

Address by Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode¹

**To
The First Term Gentleman Cadets of the First Course
At the Indian Military Academy
10 December 1932.**

I wish I could have welcomed the Gentlemen Cadets of the new Indian Military Academy on the day they first made their appearance here, for it was a memorable day in the history of the Indian Army. I could not do so, because it was pointed out to me that they had not yet received their uniform, nor were they sufficiently drilled to make an inspection of parade possible. At the request of the Commandant I, therefore, postponed my visit till today, when he said that he would be ready to receive and I should like to thank him and all those who, under considerable pressure of work, have made this meeting possible.

I have taken the opportunity of my first formal inspection of the Indian Military Academy to invite a number of distinguished Indian gentlemen and especially those who assisted me as members of the Indian Sandhurst Committee to be my guests here today. Such an institution has been long asked for and much discussed. It is an Indian institution for Indians, open to Indians of all castes and creeds, and paid for by Indians, and I am most anxious that representative Indians should see it themselves and give us the opportunity of showing them that we, Army authorities, are determined to make it in every way worthy of the Indian Army - and that it is a high standard - and in no way inferior to the corresponding institutions in England.

Indian politicians here today know that there has been a strong and persistent demand for an Indian Military Academy ever since self-government for India emerged from the clouds of pious aspiration on to the firmer ground of an

accepted policy. The so-called Skeen Committee recommended that an Indian Sandhurst should be started in 1933. Events have moved more quickly than they anticipated, and we have been able to antedate that by one year and today you see for yourselves hopes translated into facts.

We had to start this Academy at a most inopportune moment during the greatest world-wide financial crisis of all time, and the prospect of having to find money to build it filled me, I confess, with gloom. We have, therefore, been fortunate in being able to make immediate use of the buildings you see today situated in a most convenient locality, with water and electric light already there, and providing the necessary military atmosphere at far less cost than if we had had to build ourselves from the beginning.

The buildings you see here today are only half of what the Academy will eventually consist of, but they are sufficient for the needs of the moment, and we shall show you today what we propose to do in the future, when the numbers reach their full complement of over 200 Cadets. It is only natural at this stage of Indian history, when she is more than half-way to the goal of responsible government in other spheres, that some should be dissatisfied with the progress we have made towards the time when she will stand on her own feet in matters of defence. It is a mere platitude to say that there can be no full responsibility until that happens. That is an inescapable fact; but quite a number of people appear to think that goal could be reached in a very short time if we, who are still responsible for the government of India, chose to use seven-league boots.

I would ask them to remember that the problem of providing for the self-government of India is unique in the history of the world, and those who are now getting down to the practical difficulties of how to translate the idea into the actual are finding in the process a large number of very difficult fences in front of them. If they are doing so in matters, political, financial and administrative, I can assure you that the problem of the defence of this great sub-continent is even more difficult. Knowing this, we should be criminal fools if we took hasty steps forward without being quite sure that each last foothold was firmly fixed on the rock of efficiency. If the army in India is not up to its work, and does not command the full confidence of the people and the fear and respect of its enemies and evil-doers, India would indeed be in bad case.

We began with a small experiment of Indianising eight units, and we have in the last two years taken several big steps forward. We have more than doubled the number of units in the process of Indianisation, and, in addition, we open all Arms, Services and Departments to Indians for the first time. Now we have

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opened this Indian Military Academy. I would also mention the very important fact that the first Indian King's Commissioned Officer has been admitted to the Staff College.

I now address myself to the Gentlemen Cadets in particular. I welcome you as the first cadets of a purely Indian Military Academy. I also welcome the Gentlemen Cadets from the Indian States. With the federal idea before us, it is just as important that the officer of the State Forces should be highly educated

as it is in the case of those in British India. I now impress upon you and upon the Indian officers who have already joined the Army under the new conditions during the last eight years, the Indian's ability to assume full responsibility for her defence and the date by which she will be able to assume that responsibility depends almost entirely on you, on those who have preceded you and are Jnow officers, and those who will, follow you in this Academy.

We have got the men who will serve under you in the ranks. No better material exists in the world, and they have proved it on many stricken fields; but hitherto they have been led by us, and now they are to be led by you. That great task is before you and before these who will follow you here to prove you are fit to teach gallant men in peace and to gain their confidence and lead them in war. Some of you already possess experience of the Army and are here, with the great traditions of the Indian Officer behind you, to enter on a wider and more responsible field of service. To others of you a military life is entirely new. But to all of you I say: Do not be dismayed at the responsibility that will rest on your shoulders. I believe you will prove you are worthy to assume it. This Academy will give you in every respect the same facilities that are given to young British officers at Woolwich and Sandhurst. I assure you now that, in this College and afterwards in the army, you will be given willing and ungrudging help in fitting yourselves, to your task. We can do no more, the rest lies with you.

May I also beg you to remember that an Army requires highly trained staff officers and leaders, and does not consist only of regimental units, and that you will have equal opportunity with British officers to enter the Staff College. It will be absolutely necessary for a considerable proportion of you to take advantage of this, if the Indian Army is to be a success.

In wishing well to this Academy, and especially to the first batch of Gentlemen Cadets, I venture to offer you two pieces of advice. Firstly, the Indian young man

of education seems very attracted by politics. May I urge you to remember that politics do not, and cannot, find any place in Army life. An Army can have no politics. It is the paid servant of the people, and is at the disposal of the Government of the day, whatever may be the political complexion of that Government. Once there is any suspicion that an Army, or any part of it, is biased politically, from that moment the Army has lost the hill confidence of the nation who pays for it. It is no longer impartial, and that way lies chaos and civil war.

Secondly, I would ask you to remember that you have come here to have your first lessons in three principles which must guide an officer of a National Army, and they are:-

First, the safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time.

Second, the honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next.

Third, your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time.

I wish all success to the Indian Military Academy and to those who are now commencing their military careers within its walls.

Notes

1. Sir Philip Chetwode, after whom the main building and its central hall are named, inaugurated the Academy on 10 December 1932 on the penultimate day of the first term. Appointed Commander-in-Chief, India in 1930 and promoted to Field Marshal in 1932, FM Philip Chetwode was much concerned with the modernisation and "Indianisation" of the Army in India. A large number of Indian and European guests witnessed the occasion. The crowning glory of this landmark event was the inaugural address by Field Marshal Chetwode, delivered in the hallowed hall of the Academy. His speech, a pointed piece of stirring oration, has come to acquire immortality as a passage from his address, has been adopted as the 'Credo' of the Academy. The Chetwode adage echoes in every military establishment of India and beckons the officers to their duty. The above address was given in reply to the welcome address by Brig LP Collins, DSO, OBE of 4 GR, Commandant.