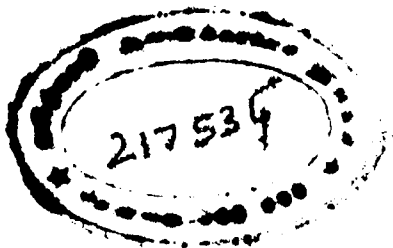


~~C 8~~ 17636200
AHB
MARQUESS OF WELLESLEY AND THE CONQUEST
OF INDIA

BY
V. V. JOSHI, M.A. (Oxon.)

Reprinted from
The Journal of the University of Bombay, Vol. IX, Part 4, January 1941



MARQUESS OF WELLESLEY AND THE CONQUEST OF INDIA

By

V. V. JOSHI, M.A. (OXON.),

Ismail Yusuf College, Andheri, Bombay

• INTRODUCTION

THE conquest of India by Great Britain was an event which was of epoch-making importance in the history not only of India and Great Britain but in the history of the world. The prestige, resource and power, which Great Britain thereby acquired, placed her in the forefront of the nations of the world. This conquest was not a freak of fortune, nor was it as some historians would like us to believe, an "act of absentmindedness". On the contrary, it was a deliberate act, undertaken in spite of much opposition in England. This will be clear to any one who reads the letters and despatches of all the principal English characters who took a leading part in the shaping of British history in India. Further, it was not a gigantic fraud as a few students of history so unscientifically maintain. To give only one example, such statements as the following are of very little scientific value.—"Lord Wellesley was determined to annihilate or curb the Mussulmans and Marathas by force or fraud. This explains his Machiavellian policy and Occidental diplomacy in dealing with the independent Princes of Hindustan. It was by fraud that he made the Nizam and Peshwa prisoners, deprived the Nawab of Karnatak, the Raja of Tanjore, the Nawab Vazier of Oudh, the Nawabs of Surat and Farukhabad, of their territories and by force ruined Tipu and some of the Maratha Princes such as Sindhia, Holkar and the Raja of Nagpur".¹ Such judgments are only superficially true because it is possible to overcome or subdue individuals by accidents or fraud, but never nations or a whole people. In the long run historical events are the consequences of the general morale of a people, their social, political and economic organisation and the qualities of their

1. Basu : Rise of the Christian Power in India ; p. 310.

MARQUESS OF WELLESLEY AND THE CONQUEST OF INDIA 9

institutions. They are not fortuitous accidents determined by a wayward fortune. Even the leaders that a people have are such as they abundantly deserve. Without being didactic, history gives an infallible judgment about the survival value of a people and their institutions. It gives with an even hand an irredeemable dispensation. The ease with which India was conquered by the British, therefore, shows that India's institutions lacked vigour and adaptability. A study of the British conquest of India ought to be undertaken with a view to discovering those drawbacks in India's political life, which made the conquest, as will subsequently be seen, so easy and almost inevitable. No doubt the British conquest has already been studied from various points of view and emphasis has been laid on the political, social, economic and religious causes of the conquest, by different students according to their own predilections. These causes certainly have materially contributed to the British conquest of India, without any one of them being the sole or exclusive cause of the event. This article restricts itself to showing how military causes were responsible for the British conquest of the country and that these military causes were the outcome of the state of political feeling among the people or rather the absence of a political feeling. This does not mean that military causes alone explain the British conquest. The emphasis on it is laid here at the exclusion of other causes, because the military aspect of the conquest, has generally been neglected and a valuable contribution can be made to Indian history by studying scientifically the military campaigns in the 18th century.

I

MARQUESS OF WELLESLEY'S JUSTIFICATION OF HIS AGGRESSIVE POLICY

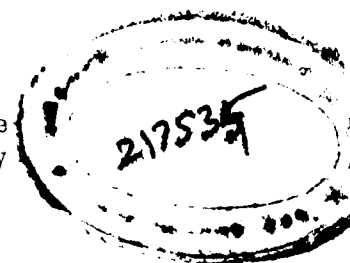
The conquest was really accomplished during the short span of Wellesley's administration, when within a few years the Company rose from the position of a second-rate power in the country to that of virtual paramountacy. The aggressive policy, which Marquess of Wellesley adopted immediately on his arrival in India, has been generally justified on the following grounds :—

Firstly, the danger of a French invasion and the necessity of preparing to meet it

It is argued that an aggressive policy on the part of the British was necessary to prepare for a naval and military

217534

18/11



invasion of India by the French. When Wellesley became the Governor General, the danger of a French invasion appeared imminent on account of Napoleon's occupation of Egypt and his wellknown ambition to push on to India to strike a blow at the British power. This Alexandrian project of Napoleon appeared chimerical to many modern historians though military students have pronounced it to be quite practicable. General Stuart wrote to Rt. Hon. Henry Dundas in 1800 A.D. as follows: "Bombay is our natural emporium.....with the Red Sea, which has acquired a new degree of political importance since the attempt of the French to reach India from Egypt. Whatever may be the present success of the attempt, it becomes incumbent on us to watch henceforward this avenue to India. The design is in itself practicable and would have most likely succeeded, had the Turks either been in alliance with the French or had the enemy pushed on immediately after he had reached Cairo".¹ Napoleon's attempt, therefore, failed largely because of the opposition of the Turks on account of his occupation of Egypt and the severance of his line of communications and supply with France due to the destruction of the French Fleet at the Battle of the Nile. The supporters of Wellesley's policy further argue that besides the land-route through Persia and the North-Western approaches to India, there was another direction from which the invading French force could have come to India. The French possessed a colony at Mauritius where they could have assembled a navy and troops with transports for a surprise landing on the western coast of friendly Indian powers. Such an operation, it was argued, would have succeeded because the western coast of India was too long for the British Navy to patrol all the harbours effectively and to prevent the French force from reaching the shores of India. Finally, a French naval squadron might have succeeded in establishing by determined effort at least a temporary superiority in the Indian Ocean, as another French squadron had done with great effect during the critical year of American War of Independence. With reference to this Arthur Wellesley wrote as follows in 1802 A.D.: "We have seen the French navies contend with those of Great Britain and an opinion has frequently been advanced by those who are in the habit of considering these questions, that during this war the navy of France would have been as formidable as her army if it had not been for the continental contest which rendered the land service more

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 577.

necessary to her".¹ This is borne out by the fact that in spite of the enormous difficulties under which the French naval forces had to operate, they were able to capture British property in the Indian Ocean, worth two million pounds.²

Secondly, reduction of French allies in India and particularly the menace of the French ally Tipoo

Historians who support Marquess of Wellesley's policy argue that his policy of aggression was justified because "in the consideration of every question of Indian policy or in an inquiry into the expediency of any political measure, it is absolutely necessary to view it, not only as it will affect Indian Powers but as it will affect the French."³ They argue that the French intrigued at the courts of Indian Powers with a view to persuading them to commence hostilities against the Company and also to form alliances for co-operation with the invading French forces. On their arrival the French would require money and supplies which they could get only from their Indian allies. It was therefore absolutely necessary to remove even by force all the potential and actual allies of the French. It was on this ground that the destruction of Tipoo was justified by the partisans of Marquess of Wellesley. Though in some respects the case of Tipoo was unique, he was certainly the most wellknown and powerful ally of the French and had it in his power to give effective help to the French. Moreover since 1792 the political events in India had considerably improved Tipoo's position. The Triple Alliance formed against him between the British, the Marathas and the Nizam had dissolved. The Marathas very nearly destroyed the Nizam in 1795 and after the latter's defeat the power at his Court passed into the hands of the French party led for some time by M. Reymond. After 1795 the Maratha Empire was so much distracted by Civil War that Tipoo had nothing to fear from the Marathas for some time. But since 1792, the position of the Company had become worse *vis-a-vis* Tipoo. Company's army in the Karnatak, which could take part in field operations was only 14,000 men, a force clearly insufficient to reduce Seringpatam, since a force of 20,000 men had failed to accomplish it during the Third Mysore War. Tipoo's army contained a powerful arm of mobile cavalry which Wellington later observed was the best he ever saw and which Tipoo intended

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 87.
2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 274.
3. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 759.

to use for harassing the communications of the enemy. Besides the finances of the Company were very low.¹ Its credit was poor and its debt stood at £10, 866, 588². Further the Company expected an invasion of the North-Western provinces by Zaman Shah, the King of Afghanistan. Tipoo was negotiating with the French for an anti-British alliance at least two or three years before the British attacked him. In his letter to the people of the Isle of France, dated the 2nd April 1797, he offered to support a French attack on the Company, with men, material and money. He however made it clear that he did not intend to initiate military operations on his own, unless French military and naval forces actually arrived in India, because he did not want to be left in the lurch. Whatever the precise motives of the French at Mauritius, the Proclamation issued by them on the 30th January 1798, together with other evidence afterwards collected, made it clear that Tipoo had formed "an offensive and defensive alliance" with the French in order "to declare war against the English whom he ardently" desired "to expel from India".

