disaffected during the Mutiny of 1857 and finally committed 'suicide' in 1858, having been saved from the gallows by the intervention of Meadows Taylor, thus fulfilling a prophecy that he would not live to complete his 24th year.

There had occurred an earlier event in Meadows Taylor's service that was to prove a catalyst to his later achievements in the literary world. In 1829 he had charge of a district where his

police had found "dead bodies, evidently strangled, and in no instance recognised, were found by the roadside, and no clue could be discovered as to the perpetrators of their death All we could learn was, that some time before, two bodies of men had passed through the district, purporting to be merchants from the north going southwards, but they appeared quiet and respectable, above suspicion. ... Day after day I tried to sift the mystery, but could not." The monsoon and political upheavals at Hyderabad interrupted Meadows Taylor's investigations into the murders and it later fell to the lot of Captain William Sleeman, at Jubbalpore, to uncover the cult of Thuggee; the ritual murder by strangulation of travellers in India who unwittingly fell into the company of one of the numerous gangs of Thugs, disguised as respectable travellers, such as themselves.

In 1832 a captured Thug, turned approver, or informer, was sent to Hyderabad where Meadows Taylor was involved in collecting evidence - "day after day I recorded tales of murder, which, though horribly monotonous, possessed an intense interest . . . Names of Thugs all over the Deccan were registered, and I found one list containing the names of nearly all those whom I had suspected in my old district." From recording this evidence of the Thugs, Meadows Taylor was inspired to write his first novel of India "*Confessions of a Thug*", which was first published in London in 1839, and an immediate success. The confessions of Ameer Ali, the Thug, first brought the cult of Thuggee to the attention of the British public, in a popular form, and successfully launched Meadows Taylor on a continuing literary career, telling the tales of Indian history to an interested readership.

Of the historical novels he wrote after the 'Confessions' I know of four; there may be more as he certainly became a prolific writer on various Indian subjects:

"*Tara*" - a tale of the Mahratta in the 17th Century and their conflicts with the Moghuls; "*A Noble Queen*" - Queen Chand Beebee of Bijapoor in the 17th Century; "*Ralph Darnell*" - leading up to Clive's victory at Plassey in 1757 woven into the background of an English family; "*Tippoo Suldaun*" - a tale of the Mysore War of 1799.

Today's readers may find these works lengthy and involved - each is between 400-500 pages. My favourite has always been the "*Confessions of a Thug*", but above all "*The Story of My Life*" - the true story of a man who from very uncertain beginnings served India and her people with dedication, affection and integrity; it is a story not to be missed.

In 1875, having retired from the Nizam's service in 1860, Meadows Taylor, accompanied by his daughter, at the invitation of Sir Salar Jung, the Nizam's Chief Minister, made a last visit to India. In May of the following year, whilst on his return journey, his health failed and he died at Mentone, in southern France, on 13th May, in the 68th year of his life.

Is Meadows Taylor's name now forgotten in the land of his birth, I wonder? I found that it certainly has not been forgotten in India! In 1983 I visited Shorapoor and in the now neglected town palace of the Rajahs of Shorapoor I met a venerable old gentleman, Rajah Pid Naik, somewhat puzzled as to the purpose of my visit, until the name of Meadows Taylor was mentioned. "Ah! My grandfather's guardian ..." Meadows Taylor's bungalow, which still bears his name, was pointed out and duly visited. Now the PWD guest house, it remains the same as Meadows Taylor described it when building it 150 years ago. At the massive fort of Nuldroog, where Meadows Taylor spent four years after leaving Shorapoor, the mention of his name provoked the same immediate response. But it is only at these places where he served that he is remembered in India. In 1986 the Asian Education Service republished five

of his books, "*Confessions of A Thug*", "*Tara*", "*A Noble Queen*", "*Tippoo Sultaun*" and "*The Story of My Life*", each at Rs 95. The name of Meadows Taylor is well worth remembering among those Englishmen who served India and her people. For those who may be interested the address of the AES is C.2/25. S.D.S., POB 4534, New Delhi. PIN 110-016.