Thirdly, the danger to the Company from the Maratha Power

The friends of Marquess of Wellesley justified his policy on the ground that the destruction of the power of the Maratha Empire was necessary for the security of the Company's territory. The Maratha Empire, it was said, constituted a danger for the following reasons :—

(a) *The prospect of a united direction of Maratha affairs.*—Ever since the ruin of Tipoo's power, the Marathas had become jealous and suspicious of British policy. They intended to combine the whole of their power against that of the Company. "There can be no doubt whatever that the great object of every Maratha statesman has been to combine their force to attack the British government; and if they had ever been free from disputes among themselves they would have carried that plan into execution." (Arthur Wellesley).³ This combination of Maratha power was on the point of realisation towards the end of the 18th century, not through free co-operation among the Confederates, but due to the concentration of Maratha power in the hands of Sindhia, who had brought Poona government under his own control. Arthur Wellesley wrote as follows. "In my opinion

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches—J. Webb, Secretary to the Govt. of Madras; pp. 9-10.
2. Sidney Owen : Wellington's Memorandum; p. 2.
3. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 287.

the extent of the influence and territory of this one man becomes a matter of anxiety to every friend to the British interests in India. He now embraces the whole extent of our frontier and of that of the Nizam, and in his person we experience that which we learn all our policy ought to be directed to prevent, viz., one man holding and exercising nearly all, if not all, the power of the Maratha Empire."¹

(b) *Trained Europeanised infantry.*—The Marathas had Europeanised their armies under French instruction. Their infantry had acquired a fairly satisfactory state of discipline and all Maratha armies possessed a powerful park of artillery. They constituted a menace to the territories of the Company which it was idle to ignore. Marquess of Wellesley in his letter to his brother wrote that Sindhia did possess the power to endanger the security of the Company, because of "the efficient state of Sindhia's military establishment, under the direction of European officers and particularly the formidable condition of his regular infantry and artillery under the command of those officers".²

(c) *The war-like basis and tradition of the Maratha Empire.*—Due to its peculiar organisation and tradition, the Maratha Empire lived by war and for war. It made a continuous demand for tribute on its neighbours. The Marathas made many complicated claims on the Nizam and frequently plundered his territories. According to Marquess of Wellesley at the beginning of the 19th century, "the territory round Poona, to a considerable extent, having been entirely desolated by the troops of Holkar, that Chieftain would have been compelled to invade the territories of the Nizam or to penetrate into the country situated south of the river Kistna, for the subsistence of his numerous troops and followers".³ In fact, like all warlike states, their very bankruptcy would have compelled them to make war on the Company and its allies.

(d) *The power and position of M. Perron and his Jahgir-state.*—The French officers who were in the employ of the Maratha states, had acquired a great influence and power and were a nucleus round which an anti-British combination of Indian powers could easily have been formed. M. Perron was a particularly important man. In a secret letter to General Lake,

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 193.
2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches; p. 412.
3. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches; p. 357.

directing him to undertake operations against Sindhia in the north, Marquess of Wellesley made his views on M. Perron quite clear. M. Perron had created an efficient force of 8000 infantry and 8000 cavalry, for whose maintenance Sindhia had assigned to him large territories on the Jumna. The power of M. Perron was most dangerous to the British for the following reasons: (i) Firstly, he had created practically an independent French state under his own immediate control in the territories assigned to him for the maintenance of his battalions. It was wellknown that "Sindhia" retained "no efficient control over M. Perron or over his regular troops"; (ii) Secondly, M. Perron had shown his anti-British tendency by dismissing all the British officers from the employment of Sindhia; (iii) Thirdly, on account of his positions south of the Jumna, and holding Delhi and Agra as he did, M. Perron was in a position to take offensive action against the territories of the Company, in Bihar and Bengal; (iv) Fourthly, M. Perron and his forces were in possession of the person of the Moghul Emperor and therefore wielded his nominal authority. The French could certainly have made dangerous use of this great instrument in their hands.¹ Thus do the protagonists of Marquess of Wellesley argue. In short, according to them, the Governor General was compelled to undertake an aggressive policy in India in order to secure British possessions against three great menaces. Firstly, the fear of a French invasion; secondly, the danger of Tipoo and his alliance with the French; and thirdly, the menace of the Maratha power.

THE MEASURES OF POLICY AND ACTION ADOPTED BY MARQUESS OF WELLESLEY TO COUNTERACT THE ABOVE MENACES

The measures and policies by which Marquess of Wellesley claimed to overcome the above menaces could be grouped under four major heads:—

(1) *Subsidiary Alliances*

He persuaded Indian states such as the Nizam or the Peshwa to enter into subsidiary alliance with the Company. By this subsidiary alliance, he was able to remove French influence at these Courts, whether actual or potential. He reduced, thereby, the number of possible French allies in India. He was also able to ensure the security of the long frontiers of the Company, by reducing many of the neighbouring powers to the position of

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; pp. 303-16.

subsidiary allies. But the greatest gain which the Company obtained from these subsidiary alliances was the increase in its military resources and power at no additional cost to itself. The subsidiary ally engaged to maintain a stipulated force of the Company, within his territories and to furnish a specified contingent to co-operate with the Company's forces, in case the Company was at war with another power. Further the Company could control the foreign relations of the allied Indian Powers. In case the Company was at war with a third power, the geographic position of the territories of the allies and the disposition of the Company's forces during peace ensured that fighting would take place either in the territories of the enemy or in the territories of the subsidiary ally. The territories of the Company were spared the ravages of war and it was enabled to use its resources unimpaired by the temporary fortune of war. In effect the military frontier of the Company was pushed far ahead of its political frontier.

(2) *Dismissal of Europeans from the Service of Indian States*

The British insisted on the dismissal of all Europeans from service in all allied Indian States and particularly Europeans of those nationalities whose governments pursued an anti-British policy. The Nizam was persuaded to give up his French officers. One of the chief conditions for continued peace with Tipoo was the dismissal of Frenchmen from his service. According to the British, the Frenchmen in the service of Indian powers, not only intrigued against the British but materially increased the military efficiency of those Indian Powers whom they served. Arthur Wellesley even claimed though with scant justification that "the necessity of guarding against the French influence was one of the principle causes of the Treaty of Bassein".¹

(3) *Destruction of the Maratha power by force*

In reducing the Maratha power by force if necessary, Marquess of Wellesley had the following objects in view: (i) The destruction of their trained battalions. Marquess of Wellesley wrote to General Lake that the most desirable object was "the entire reduction of M. Perron's regular corps. This operation necessarily included the capture or destruction of his artillery and military stores"². (ii) Obtaining possession of the person

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 274.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 308.

of the Moghul. (iii) "Early and effectual demolition of the French State erected by M. Perron on the banks of the Jumna",¹ and the occupation of Delhi, Agra, Baroach, Ahmednagar and Bundelkand. (iv) Prevention of either Sindhia or Holkar from dominating the Maratha Empire. This was achieved by controlling the Peshwa at Poona under the Treaty of Bassein concluded with him and the consequent unopposed march of A. Wellesley to Poona. (v) The defence of the Nizam against the Marathas. Unless the complicated question of Maratha claims on the Nizam was satisfactorily solved, there could be no permanent peace in the Peninsula. The territories of the Nizam were a buffer between the Marathas and the Company, and therefore the defence of the Nizam was a matter of absolute necessity to the Company. In fact, "the immediate cause of the war was the refusal of the Confederates to separate and withdraw to their usual stations within their respective territories, the armies which they had assembled and united on the frontier of our ally, the Subhedar of the Deccan, after having declared that the intention of that junction was to decide whether there should be peace or war with the British government and its allies". (Marquess Wellesley to Arthur Wellesley).²

(4) *The Encirclement of Indian Powers by cutting them off from the sea—i.e., take Possession of the Provinces of Malabar, Gujrath and Cuttock*

Wellesley's policy of aggression was designed eventually to annex or control the three maritime provinces of India, namely, Malabar, Gujrath and Cuttock, and thereby to insulate the two Indian Powers—Tipoo and the Marathas—from foreign intercourse. British control of the coastline of the Indian Peninsula could prevent the landing of a French invading force in the territories of an Indian ally far more effectively than British superiority on the Indian Ocean could possibly do. Further by depriving the Indians of access to the sea, the Indian Powers were robbed of the means to replenish their military resources from foreign sources. Any French help that Tipoo could get either in men or material would have had to come by the harbours on the Malabar Coast. Wellesley therefore demanded the surrender of the Malabar Coast as one of the principal conditions of peace with Tipoo. Similarly, during the war with the Marathas, the British

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 311.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 411.

quickly occupied "the sea-port of Baroach and its dependent territory, the forts of Champaner and Pawangarh, with the whole of Sindhia's territory in the province of Gujrath, situated to the northward of Baroach". Marquess of Wellesley gave considerable importance to the acquisition of those territories, since he considered that the military resources of Sindhia were improved because of "the facility which the possession of the sea-port of Baroach afforded to Sindhia of improving his military establishment, by the accession of French or other European officers, of military supplies and stores, etc., and even of a body of French or other European troops".¹ A commanding position in Gujrath was a definite object of British policy. The military and strategic importance of Gujrath was well-understood among British military circles. On this subject General Stuart wrote in 1800 as follows—"The possession of Gujrath would be attended with military and commercial advantages of the first importance".² Gujrath was a rich country and produced all the cotton in India, which was exported to Europe and China. If the British occupied Gujrath they could obtain a large revenue, which would have been very welcome to the low finances of the Company. Further advantage which the Company could get from a commanding position in Gujrath was that it would enable the British to operate against the territories of Zaman Shah, which lay on the Indus, should that king attempt to carry out his threat of invading India. On the other hand if a European power, particularly the French in the Red Sea, invaded India and took possession of Gujrath, it would have secured them on the mainland of India and therefore they had to be forestalled.³ As for the province of Cuttock, British desire to possess it was dictated by two advantages which they expected to get from it. By acquiring the province the British could cut the communications between the Raja of Nagpur and the French and secondly, they could connect by land the British territories in Bengal with those in Madras. As Marquess of Wellesley wrote, the possession of Cuttock enabled the Raja of Berar "to interrupt the communication between our northern and southern possessions, to facilitate the invasion of Bengal, of the Northern Sircars, and to obtain the aid of the French."³

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 412.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's despatches—Letter from General Stuart ; p. 575.

3. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 414.

II

THE UNREALITY OF FRENCH, TIPOO'S AND MARATHA MENACES:
THE REAL CAUSE OF BRITISH AGGRESSION

Marquess of Wellesley really needed no advocate, because his very success justified him in the eyes of historians and successive generations. Besides, both Marquess of Wellesley and his brother A. Wellesley, as is clear in the first section, argued their case remarkably well. It is however doubtful if the Governor General was being accurate in the assumptions that he made for justifying his aggressive policy. He made in fact an exaggerated estimate of the menace which the French, Tipoo Sultan and the Marathas spelt for the Company, either separately or combined. During his own time many differed from Marquess of Wellesley both in the general policy that he followed and in his individual actions. Most of his critics wanted him to follow a more moderate course of action. From most of the letters and despatches of Marquess of Wellesley connected with his policy in India, the decisive factor which appears to have weighed with him was the injury he considered he did to French interests and influence in India. No doubt the French were jealous of British possessions in India and it appears that Napoleon conquered Egypt as a stepping stone to a subsequent invasion of India either *via* Persia and the north-western frontier of India or *via* the Red Sea. At the time Wellesley arrived in India, he was not alone in appreciating the magnitude of the French threat. The Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, in their instructions to Marquess of Wellesley in the letter dated the 18th June 1798, made their suspicions of French designs quite clear. They said, "Our Empire in the East has ever been an object of jealousy to the French, and we know that their former Government entertained sanguine hopes of being able to reach India, by a shorter passage than round the Cape of Good Hope, and we have no doubt that the present Government would risk a great deal and even adopt measures of the most enterprising and uncommon nature for the chance of reducing, if not annihilating, the British power and consequence in that quarter of the world".¹

(1) *French menace was exaggerated*

Thus it appears that the fear of a French invasion of India was based entirely on two considerations, namely, the aggressive

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 3.

and ambitious policy of the French government and secondly, the occupation of Egypt by Napoleon. These two considerations had appeared very weighty during 1798-99, but later it became increasingly obvious that the French invasion of India either by land or sea was neither imminent nor practicable, throughout the Revolutionary War, in view of the continental commitments of France and her peculiar difficulties for prosecuting an overseas war. Consciously or unconsciously, Marquess of Wellesley altogether ignored those difficulties in the path of France, which made a French invasion well-nigh impossible. These difficulties were the following :—

(a) *Isolation of the French Expeditionary Force in Egypt.*—In the invasion by land of India by the French force in Egypt, France could not obtain an active alliance of the Turks and the Persians, nor could their invading force hope to maintain an active uninterrupted line of communications, with France, for reinforcements and supplies. Napoleon's project, if he really seriously intended to carry it out, of invading India from Egypt through Asia, was still-born almost as soon as he reached Egypt. His communications with France were broken by the defeat of the French ships at the battle of the Nile, and he could not hope for any reinforcements of men or material. Besides the hostile attitude of the Turks compelled him to consolidate his occupation of Lower Egypt where he had to improvise a base of supplies for his limited army of occupation. The effective range of operations of this small army and its limited resources, was so far circumscribed that he could not take Acre. With these facts before him Marquess of Wellesley obviously over-estimated the French danger.

(b) *Naval inferiority of the French.*—But the chances of a French Expeditionary Force transported in ships reaching India in strength sufficiently formidable to endanger British possessions were even smaller. It was wellknown that France did not possess transport ships sufficiently numerous to carry a large expedition over oceanic distances. Arthur Wellesley observed, "I don't believe, he (Tipoo) would accept nor do I believe, she (France) could transport a larger number than three thousand men".¹ A secret expedition would have been practically impossible, because the British navy kept a close blockade of the coasts of France. As soon as a French force would have left, the British Government would have known

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 41.

about it. Even if the French had succeeded in eluding the British blockade off the French coast, they would have had to pass the British squadron off the Cape of Good Hope and be prepared to meet the British naval forces off the Indian Coast. It was so hazardous a venture that it would not have succeeded had it been tried and the French never did really attempt it. Without a command of the sea to maintain uninterrupted communications, no overseas expedition could be successful. Besides the French were engaged in a perpetual contest on the European Continent, in which she was so successful that she succeeded in conquering for a time nearly the whole of Europe. Her energies in men, money and material were therefore concentrated on the European struggle, with the consequence that the French navy was starved of talent, money and prestige. In spite of the supposed offensive and defensive alliance, Tipoo could only obtain 150 men from Mauritius. In fact as long as war continued in Europe and Napoleon had to face new coalitions, formed by British diplomacy and gold, the chances of a strong French force being sent to India were very small. Arthur Wellesley correctly observed that there would have been greater "French intrigue" at Tipoo's Durbar after the conclusion of the Anglo-French War¹. Finally, the British statesmen in England, on account of a closer touch with the European situation, were in a better position to judge the probability of a French invasion of India, than Marquess of Wellesley. In March 1803, when war with France was shortly expected to be renewed and Napoleon was making military preparations in the ports of France and Holland, and was undoubtedly at the zenith of his power, Castlereagh wrote to Marquess of Wellesley as follows regarding the French menace to India. He said, "I am sure your Lordship will keep in view how much will be gained in positive strength by directing our exertions, even in war, against the debt, so long as there is little appearance of the enemy being able to menace India. Howsoever jealous France is of our power in the East, and howsoever steady she may be in her purpose of aiming at positions, from which she might hope one day to shake that power, yet I cannot persuade myself that she has or can have for a length of time, the means to attempt any direct attack against possessions so well-defended as ours are by the army now on foot".² Curiously enough, in July 1803,

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 46.

2. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellesley's Despatches—Lord Castlereagh's letter; p. 582.

Marquess of Wellesley was of the same opinion! He wrote as follows—"The degree of danger to be apprehended from France in India, during the existence of war, is in my opinion, inconsiderable in the present state of our power in India, provided that power be duly exerted in maintaining a commanding superiority in these seas, and in preserving our European and native land forces in a state of complete efficiency and strength."¹

(c) *Over-estimation of French intrigue at Indian courts.*—Further the concern which Marquess of Wellesley displayed regarding the influence and intrigue which the Frenchmen in the service of Indian powers carried on was unnecessary. These Frenchmen were mostly purely mercenary adventurers, who possessed insufficient contact with the government of their country to carry on an intrigue in national interests. Even M. Perron was not so mindful of national interests as might have been expected of him, unless he believed that in his personal power in India, no national interests were involved. He was quite willing to relinquish his power at a price as is clear from this: "It will be highly desirable to detach M. Perron from Sindhia's service by pacific negotiation. M. Perron's inclination certainly is to dispose of his power to a French purchaser; but I should not be surprised if he were to be found ready to enter into terms with your Excellency, provided he could obtain sufficient security for his personal interests." (Marquess of Wellesley to General Lake).²

(2) *Tipoo was not a real Menace*

Marquess of Wellesley considered the security of the Company threatened by the power of Tipoo Sultan. It was quite clear that Tipoo could secure very little help from the French and the presumed offensive and defensive alliance produced no more than 150 men from Mauritius. As for the danger that he represented to the Company, it was insignificant because no Indian power was equal to the Company in the military sense. As General Stuart correctly observed, "No native state can ever be very formidable without the assistance of an ally; and there is but little reason of apprehension from their aggrandisement by an extension of territory, as long as that is confined to the inland countries."³ No doubt on account of the weakness of the Nizam, the civil war

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellesley's Despatches; p. 585.

2. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellesley's Despatches; p. 315.