UNITS OF THE INDIAN AND BURMA ARMIES, INDIAN NATIVE STATES ARMIES, PARA MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES, OUTSIDE OF THE GURKHA BRIGADE, ENLISTING GURKHAS AFTER 1900

Lt Col A A Mains, late 9th Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army

INDIAN ARMY

Infantry of the Corps of Guides - ceased 1922.

A number of Battalions raised during World War I, of which the following had over 100 Gurkha ranks:

85 Burman Rifles (see under Burma Army)

2/127 Baluch Light Infantry

3/151 Punjab Rifles

3/152 Punjab Rifles

All these units were disbanded at the conclusion of the War.

BURMA ARMY

Up to 1942:

85th Burman Rifles - became in 1922 3/20th Burma Rifles, Gurkha content wasted out.

7th (Police) Bn, Burma Rifles - raised 1941 from Burma Military and Civil Police. Some Gurkhas.

Six Garrison Companies, raised 1940. Some Gurkhas.

All these units disintegrated in 1942

1942-47:

4th Bn, The Burma Regt. All Gurkhas

Burma Intelligence Corps. Some Gurkhas - a Corps of guides and interpreters.

Both these units were raised in India from refugees of various Army and Para Military units of the Burma Army. Passed to the new Government of Burma at Independence. Gurkhas believed to have been very quickly wasted out.

ARMIES OF THE INDIAN NATIVE STATES

Jammu and Kashmir Army. First unit - Suraj Gorakh Regt., raised in Jammu in 1849 from the descendants of the original Gurkha invaders of Jammu at the end of the 18th Century. Some four other battalions had up to 50% Gurkhas at one time or another; taken into the Indian Army in 1948 as the Jammu & Kashmir Rifles with five battalions each with 50% Gurkha content.

Sirmoor Sappers and Miners. Gurkha content, 50%. Disbanded after Independence.

3rd Tripura Rifles - mostly Gurkhas; became 6th Bn Assam Rifles in 1948

Others

The following States enlisted Gurkhas - usually one platoon in one battalion: Alirajpur; Alwar; Baria; Bahawalpur; Rajpipla; Rampur; Suket; Udaipur (in two battalions).

All disbanded after Independence. It is interesting that two, Bahawalpur and Rampur, were Moslem States.

PARA MILITARY UNITS

Assam Rifles

Five battalions up to 1947, mostly Gurkhas with some tribals. Linked officially to the Gurkha Brigade -

1st Bn to 2 GR and 9 GR

2nd Bn to 7 GR and 10 GR

3rd Bn to 1 GR and 4 GR

4th Bn to 5 RGR and 6 GR

5th Bn to 3 GR and 8 GR

British officers were found almost entirely by secondment from regular Gurkha Battalions. Found 23 GOs and 2674 GORs as reinforcement for regular Gurkha Battalions in World War I, and fought on Burma front in World War II.

Burma Military Police and Frontier Force.

The Burma Military Police units were raised at various dates from 1886 to police the Tribal areas and act as Armed Police in the settled Districts. Composed of Punjabi Mussalmans, Sikhs and Gurkhas. Provided Gurkha reinforcements in World War I. The force was split in 1937 into:-

Burma Frontier Force of seven battalions

Burma Military Police of three battalions The BFF and BMP disintegrated in 1942.

CIVIL POLICE

Bengal.

Calcutta Armed Police - still in existence

Chittagong District Armed Police - replaced by Mussalmans in 1947

MISCELLANEOUS

Singapore

Singapore Armed Police. Raised after World War II to replace the Sikh Police dismissed for pro-Japanese activities. Still in existence as the Armed Police of the Republic of Singapore

Brunei

A unit of Palace Guards raised a few years ago by HH The Sultan, mainly from time expired soldiers of the British Brigade of Gurkhas in the Far East.