3. Opp. Cit.

in the Maratha country and the low finances of the Company, Tipoo had temporarily improved his relative position, but he had not become quite so formidable as to leave the issue of a war between him and the Company in any sense doubtful. When J. Webb wrote to the Government of Madras in July 1798, he drew a black picture of the Company's position; but the disadvantages of Tipoo were even greater than those of the Company, and he was not as powerful as he was in 1792. Marquess of Wellesley in his letter to General Harris dated February 1799 wrote as follows—"The enemy's country, the nature of his resources, the strength of his defences and the character of his force, are subjects familiar to the whole of your staff,..... On the other hand, Tipoo Sultan's army is known to have suffered essentially both in numbers and discipline since the last war. His finances are in great disorder; he no longer possesses the confidence of his army, his councils are distracted by a variety of contending factions, and his spirits are dejected and broken by the disappointment of his hopes of French assistance, by the retreat of Zaman Shah, by the failure of his intrigues at the Court of Poona and Hyderabad, and by the unexampled vigour, alacrity and extent of our military preparations."¹ That Tipoo was not a menace is clear from the fact that he made no preparations for an offensive operation against the Company, but contended himself with defending his territories. He did not want the war at all unless he received substantial help from the French. As Mr. Webb mentioned above said, "No rupture with Tipoo was to be apprehended, but by our own provocation." Even Arthur Wellesley expressed the same opinion. He said, "If we are to have a war at all, it must be of our own creating; a justifiable one I acknowledge, one we shall think necessary, not on account of any danger which we immediately apprehend, but one which we suppose may eventually be the consequence of this alliance with the French, and in order to punish Tipoo for a breach of faith with us".²

Thus the destruction of Tipoo was a ruthless act. Many have condemned Marquess of Wellesley for it on moral grounds; some have justified it on grounds of political expediency; in either case most historians think that Wellesley does not come off well in the judgment of modern history. This condemnation is largely due to a tendency among historians to take isolated

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 95.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 41.

events or episodes of history and judge them in the manner of an inquisition as if political actions are personal acts of the chief actors in history. The fall of the Moghul Empire and the early destruction of Maratha nationalism had created in India a political void. It had to be filled by the inevitable process of a strong power emerging as paramount. The Company was unquestionably the only really powerful state in India, the others being in various stages of decay and decomposition. Marquess of Wellesley therefore established the inevitable supremacy of the Company in a short time and in a less bloody manner than would have been the case had he followed the more cautious policy advised to him. In History, events of great importance have seldom taken place without a violent destruction of the old, though historians subsequently attempt to justify or condemn them on moral grounds. Organic historic events occur in a way that makes morality irrelevant.

(3) *The Maratha Bogey was Equally Unsubstantial*

The menace of the Maratha power was equally groundless. In his attack on Tipoo, Marquess of Wellesley's case was fortified by the blank cheque he had received from the Court of Directors. The Secret Committee of the Court of Directors wrote to him as follows—".....and should you judge either from his answers or from the steps that he is taking, that his designs are such as the French Proclamation represents....., we think it will be more advisable not to wait for such an attack but to take the most immediate and most decisive measures to carry our arms into our enemy's country.....We rely upon your using the latitude allowed you in the preceeding paragraph with the utmost discreion, that we may not be involved in a war in India, without the most inevitable necessity, of which necessity we leave you to be the sole judge."¹ But Marquess of Wellesley was not allowed the same latitude in his policy towards the Marathas. In his general policy towards the Maratha Empire, he was severely criticised by the authorities in England. The fall of Tipoo had changed the balance of power very much in favour of the Company who became indisputably the strongest military power in India. As Castlereagh remarked in 1804, British power in India was too firmly consolidated and the prospect of attack from any quarter too remote to justify its risking a preventive war with the Marathas. Far from being a menace, the Maratha Empire was the sick man of India at the close of the 18th century. It was

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 3.

decayed and was exhausted by a long civil war and in military resource it was far from being equal to the effective power of the Company. This is clear from the following considerations :—

(a) *The lack of cohesion and singleness of purpose.*—The Maratha Empire lacked union. The feudatory powers which constituted it were utterly divided among themselves. The jealousy, hatred and suspicion of the members of the Confederacy towards each other precluded any possibility of a union. The power of the Peshwa was inconsiderable and he carried on a perpetual feud with the southern Jahgirdars in his territory. No doubt the Marathas openly talked about combination against the common enemy—the British. But internal strife made such a combination impossible. Bhosle of Nagpur claimed the kingship of the Maratha Empire, while the animosity between Sindhia and Holkar was so great that nothing could bring them together. How far this civil strife had gone is clear from the following—"By reference to the records of the day, it will be seen what pains were taken by the Confederates to bring Holkar's army in active operation in the Deccan; and if that chief had performed his engagements with Sindhia, I cannot pretend to say that I should have brought the army through its difficulties. Amrut Rao intercepted a letter from Sindhia to the Peshwa, in which Sindhia urged His Highness to break his alliance with the English and promised that as soon as we should be defeated, he (Sindhia) would join with the Raja of Nagpur and the Peshwa to destroy Holkar. Amrut Rao sent this letter to Holkar and the consequence was that Holkar, after he had made two marches to the southward with a view to co-operate with the Confederates, returned and crossed the Nerbudda, and in point of fact never struck a blow; on the contrary he was in friendly communication with me throughout the war."¹ Arthur Wellesley to Rt. Hon. R. Dundas.). Besides the personal animosity among the various Maratha Chiefs, the leaders of the Maratha Empire were by a curious coincidence peculiarly unfit to lead the state in a first-class crisis. Sindhia was indolent, weak-minded and voluptuous. Holkar had a streak of insanity. Bhosle was supposed to have no aptitude for military affairs, and the Peshwa was licentious, imbecile and had in him a criminal strain.

(b) *The economic ruin of the Maratha country in the Civil War.*—The Maratha powers were financially bankrupt and their

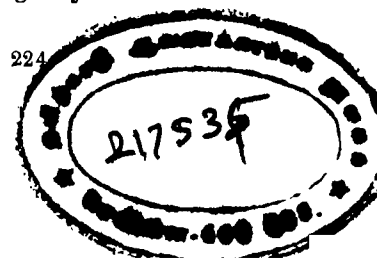
1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 350.

territories were ruined by the Civil War. Had the Marathas been powerful enough to menace the security of the Company in an offensive war, they would never have let the Company's troops occupy Poona without a challenge. Holkar himself though powerful had no stable resources. The following judgment of Marquess of Wellesley was not altogether wrong. "The situation of Holkar is precarious and accidental; the instability of the resources of that adventurer reduces the continuance of his power to the utmost degree of uncertainty, and absolutely deprives him of the means of opposing any systematic or formidable resistance to the operation of our alliance with the state of Poona." As for the Deccan it was absolutely ruined by the Civil War. "They have not left a stick standing at the distance of 150 miles from Poona; they have eaten the forage and the grain, have pulled down the houses and have used the material as firewood, and the inhabitants are fled with their cattle. Excepting in one village, I have never seen a human creature since I quitted the neighbourhood of Meritch."¹ The ruin of the country was so great that in 1804 there was a great famine all over the Deccan.

(c) *The great weakness of Sindhia.*—One of the curious facts about the British attitude towards the Marathas was their consistent under-estimation of the effective power of Holkar and their belief that Sindhia was far more powerful than he really was. In fact, according to them, the menace of the Marathas was symbolised in the power of Sindhia and particularly in his French officers and their trained battalions. But in fact Sindhia's power had very much declined towards the close of the 18th century. Firstly, he had suffered severe losses in his war against Holkar and his military prestige was much reduced. Secondly, Sindhia was weakened on account of his mistaken policy of acquiring control at Poona. His preoccupation in the Deccan gave his opponents and vassals in the north a great opportunity to undermine his power and reduce his influence in Hindustan. In his ambition to get control of the power at Poona, he neglected his affairs in the north, the base on which his power mainly depended. M. Perron's independence was a measure of Sindhia's weakness.

Thus not only the Marathas were no menace to the British but their attitude towards the English was also uniformly friendly, and they scrupulously abstained from offering any

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 224



provocation to the Company. In spite of all the hard things that were said about the Marathas, the British never had cause to complain on that score. Castlereagh makes it clear in the following statement: "The Marathas have never in any instance commenced hostilities against us. When by taking part in their internal disputes, we have been at war with any of the Maratha-states, they have always availed themselves of the first opening for peace, and have shown forbearance and humanity to a British army more than once when in difficulty. So far then as past experience goes, there seems no special ground to apprehend future danger from the Marathas".¹ No doubt they resented the Treaty of Bassein partly because it frustrated the long-cherished and conflicting ambitions of both Sindhia and Holkar and also because of the loss of independence which the head of the Empire had suffered through the Treaty. As Castlereagh pointed out, "the fact" was indisputable that "a general repugnance to the British connection on the terms proposed prevailed among the great Maratha powers".

(4) *The Critical Attitude of the Authorities in England*

Thus in spite of the absence of any real menace from the Marathas, Marquess of Wellesley precipitated a preventive war with them by forming a subsidiary alliance with the Peshwa. Lord Castlereagh, the President of the Board of Control, strongly opposed the aggressive policy of Marquess of Wellesley.² He suggested that since the destruction of Tipoo, there was no need to have a close connection with the Maratha powers. According to him the Governor General should have followed either of the three following courses in his attitude towards the Marathas: (i) Either, the British should have helped Sindhia and the Peshwa to suppress the rebellion of Holkar and form subsidiary engagements with them, without stationing the subsidiary force, within their territories; (ii) or, the British should have offered, in conjunction with the Raja of Berar, "a disinterested mediation"; (iii) or, they should have assisted Sindhia to re-establish the Peshwa in his authority, in return for the expenses of the expedition and compensation in Gujraht without however forming any subsidiary alliance either with the Peshwa or Sindhia.

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 254.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; pp. 255-64. Lord Castlereagh's letter.

From the point of view of Lord Castlereagh, therefore, the Company was already so strong as not to need a Maratha alliance. "With such an Empire (as the Company possessed), a Maratha connection may be a very good thing, if it can be had without mixing us too deeply in their internal disturbances, or leading to an extension of dominion beyond our purpose, but we are too strong to require it. Our wisest policy is to place our dependence in that quarter, in the consolidation and improvement of what we already possess".¹

The secret Committee of the Court of Directors were of the same opinion as Lord Castlereagh. They were quite willing to modify the Treaty of Bassein in such a way as to make it more acceptable to the majority of the Maratha powers, by renouncing those articles of the Treaty that gave most offence. They wrote: "Our wish is that it should be expressly stipulated in an additional article of the Treaty that the subsidiary force shall hereafter be stationed within the Company's territories..... We entertain great doubts whether it is desirable, regard being had to the character and complexion which it is the object to give to the alliance, to stipulate for a general right of arbitration as between the Peshwa and other states. Such right must in itself create much jealousy and we are inclined to think that it would be on the whole better not to push our claim of arbitrating too far."²

Marquess of Wellesley therefore pursued a policy which the authorities in England did not encourage. The difference arose on account of the totally distinct aims that the two had in view. The authorities in England considered the reduction of debt and consolidation in already acquired territories as far more important than further acquisition of power and new territories. Castlereagh assumed the aim of Indian policy as follows—"The proposed end in view" is "a defensive alliance and guarantee, connecting the Marathas with the Nizam and the Company, and through that League preserving the peace of India". On the other hand, Marquess of Wellesley, though professing defence and the scorching of the Maratha "hydra", was following an aggressive policy, because the condition of India promised its successful execution.

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 264.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches—from the Secret Committee to Marquess Wellesley ; p. 271.

(5) *The True Cause of British Aggression in India*

The internal condition of the Maratha Empire had brought about so much discord and weakness and the willingness of the Peshwa to enter into subordinate alliance with the Company was so opportune as to make that Empire an easy prey to any power which could use force with quickness and decision. It was the culpable weakness of the Marathas and the favourable opportunity of destroying it, which made Marquess Wellesley so reluctant to give up those advantages which the British had acquired by the Treaty of Bassein. In this connection Barlow quite justifiably asked, "When can we hope to have all India again at our command?" After all, as he showed, the Gaekwar was an active ally of the English and the Raja of Berar possessed "neither military, knowledge nor military resources". In fact politically as well as militarily the position of the, Company in 1803-4-5 was most favourable for a most decisive and overwhelming blow against the power of the Marathas. The weakness of the Peshwa and the Nizam gave the Company a most suitable opportunity and excuse to place the subsidiary force within the territories of those two princes. The military advantages to the Company of these forces so stationed, were one of the decisive factors in the overthrow of the Maratha power. With the military stations acquired in Gujrath, at Poona and in the Nizam's dominions, the Company acquired advanced bases close to the forces and territories of the Confederates, against whom the Company could initiate immediate offensive operations. On this point Arthur Wellesley expressed himself as follows—"I have to observe that as in order to defend the Peshwa against the attempts of either of those chiefs, to establish an influence at his Durbar by means of an armed force, it would be necessary to bring the troops from a great distance; and they would have to arrive and operate in a country in which no magazine or establishment would have been formed for them. I can have no doubt respecting the expediency as a military question of establishing the subsidiary force within the Peshwa's territories".¹

The real cause of British aggression therefore was neither the menace of non-Indian powers nor that of Indian powers. The true cause lay in the existence of two facts. They were:—

Firstly, the great weakness of Indian powers, whose nature and causes are explained in the next two sections, that are to follow, and

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; pp. 291-92.

Secondly, the internal geography of India. The internal geography of the country deprives Indian states of natural frontiers and their defence against each other becomes very difficult. At the same time it makes it incumbent on the strongest power in the country to carry on war until it brings the entire country under its sway. Indian historical development shows that perpetual war goes on in the country unless either a foreign power conquers the land or a power rises in India which subdues all others. A void had been created in India by the anarchy of the 18th century after the fall of the Moghul Empire and an early extinction of Maratha nationalism. This void had to be filled and the Company was unquestionably the strongest power in India and therefore qualified to fill the void by subduing the entire country.

To sum up : the rise of the British power in India from a second-rate position to that of virtual paramountcy can be traced to the aggressive policy of Marquess of Wellesley. He justified his aggression by pleading that the Company's possessions in India were threatened by the French, the Tipoo Sultan and the Marathas. He overcame these dangers by a great increase in the political and military power of the Company accomplished by a military overthrow of Tipoo and the Marathas. Moreover he won over many subsidiary allies and made the Company a virtual successor of the Great Moghul. However the grounds on which Wellesley justified his aggression were unsubstantial. The French had no chance of invading India without a command of the sea and with the Continental wars on their hands. In spite of his restlessness, the power of Tipoo was hardly equal to that of the Company, and he did not want to attack the Company. Finally, the Marathas, who were the strongest of Indian powers, had become too weak through discord, civil war, financial bankruptcy and poor leadership, to endanger the security of the Company.

The real cause of British aggression was the weakness of the Indian States, which made aggression profitable. Besides, the internal geography of India compelled the Company to attain peace in India by conquering the whole country.

III

MILITARY ADVANTAGES OF THE BRITISH

In the second part, it was maintained, that the true cause of British aggressive policy was the weak and exhausted condition of the principal Indian powers and the necessity for the strongest

power in India to expand, until its rule extended over the entire country. It now remains to be shown that the Company during the administration of Marquess of Wellesley was the strongest military power in India. In this section only the positive advantages will be dealt with and in the next section the military advantages acquired by the British, on account of certain weaknesses of the Indian forces opposing them, will be discussed.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MILITARY HISTORIAN OF INDIA

The historian of the British military conquest of India is confronted with an important question. What made the British military so effective and overwhelming? What were the causes of the sudden and signal overthrow of such powerful states as those of Tipoo and the Marathas? This question has not received all the attention that it deserves. In these articles, reference has been made only to the Mysore and Maratha campaigns, because Tipoo and the Marathas were the strongest of Indian powers.

The rapid and unfailing success of Marquess of Wellesley's policy depended upon the possession of a powerful military force, which could overwhelm any opposition which the Indian states could bring, because without an effective military instrument, no aggressive policy could be successful in the long run. If any proof is needed of the superiority of the Company in the military sphere, it is furnished by the ease with which India was conquered. This fact becomes all the more striking if it is remembered that the British troops in India were numerically very small in comparison with the forces which Indian powers were in the habit of maintaining. The Indian establishment of the Company was no doubt large and though Indian troops fought well on numerous occasions, their main task was the occupation of conquered territory and they were, therefore, auxiliary forces. The Company depended upon the White troops for all important and critical operations. All the same, including the Indian troops, the forces of the Company were always inferior numerically to those of their enemy. At the time of the Fourth Mysore War, the Company had an establishment of 80,000 men, though only 20,000 of them could be used in the operations against Tipoo Sultan who had an army twice as large in the field. In 1800 A. D. the number of European troops in India was only 14,000 men and the number of British troops necessary for all eventualities was considered to be 30,000 men, out of which 18,000 could at all times be spared for field operations. Marquess of Wellesley who always thought in

terms of an offensive strategy did not demand more than 31,000 British troops for an adequate defence of India. Thus the vast continent of India was conquered by the British with trifling forces. As Lord Castlereagh pointed out, a territory inhabited by fifty million people, was governed by a civil and military complement of 30,000 Europeans. No doubt the total military force inclusive of Indian troops was over 115,000 men, but was it excessive if compared to that of Aurangzeb, for instance, who was the Lord of nine hundred thousand horsemen? The following were some of the positive causes of British military superiority :—

1. *A resourceful diplomatic policy*

In the diplomatic field, the British were at once more subtle and consistent than the Indian powers who had hardly a settled policy. In national defence, diplomacy plays as important a part as the defence forces themselves. For the prosecution of a successful war, considerable amount of diplomatic preparation is generally necessary before operations actually begin. In this diplomatic activity, the aim of every state is to collect as many allies as possible and ensure the neutrality of the potential allies of the enemy. In this aim, the British were far more successful than their Indian opponents. In almost every war that the British fought in India, they not only obtained many important allies and found partisans even in the camps of the enemy, but also so divided the ranks of the enemy Indian States as to deal with them one by one and destroy them piecemeal. Thus, even before the war started, the British in Madras were authorised by Marquess of Wellesley to intrigue with the enemies of Tipoo Sultan, particularly Meer Allum, and to make secret advances to the deposed family of the Raja of Mysore. When the war started, Tipoo unhelpt by the Marathas, was crushed in two months. Similarly, in the Second Maratha War, the Peshwa, the Gaekwar, and the Southern Maratha Jahgirdars were allies of the Company, and while Sindhia and Bhosle were being overwhelmed, Holkar maintained an unconcerned neutrality. Thus treachery and absence of unity among the enemy appears to have considerably simplified the task of the British. The British isolated their victim of aggression and destroyed him utterly. The most important cause of this absence of a settled diplomatic outlook and consistent foreign policy dictated by the interests of the State, was that Indian states were the private possessions of individuals, many of whom were adventurers. Under the circumstances, the only policy these Princes could be expected to

follow was the one which ensured them the quiet private possession of their territories. That is why British protection was very welcome to most of these princes, many of whom entered into an alliance with the British to safeguard themselves against the encroachments of some of their more pugnacious neighbours. Any coalition among Indian powers was equally difficult because each of them was more jealous of his natural ally than he feared the enemy. Arthur Wellesley was not far wrong when he made the following statement: "The Asiatic governments do not acknowledge, and hardly know.....rules and systems. Their governments are arbitrary, the objects of their policy are always shifting, they have no regular established system, the effect of which is to protect the weak against the strong; on the contrary, the object of each of them separately, and of all of them collectively, is to destroy the weak; and if by chance they should by a sense of common danger be induced for a season to combine their efforts for their mutual defence, the combination lasts only so long as it is attended with success; the first reverse dissolves it; and at all events it is dissolved long before the danger ceases, the apprehension of which originally caused it."¹