Royal Nepalese Army

Mention should be made of the assistance of Nepal in World Wars I and II in sending troops to garrison the North West Frontier. Two battalions also fought on the Burma front in World War II.

TAILPIECE

An ethnic Gurkha Sub Inspector of the Madhya Pradesh Mounted Police, the son of a Havildar of the same Force, came second in the individual Show Jumping event in the 1984 Indian National Games, losing by only 0.3 of a second to an officer of the 61st Cavalry, and was in the team which won the gold medal in the team event.

LT. COL. KEITH SIMPSON FITCH OBE MRCS FRCS

54th Sikhs; 4/12 FFR; 40 Signals Co; IMS

A G Mann

Keith Simpson Fitch was born on 28 August, 1899. He was first commissioned into the Unattached List Indian Army on 31 January, 1913. He was formally appointed to the Indian Army as an officer with the 54th Sikhs on 6 February, 1918. He was also certified as an instructor in Army Signalling. Promoted to Lieutenant on 31 January, 1919, he retired with

gratuity from the Indian Army on 26 May, 1923. This was possibly as a result of the reorganisation of the Indian Army about this time.

Keith Fitch then went on to become a Doctor of Medicine. He studied at Guy's Hospital Medical School in London, gaining MRCS in 1929, LRCS (Lond) 1929, FRCS (Edin).

His next step was to re-join the Indian Army which he entered on 6 August, 1929, in the rank of Captain which was backdated to 13 April, 1927. He was a Doctor in the Indian Medical Service and was posted to the Indian Military Hospital at Dehra Dun. His postings during his career were as follows:-

1932 Indian Military Hospital – Drosh

1933 Leave ex India to 8 December

1934 Indian Military Hospital – Sialkot

1935 Civil Surgeon at Midnapur, Bengal

1.9.35 Medical Officer, Presidency General Hospital, Calcutta

13.10.35 Major

14.4.6 Civil Surgeon, Hooghly, Calcutta

1.11.37 leave ex India

17.5.39 Civil Surgeon, Darjeeling, Assam

15.5.41 Honorary Surgeon to Governor of Bengal

1943-44 Director of Air Raid Precautions Casualty Services, Bengal, Deputy Surgeon General for Famine Relief, Bengal, Acting Civil Surgeon, Chittagong

13.10.43 Lieutenant Colonel

8.1.45 Deputy Director for Resettlement Indian Medical Service

Papers marked as 'Confidential Report (Med 77)' - These give glowing reports of Fitch as an Administrator and one entry states "An Officer of outstanding administrative ability, with imagination and a marked determination to insist of the right standard being maintained."

Another entry, which is signed by a Lieutenant General of the Indian Medical Service states - "I entirely agree; and on his years' work I grade this officer as outstanding." This report has the signature of Fitch on the bottom of his rating report.

MEDAL ENTITLEMENT

OBE Civil LG 1 Jan 45, page 30; British War Medal Lt; Victory Medal Lt; Indian General Service (GVR) Lt 54 Sikhs clasps Afghanistan NWF 1919, Waziristan 1919-20, North West

Frontier 1930-31; 1939-45 Star; Burma Star; Defence Medal; War Medal; 1935 Jubilee Medal; 1937 Coronation Medal

Lt Col Fitch retired in 1947. His medals are mounted Court Style as purchased. They had been mounted in this fashion for some time and quite obviously worn. They are in excellent condition but Fitch has had them mounted with a Military ribbon for the OBE, though according to the LG it is definitely a Civil award.

Information received from the General Medical Council (UK) on 7 October, 1986, states that he was fully registered with the Council on 26 July, 1929, on the strength of his qualifications as MRCS England and LRCP London 1929. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1939. His registered address was c/o Messrs Grindlay and Co., 54 Parliament Street, London. He was erased from the Register on his death on 19 March, 1955, at Silverstream Hospital, Silverstream, New Zealand.