The advantages of successful diplomacy were always seen in the operations that followed. The forethought and military sagacity of British diplomacy enabled the Company to acquire supply bases and points of strategic importance on the line of advance against the future enemy. This is particularly noticeable in the war against the Marathas. By virtue of a successful diplomatic manœuvre, the British obtained the support of the Gaekwar and the Southern Maratha Jahgirdars, together with a subsidiary alliance with the Peshwa. This success immediately placed the Company in a favourable strategic position *vis-a-vis* Sindhia. Due to this advantage, the bases acquired by the Company at Poona and in Gujraṭh enabled it to take rapid offensive action against Sindhia's territories and deprive him, within a short time of the commencement of hostilities, of two most important of his possessions—namely, Ahmednagar and Baroach. The Company ensured the benevolent neutrality of the Maratha Jahgirdars in Southern Maratha Country partly by diplomacy and partly by the show of military pressure in the form of a contingent on the Tungabhadra. The attitude of these Jahgirdars was important for the successful prosecution of the war, because their possessions lay across the

1. Sidney Owen : *Selections from Wellesley's Despatches* ; p. 295.

line of communications of the British army, with its great supply base at Seringpatam. The friendship which these Jahgirdars maintained towards the Company during the Second Maratha War helped the British in two important ways: (a) They gave protection to the convoys of supplies which passed through their territories to the British army and (b) They kept tranquility in the territories in the rear of these British armies.

2. *A monopoly of sea-power in Indian waters*

The possessions of the British lay along the sea-coasts of India, because they were primarily a sea power. But their military operations on the peninsula of India were no less benefitted by this sea-power. With the command of the sea in their hands the British could reinforce any of their coastal possessions with the least possible delay and without danger of interference from any other power. This enabled them to economise on their standing army which would have had to be much larger if the movements of their armies were not facilitated by an uninterrupted possession of sea-power. The British hemmed in the Indian powers and interrupted any communication that the Indian powers may have had with other Europeans. The most effective use of Sea-power is seen in the Fourth Mysore War, when the Bombay army was landed on the Malabar coast, at a point which Tipoo least expected it to land.

3. *An efficient organisation for communications and supplies*

The Company possessed an organisation for the maintenance and improvement of its communications much superior to that of the enemy. In fact, since the Company's forces well-understood the importance of communications and an uninterrupted flow of supplies to the army in the field, they gave great attention to the bullock-department, to the escort for supplies and the fortification of advanced supply-bases. The importance of communications in war is tersely expressed by Napoleon's dictum that the secret of war lies in the communications. We do not therefore find the armies of the Company advancing beyond the limits which the efficiency of its communications dictated, except in the famous case of Monsoon. The great efficiency of the Company in maintaining and facilitating the lines of communications may be illustrated by the three following examples:—

(a) Tipoo, who possessed an efficient light cavalry, was expected to let it loose on the Karnatak, to ravage the territory and

intercept the convoys of the Company. In order to ensure safe communications, the Company improved the roads, particularly in the frontier regions, and the bases of supplies, which maintained an advancing army, were well-fortified in order to frustrate any attempt on the part of the enemy to destroy them and endanger the security of the forces. Further, the villages in the frontier districts were fortified to prevent their falling a prey to the predatory and destructive excursions of the enemy's irregular horse.

(b) The advisory instructions given to Col. Sartorius by A. Wellesley, in the expedition for the subjugation of Malabar, bring out the importance of road-making for the success of military operations. There never was "a country which from its nature, its situation, the manners of its people and its government....so well-calculated for turbulence". The difficulties that faced a conquering country were many. It was first of all a country of great natural strength on account of its mountainous nature; this strength was still further increased by the thick forests which covered most of its surface. The ruling people called the Nairs were hardy and warlike and their power of resistance was still further enhanced by the general fortification of villages. The tactics of the Nairs consisted chiefly of interrupting communications by surprise ambushes, which were peculiarly successful on account of the concealment offered by the thick forests. The only method to counter such a warfare was to remove the advantage of concealment and surprise which the enemy possessed by making roads throughout the country and by clearing the forest to a considerable distance on either side of the roads thus made. The importance of communications in military operations is supreme. Arthur Wellesley emphasised it thus: "Depend upon it, my dear sir, that the success of military operations in India depends upon its supplies; there is no difficulty in fighting and in finding the means of beating your enemy either without or with loss; but to gain your object you must feed, and you can feed only by communication....."¹

(c) But the most striking example of the efficiency of the communications is to be seen in the careful provision that the Company made for boats and building of pontoon bridges. This enabled the heavily armed forces of the Company to cross swollen rivers with ease, while the Marathas with only an improvised and intermittent supply of boats, and due to a general

inability to construct bridges, were unable particularly with their cavalry to manouvre across swollen rivers.

4. *The powerful artillery of the British*

Undoubtedly, a powerful artillery consisting of field-pieces and galloper-guns gave the Company's troops an enormous advantage over their opponents on the field of battle. But what was of even greater importance was that its siege-train and heavy-guns enabled it to reduce fortresses and fortified places, and there was no fortification in India, with the possible exception of Bharatpur, which seriously baffled the military skill of the British for any length of time. One of the most striking facts of British history in India is that the fortresses failed to play the enormously important role, against the British, which they had repeatedly and so successfully played against all other armies in Indian history. Before the coming of the English in India as a political power, forts whether natural or constructed had played a decisive part in Indian military operations. The part which Deccan hill-forts played in the rise of Maratha power, by baffling the military skill of the Moghuls, is wellknown. Of course most Indian forts were of poor construction and were not very formidable as fortifications, but even badly constructed embattlements, weak ramparts and patched up stone-walls of a fort had proved sufficiently strong to withstand determined onslaughts by Indian armies. In spite of their skill in taking a fort or defending one in their possession, the Marathas had failed to make any contribution to the art of military fortification. The real cause of the historic strength of Indian forts was the great ignorance of the art of siege among the Indians and the lack of adequate armament in their armies for breaching walls either by preliminary bombardment or by well-constructed mines. The historic role of Indian forts was: (a) In the reduction of these forts the enemy wasted considerable time and resources in men and material. Since the defence of these forts was comparatively easy even for a small garrison as long as it was invested by the old Indian armies, the defenders inflicted great loss on the enemy at trifling cost. It took Aurangzeb several months to take a single Maratha fort by storm. (b) It became a centre for rallying for all those who wanted to resist the enemy. It acted as a base to organise detachments for the purpose of harassing isolated enemy posts and billets occupying the Country, and still more important, to attack the convoys and supplies of the enemy and to break off

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 118.

his communications with his own country or any other base of supply he may have established.

The Indian forts, however, could no longer perform these vital traditional functions when they had to face the attack of the English. The English took most of the forts with the greatest ease, either by a breach in the walls made by a preliminary bombardment and then storming the fort or by an escalade. The chief reasons for this failure of the forts were the following: (a) The British possessed a powerful artillery which was very effective against the inadequate fortifications of most of these forts, and since these forts possessed no artillery of their own comparable to that of the Company, British artillery had full play against the forts, without fear of being silenced by enemy batteries. (b) The forts were simply constructed and depended for their strength in early days more on the natural strength of the situation than any engineering skill of those who constructed them. In fact the art of military fortification was very primitive in India. This led to an important consequence, because the Indians were deprived, thereby, of a base for rallying and support which is absolutely essential for a dogged and guerilla resistance. (c) The forts were quite impotent to break off communications. This was due to two reasons—Firstly, the powerful escort which the British provided for their convoys made it impossible for the fort garrison on account of its weakness to detach parties of so great a strength as to intercept these convoys. Wellington's opinion on the question whether Indian fortresses could interrupt communication is quite emphatic. He said, "no fortress is an impediment to the operations of a hostile army in this country, excepting it lies immediately in the line on which the army must necessarily march or excepting it is provided with a garrison of such strength and activity as to afford detachments to operate upon the line of communications of the hostile army with its own country."¹ The chief advantage of these forts consisted in the power that they had on the country surrounding it. Secondly, the lines of communications of the Company's forces in the field were less vulnerable than those of a corresponding army in Europe. The armies of the Company were more self-sufficient in magazines and stores than those in Europe. The Company's armies on active service carried vast quantities of supplies in the movable depots with them and had their own magazines which made them indepen-

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 82.