His death certificate, which was purchased from New Zealand on 27 July, 1989, states that he died of Coronary Thrombosis and was cremated at Karori on 22 March 1955.

His first wife (her fate unknown) was Agnes Faulkner Stuart and they were married in London when he was aged 22. They had no children. His second marriage was to Lilian Rosalie Margaret Inglis at Ootacamund when he was 48 years of age. They had two children, a female aged 5 and a male aged 1 (at the time of his death). They had been in New Zealand for 6 months.



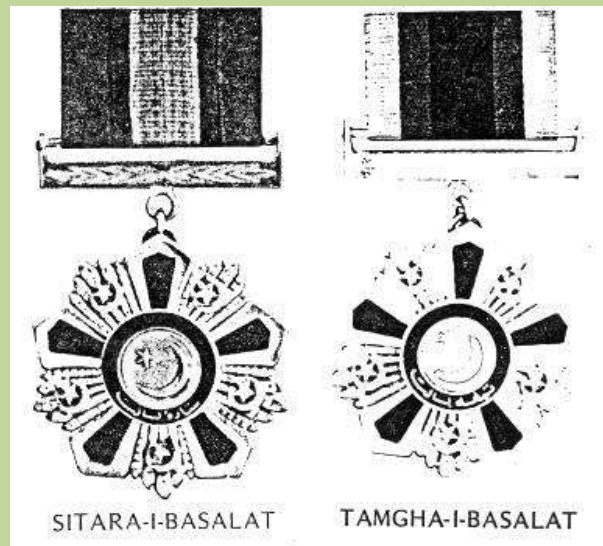
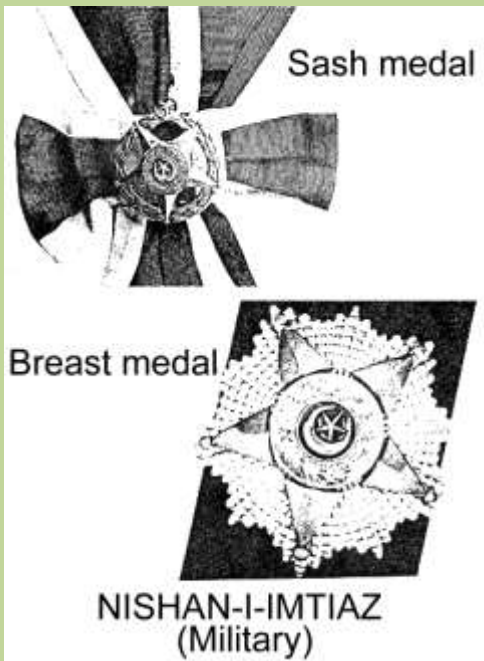
THE ORDERS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN (continued)

When describing The Order of Imtiaz in Volume 7, No 2, I admitted to some confusion based on the various documents that I had been able to consult.

Major General Shahid Hamid has since forwarded a copy of a booklet published by Inter Services Public Relations and compiled by Personnel Services Directorate, Adjutant General Branch GHQ on badges of rank, dresses and honours and awards of the Pakistan Army. This clearly shows that the insignia for the four grades of The Order of Imtiaz are not as shown in my previous article. The correct versions are shown below, although I wonder if the illustration for the Breast Star of Nishan-i-Imtiaz is correct or if it has been wrongly positioned on the sash ribbon (the Star and Crescent seem to face the wrong way).

The insignia for Sitara-I-Basalat and Tamgha-I-Basalat (Volume 6, No 4) would also appear to have changed from the descriptions given in earlier documents and so I include illustrations of the current style.

On a related note the latest newsletter of the Ribbon Branch of The Orders and Medals Research Society mentions that recent issues of ribbons for Pakistan appear to have increased in size to 35mm.