dent of temporary supply-bases and magazines on the line of advance behind them. The principle depots therefore were not in the rear of the army but at Madras or Seringpatam. This enabled the Company to march greater distances into the hostile countries than would have been possible under conditions of warfare prevalent in Europe. This made the task of Indian forts more difficult because in the absence of temporary magazines and depots behind their lines of the enemy, they found fewer objectives to attack, to break off the lines of communications. If temporary supply-bases did not exist, they could not profitably be attacked. In defending the claims of Seringpatam as the chief supply base of operations in the Peninsula, Arthur Wellesley observed, "In European warfare it is absolutely necessary that the expence magazines, etc., should be on the spot; and they are usually moved forward in proportion as the army is enabled to advance. But in this country, in which the armies take the field with such formidable equipments, with arsenals and magazines which they always carry with them, it is not necessary, however convenient it would be, that the depot which is to supply those equipments, and the wants of the service, should be immediately in the neighbourhood of the scene of action."¹

5. *The equipment and discipline of the Company's forces*

In discipline and equipment, the armies of the Company were decidedly superior to the Indian forces opposing them. The musketry and artillery produced a fire so deadly that the Indian forces had neither protection against it nor a reply to it. This enabled the armies of the Company always to take the initiative in the attack, and press it home with their well-disciplined cavalry. On the other hand, the lack of proper discipline among Indian forces made it difficult to rally them or to nerve them to a dogged and prolonged resistance. Further, Indian armies throughout history had been preponderantly cavalry forces. We would therefore have expected the best possible performance by the Indian cavalry forces. But Indian cavalry, in the war against the British, does not appear to have done everything that could be expected of it. This was due partly to the fact that Indian cavalry forces always remained irregular and ill-disciplined and were neglected generally by most Indian powers during the latter half of the 18th century, and partly because after the experience of the army of Lord Cornwallis in the Third Mysore War, the Company raised a well-disciplined

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 78.

cavalry arm, which it did not possess before. The possession of a cavalry arm improved the military efficiency of the Company's forces enormously. The irregular horse of the Indian powers could no longer come near enough to harass the main forces of the British, and was henceforth useless to intercept their convoys. The battle of Fattegarh fought against Holkar showed that in a purely cavalry combat, the cavalry of the Company was more than a match for the best Indian cavalry. Similarly, an efficient cavalry enabled the British forces to destroy utterly the defeated forces of Sindhia and Bhosle after the battle of Argaum.

IV

MILITARY WEAKNESSES OF INDIAN STATES

Though the military arm of the Company was formidable, it does not entirely explain the rapid success of the British in India. The Indian forces of the Indian powers show a definitely defective military organisation and an inferior military science. This was an important cause of the easy British conquest of India. The military weaknesses of Indian States can be well-illustrated by reference to the Fourth Mysore War and the Second Maratha War. Tipoo Sultan was destroyed in two months and the entire fabric of Maratha power was crushed beyond repair within three years of the Treaty of Bassein. These were ranked first-rate Indian Powers and the fact that such powerful states were destroyed in so short a time, requires an explanation.

THE REASONS FOR TİPOO'S DEFEAT

The total defeat of Tipoo, we find, was due to tactical mistakes and wrong handling of his forces. His mistakes could be grouped under these : Firstly, Company's Madras army was able to cross the frontier and take Seringpatam within three months of the declaration of war, because in the long march from the frontier to Seringpatam, it was not delayed by the necessity of having to take any well-fortified places such as Bangalore, which would have prolonged the campaign for two seasons and would have made the task of the Company's forces far more difficult. Secondly, in his solicitude for the safety of his guns, Tipoo did not use them fully for the support of his infantry. Referring to the action at Malvelly, A. Wellesley wrote as follows regarding Tipoo's handling of his guns and infantry—"His troops behaved better than they have ever

been known to behave. His infantry advanced and almost stood the charge of bayonets of the 33rd, and his cavalry rode at Gen. Baird's European brigade. He did not support them as he ought, having drawn off his guns", at the moment we made our attack and even pushed forward these troops to cover the retreat of his guns".¹ Thirdly, Tipoo failed to make proper use of his light cavalry which was "the best of its kind in the world".¹

THE REASONS OF MARATHA DEFEATS

The causes of Maratha defeats during the Second Maratha War show that British success was due not only to the fighting efficiency of the British forces, but also due to an inferior generalship and organisation on the side of the Marathas. These causes were as follows :—

(a) *The season of the year favoured British forces*²

The Company being the aggressive power, it possessed the initiative for starting the operations and naturally chose the season of the year which very much handicapped the Maratha forces. The Indian powers most unwisely left the choice of the season to commence operations to the Company. The British declared the Fourth Mysore War in March and captured Seringpatam in May, because in case they had waited any longer to declare war, the Malabar Monsoon would have made it impossible to capture Seringpatam in one campaign. But the British deliberately chose the Monsoon months—June to September—to commence war against the Marathas. This was in curious contrast to Maratha war tradition, who always began their military expeditions after the harvest gathering in October. Arthur Wellesley was so anxious to commence the war in Monsoon months, that he precipitated the war, with Sindhia and Bhosle on the 6th August. The advantages he hoped to acquire thereby were considerable. The arm which the British feared most in the Maratha army was the Maratha irregular horse. During the Monsoons, the numerous rivers in the Deccan filled and could not be passed by cavalry. The British army on the other hand could easily pass them because they could construct pontoon bridges and had provided for basket boats. The sphere in which Maratha cavalry could operate was therefore seriously circumscribed during the rainy season. By commencing the war in the Monsoon months, Company

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 62.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; pp. 203-211.

immobilised the most powerful arm of the Maratha forces. Maratha country is dry and barren and does not afford much water, except during the Monsoon season. During months other than the rainy season, all rivers and most of the tanks run dry. The forces of the Company would have been seriously handicapped for want of water, had the war started in other months. Finally, rainy months were the only ones when forage was in available large quantities for bullocks and horses in the Deccan.

(b) *The absence of well-fortified towns and the lack of prepared defence positions*

The rapid fall of Maratha resistance was due to a total lack of fortified towns and positions throughout the Maratha country. A few of the towns like Ahmednagar were so weakly fortified and garrisoned that they were taken by the forces of the Company within a matter of few days. Most of the towns were liable to be taken by assault and there was nothing except the army in the field to check the career of conquest of the enemy. In fact, in spite of their military talent, no precautions for a general defence of the country were taken. In the absence of the such places of strength round which the resistance of the Marathas could properly harden, the British army could concentrate on finding the Maratha army and defeating it in battle. The British did not have to dissipate their strength in reducing the strong defence works in the enemy country.

(c) *Defective military direction in the war*

From the point of view purely of military science, the direction and command of the Maratha armies was defective. The army was not handled properly. The Marathas fought the war by remaining on the whole on the defensive, and even in the battles fought initiative in them was left to the British. Thus in stead of advancing into the territories of the Peshwa, where he might have won the Southern Jahgirdars on to his side, Sindhia merely made a demonstrative advance into the country of the Nizam. With reference to this, A. Wellesley wrote as follows to Lieut. Gen. Stuart: "It is very probable however that in case Sindhia should advance towards Poona, the Jahgirdars would at best become neutral, and will return to the southward under various pretences; and if there should be nothing to check their enterprises, their neutrality would soon degenerate into enmity."¹ Sindhia did not even take a

vigorous offensive into the territories of the Nizam, either with his entire army or what he should really have done, only with his cavalry. Even regarding the time and manner of the commencements of the battles, between the British and Sindhia, the initiative remained with the Company. No doubt the Marathas as a rule occupied a strong ground, but beyond the natural difficulty of the place for an attack, they made no attempt whatsoever to make the attack of the enemy a costly failure. Maratha generalship displayed a total lack of resourcefulness. At the battle of Assaye, for instance, though the Marathas occupied strong ground, they made no attempt to offer battle until they were themselves attacked. Besides, they were so careless as to leave the fort of Peeplegaum on the river Kaitna unoccupied. Had they occupied it, Arthur Wellesley would have found it difficult to attack them.

Another glaring defect in the handling of the Maratha army was the failure of the Marathas to use their cavalry, which had become famous in India. Thus we find that Sindhia's cavalry could have attacked the baggage of Arthur Wellesley's army when he had left it improperly guarded, for an attack on Sindhia at Assaye. Similarly, throughout the Maratha War, the cavalry failed to attack the convoys of the British and made very few attempts to carry on a predatory war into the territories of the Company. Colin Campbell, who fought at the battle of Assaye, has given the following opinion in his account of the battle: "If the numerous cavalry of the enemy had done their duty, I hardly think it possible, we would have succeeded."¹

EUROPEANISATION OF THE MARATHA ARMY

Thus the failure of the Marathas and the Indian powers generally may be said to be due to the military inefficiency of the Company's forces and the inefficient leadership of the Indian forces. Bad leadership there undoubtedly was and the civil war had weakened the Marathas and particularly had it reduced the power of Sindhia. The Company certainly was powerful and the possession of a regular and disciplined cavalry enabled it to maintain a sustained offensive action which gave no respite to the Marathas to recoup and rally. However those who have thought about these matters and many of those who fought the Marathas in the Second Maratha War argue that the

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 229.