BRITISH OFFICERS REMAINING WITH THE ARMIES OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN AFTER INDEPENDENCE - 1947

Lt Col A A Mains, late 9th Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army

GENERAL

It was one of the conditions agreed to by the British Government, at the request of the new rulers, that after Independence all British officers should cease to be part of the administration, except in so far as either Dominion wished to retain their services. Generally speaking, and more particularly in India, they did not. Some Indians, including old Government servants, who should have been aware of the true position, have denigrated the British officers by implying that they left because they had no desire to serve any longer; this is ungenerous since the British had no option.

Both Dominions were reluctant to employ British officers in operational posts or command of active units in the Army, but this was forced on Pakistan by the paucity of suitable Moslem officers, particularly in the Artillery and Engineers. The whole question of the employment of British officers of the old Indian Army was sadly mishandled.

EXTENDED SERVICE

The former Government of India had stated that a reasonable number of British officers would be required over the transitional period and had invited them to "extend" their service in India or Pakistan. They were assured that they would be under the control of Supreme Headquarters in all matters of status, pay and administration, and could leave on giving three months' notice. However, before the end of 1947 the Supreme Commander, Auchinleck, frustrated by the two Dominions, now at war with each other over Kashmir, resigned and, without any consultation, not even with the Commanders in Chief of India and Pakistan (both British officers) , gave notice on behalf of all other British officers. He did this on the grounds that Supreme Headquarters was no longer in a position to look after their interests; he also stated that any officer who wished to continue with either Dominion must agree his own terms.

THE DOMINIONS' TERMS

The two Dominions then published their own terms which, although adequate, were not particularly generous.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan said that she would treat her British officers as though they had left the army, but on re-engagement she would allow them to draw pay at the old Indian rates, with the deduction of half their pension if they were in receipt of one.

INDIA

India said that she would treat her British officers as if they had never left the service and would pay them on the old rates with the prospect of enhancing their pensions and would grant the customary year's leave pending retirement to all ex regular officers. These terms were applicable only to officers of the old Indian Army; British Army officers would serve on terms agreed between their respective Governments. The dictat of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Montgomery, that any officer who stayed on would forfeit any claim to transfer to the British Army, caused complications and largely dictated the type of officer who remained. Except for a very few senior officers most of those who stayed did so for a pecuniary advantage, namely an enhancement of their pension, which in some cases was considerable. It was unfortunate that a few of the technical Corps did so to continue to enjoy certain illegal profits made by speculation and corruption. This produced, in 1948, a crop of investigations by the War Department Special Police and, later, Courts Martial which did nothing to enhance the prestige of the remaining British officers. It was fortunate that this class of officer was replaced by 1949 and that those remaining, not more than seventy, were dedicated to India's cause and gained the full confidence of all but the most violently anti-British politicians.

IMPLEMENTATION

THE ACTUAL TERMS

British officers served on a year to year basis, with three months' notice on either side. India's desire to get rid of British officers as soon as possible was conditioned by the necessity of maintaining a large army to counter the threat from Pakistan. I learned later that I was due to go at the end of 1951, but at the last moment no suitable relief could be found, so, very belatedly, in December of that year, I was given another year. India interpreted the pay conditions literally - we continued to receive our old pay together with staff pay and other allowances, but an attempt to put up our pay when, owing to inflation, the British Government persuaded India to increase the pay of attached British Army officers, came to nothing. Leave terms were not ungenerous - a month a year with free travel within India, and additionally I received two air passages (self and wife) to the UK in 1949, and one passage in 1951 - this I commuted to money to take my wife and myself to Beirut. We received 1st Class P & O passages at the conclusion of service.

THE LEGAL POSITION

At the outset, to avoid British officers becoming mercenaries and to keep them under military discipline, they were transferred from the Indian Army to a "British Special Service List late Indian Army", an offshoot of the Dominions Office, and thus continued subject to the British Army Act. Our Commanding Officer was the senior British officer in India. A small British section under a British DAAG was located in AG's Branch at Army HQ to deal with our records.

India, on passing a new Indian Army Act at Independence, produced a clause defining a British officer and a further clause that "British Officers shall have full powers of command under this Act". Brigadier Macdonald, Commandant Infantry School, was also Station Commander Mhow, which was directly under Delhi Area. As a Brigadier in the same position as a Sub Area Commander, he had a Court Martial Warrant and could order a Court

Martial of, or give the prescribed Reprimand to, an Indian officer. On the other hand Indian officers had no powers of command over British officers, who were merely enjoined to obey Indian officers senior to them by virtue of their contracts.

UNIFORM

Until India introduced her new badges of rank in about 1951 British officers of the old IA wore their Regimental badges; afterwards they were ordered to wear those of the "General List". This really only entailed replacing the cap badge and ceasing to wear shoulder titles. To save expense we continued to wear Regimental buttons on service dress and patrols.

PERIOD OF SERVICE

Most of the seventy British officers went in January 1953; in the Infantry School the GSO I (myself) and QM left, leaving only the Commandant who went two years later when all except the Chief Engineer at Army HQ left. The Chief Engineer went about three years after but was appointed Chancellor of the University of Roorkee (formed from the Thomason College).

SENIOR OFFICERS WHO SERVED

Adviser General Staff (General Russell); Adviser A & Q (General Stable); DMT & Adviser Armoured Corps (General Wilkinson); Commandant Staff College (General Lentaigne); Chief Engineer (General Williams RE); Director of Signals (Brigadier Akehurst, Royal Corps of Signals); BGS Southern Command, later Commandant Infantry School (Brigadier Stuart); Commandant Infantry School (Brigadier Macdonald).

PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

My five years at the Infantry School were very happy ones and my wife and I established friendships with a large number of Indian officers which have continued to the present day. I can honestly say that I had difficulties with only three Indian officers out of the very large number with whom I had dealings during those years.



LETTERS

● Tony Mann, in his article on Charles Ommanney (Vol. 7, No 3, page 15) mentions him joining 109th Infantry and being 'Regimental officer for the Madras enlisted men'. The 109th became one of the battalions of the 4th Bombay Grenadiers (my regiment) and the Bombay Grenadiers never enlisted Madras men. The Indian Army list shows Ommanney as of the 109th but 'detached as Recruiting Officer for Madras men at Bangalore', i.e. he was on detachment from the Bn. The Grenadiers enlisted Dekhani Mahrattas, Konkani Mahrattas, Rajputana Mussalmans and Punjabi Mussalmans.

As a point of interest the IA list of June 1911 still shows Ommanney as 75th Infantry and RO at Bangalore and it is not till the April 1912 IA list that he is shown as 109th Regt but still RO at Bangalore. IA list July 1914 shows him as Double Company Commander with the 109th. These are a little different from the dates Tony Mann gives. Lt Col Patric J Emerson

"The Daily Telegraph" of 22 November 1990 carried an obituary for General Sun Li-jen who died in Taiwan aged 90. It described him as "an outstanding Chinese military leader whose expeditionary army saved the lives of thousands of British soldiers besieged by Japanese troops in Burma in 1942.

Resourceful and tenacious, lean and handsome, the 'ever victorious general' was wounded 13 times during the defence of Shanghai against Japanese invaders.... Sun's greatest triumph came in 1942 when, amid scenes of chaos among Allied troops in Burma, his Chinese 38th Division counter-attacked the Japanese invaders. This permitted the escape of the 1st Burma Division and saved the 17th Indian Division, further to the east, from being overrun. Sun was appointed CBE.

After a gruelling trek through some of the world's most inhospitable jungles, Sun eventually retreated into India. He was then appointed commander of X-Force, whose task was to liberate Burma by attacking from the west.

Mainly because of interference from Chiang (Kai-shek), Sun proved less willing to commit his troops; and to the fury of Gen "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, X-Force did not capture Myithyna until November 1944"

Would any of our members, some of whom may have had dealings with General Sun, care to augment the information given in the obituary or pass comment on the phrase "scenes of chaos among Allied troops in Burma"?

Phil Daybell