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 304.

chief cause of the failure of the Marathas consisted in the policy adopted by the Marathas, of training infantry battalions and maintaining a heavy train of artillery, to fight the war on a European model. The Marathas, it was said, had a genius for predatory and guerilla war and not for pitched infantry battles, and therefore they committed a great blunder in training their army in infantry battalions by European officers. The opinion of so great a soldier as Arthur Wellesley subscribed to the same view. He was so convinced of this that he wanted to encourage the Marathas to take Europeans in their service and maintain infantry and artillery, since it would in his opinion make the task of the British to defeat the Maratha armies, easier. His statement was as follows: "Sindhia's armies had actually been brought to a very favourable state of discipline, and his power had become formidable, by the exertions of the European officers in his service; but I think it is much to be doubted, whether his power or rather that of the Maratha nation, would not have been more formidable, at least to the British Government, if they had never had an European in their service, and had carried on their operations, in the manner of the original Marathas, only by means of cavalry. I have no doubt whatever that the military spirit of the nation has been destroyed by their establishment of infantry and artillery, possibly, indeed by other causes; at all events it is certain that those establishments, however formidable, afford us a good object of attack in a war with the Marathas, and the destruction of them contributes to the success of contest, and to the reestablishment of peace, because having made them the principle object of their attention (which they must do in order to have them at all) and that part of their strength on which they place most reliance, they become also the principle reliance of the army; and therefore they are lost, the cavalry as in the case of this war will not act."¹ Thomas Munro who could speak on military affairs with authority, was also of the same opinion. About Sindhia's infantry, he wrote, "Its discipline, its arms and uniform clothing, I regard merely as the means of dressing it out for the sacrifice. Its numerous artillery prevent it from escaping by rapid marches; it is forced to fight deserted by its cavalry and slaughtered with very little loss on our side. Sindhia by abandoning the old system of Maratha warfare and placing his chief dependence on disciplined infantry, facilitated the conquest of the states of Polygares and Rajahs, whose forts and

1. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 356.

jungles might have secured them against his horse; but he at the same time disabled himself from maintaining a contest with us for he reduced the war to a war of battles and sieges, instead of one of marches and convoys. As long as his battalions are not under French influence, by being commanded by officers of that nation, it is more in our interest that he should keep them up than he should disband them and raise horse."¹ By this policy of Europeanising their armies, the Marathas lost the greatest advantage that their former armies possessed, namely, mobility and ability to avoid staking their all in a few pitched battles. They altogether neglected cavalry, that arm of defence which had served them so well for over a century. Munro was quite emphatic about it. "The introduction of a great body of regular infantry, with a vast train of artillery, had made his (Sindhia's) army unwieldy, and in order to keep up the foot, the cavalry was neglected. They were deficient in number and quality, and as they were considered only a secondary corps to the infantry, they had lost all their spirit of enterprise. They gave very little support to their infantry in the different battles that were fought, and they attempted nothing alone. They fell in during the campaign with several convoys and though the escorts were but inconsiderable, they did not cut off one of them".²

With this in mind Arthur Wellesley gave quite interesting advice to Col. Stevenson regarding the manner in which a war against Sindhia, who had powerful guns and a semi-disciplined infantry, should be conducted. He wrote, "Do not attack their position, because they always take up such as are confoundedly strong and difficult of access; for which the banks of the numerous rivers and nullahs afford them every facility. Do not remain in your own position, however strong it may be, or however well you may have entrenched it; but when you shall hear that they are on their march to attack, you secure your baggage and move out of your camp. You will find them in the common disorder of march; they will not have time to form, which, being but half disciplined troops, is necessary for them. At all events you will have the advantage of making the attack on ground which they will not have chosen for the battle; a part of their troops only will be engaged; and it is possible that you will gain an easy victory".³

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 792.

2. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellesley's Despatches ; p. 791.

3. Sidney Owen : Selections from Wellington's Despatches ; p. 314-15.

CORRECT MILITARY POLICY AND HOLKAR'S SUCCESSES

This general explanation does not however fit the facts, because the above-mentioned criticism of the Maratha army's Europeanised organisation is based on the assumption that Maratha national power was raised and maintained on the remarkable exploits of their excellent cavalry. The history of Maratha power does not bear this out. In Shivaji's army which was at once the source, inspiration and ideal of the subsequent growth of Maratha greatness, the infantry showed a definite preponderance over his cavalry. The correspondence of the British factors bears this out. Shivaji held his over two hundred forts with his infantry and used his cavalry—no doubt an excellent one—as an auxiliary corps for predatory excursions and interception of Moghul convoys. In fact Maratha power was based during the years of its birth on a fleet-footed infantry and the hill-forts. The change in the composition of the Maratha armies came from 1700 during the reign of Shahu. After the failure of Aurangzeb's invasion of the Deccan and his death, there was very little need to hold the hill-forts in strength, as the Maratha territories were no longer menaced. Thenceforth the Marathas embarked on those chauth-collecting expeditions for which cavalry was the most suitable instrument, particularly because the Marathas did not intend to occupy the territories their cavalry over-ran. During the years 1700-1750, Maratha armies were almost entirely composed of cavalry. After the middle 18th century, however, a new change began in the Maratha armies. Most of the Maratha Sardars who had large armies under their independent command began to feel the need of occupying the territories their armies had repeatedly over-ran. Besides it was found that walled towns and fortified places could not be reduced by cavalry alone. The infantry force was therefore gradually being introduced into the Maratha armies because the character of the Maratha power changed from a national state into an Empire. One of the earliest examples of this infantry was the gardi force of the Peshwas before the Panipat. Therefore preponderance of infantry was not an innovation.

Thus there is no doubt that one of the important causes of Maratha defeat was a faulty leadership and military science. Europeanisation in itself was not the cause of Maratha defeats. Holkar's successes show that a more scientific military policy might have resulted in greater success to Maratha arms. A brief account of Monson's defeat will best illustrate the military

policy, which the Marathas ought to have followed in their war against the British. At the beginning of the War, Holkar was near Ajmer, but as soon as he found that the British Commander-in-Chief advanced towards him with a large force, he retreated with his whole army towards Malwa, where he plundered a town belonging to Sindhia. He retreated over two hundred miles, and the British found it impossible to keep pace with him. In the meanwhile Monson with a force of five battalions, suitable artillery and 5000 irregular horse, advanced upon him from Kotah. Monson passed the Mueundra Ghat and came upon the river Chumbal. However his provisions failed and had only two days supply left with him. Holkar immediately crossed the Chumbal and destroyed Monson's cavalry, after which he began a more than two hundred miles pursuit of Monson's infantry, until not more than a few stragglers were left of the entire army of Monson. Later, however, Holkar did not benefit by his experience and good luck. He followed up his success into the territory held by the Company and exposed the whole of his forces to the hazard of battle as Sindhia had done before him. The consequence was that he was overcome in the cavalry battle of Fategarh and in the infantry battle of Deig. The correct military policy for the Marathas would have been to avoid general action for as long a time as it was possible for them. They could have used their numerous cavalry to harass the enemy on his march, to attack his convoys and baggage, to intercept his communications generally and to make surprise predatory dashes into the enemy country. They would thus have been able to wear out the heavily armed infantry forces of the Company. The cavalry of the Company was also far too much encumbered with baggage and heavy equipment to prove serious menace to the Maratha light cavalry which did not intend to precipitate a general action. In this manner the Marathas could have avoided altogether a pitched war, indefinitely, until such time as it suited them to attack. Arthur Wellesley benefitted by the experience of Monson, points this out very well. The army of the Marathas "is light and chiefly composed of cavalry; the whole composition of our army is heavy; even our cavalry from the nature of their constitution and equipments and owing to the food eaten by the horses, are not able to march with greater celerity for any length of time than our infantry. His (Marathas) troops and his (Marathas) horses subsist on the grain, the produce of the country. Our troops come from countries, the general produce of which is rice; they and even their followers must have a certain quantity of that grain; and

the horses of the cavalry must likewise have a grain not the general produce of the Maratha territory, which in addition to the inconvenience of boiling it, must be brought from a distance".¹ Thus on account of equipment as well as the necessity of bringing large supplies unobtainable in the Deccan from a distance, the speed and range of operations of the forces of the Company would have been small. The Marathas under the circumstances could have easily prolonged the war and could have thereby worn out the enemy by refusing to stake everything on the uncertain arbitration of an early engagement.

Sindhia should not have brought his semi-disciplined infantry to an offensive action at the outset of the war, far away from its base in Hindustan. His strategy should rather have been to leave the infantry behind in the heart of his territories in northern India and carry on a guerilla offensive and predatory war in the country of the Company and its allies. He should have advanced with his cavalry alone, but as soon as the enemy was weakened by his harassing and had advanced far from his base of supplies, the infantry should have been brought forward to attack an enemy already retreating on account of the failure of supplies. Arthur Wellesley has admirably summarised the tactics of the Marathas, used in the defeat of Monson. He wrote: "There are two modes in which the Marathas carry on their operations. They operate upon supplies by means of their cavalry; and after they have created distress in their camp, which obliges the army to commence a retreat, they press upon it with all their infantry and their powerful artillery. Their opponent being pressed for provisions is obliged to hurry his march, and they have no fear of being attacked. They follow him with their cavalry in his marches and surround and attack him with their infantry and cannon, when he halts and he can scarcely escape from him."² This method was so effective against the British that not only Monson's force was destroyed but it compelled Murray to retreat precipitately as well.

UNCONTESTED BRITISH VICTORIES

The above discussion makes it clear that the Marathas were defeated partly because of the military advantages that British power possessed and partly because of certain disadvantages that the Maratha armies laboured under, arising mainly from an inferior leadership and a faulty military science. In spite of this,

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 414.
2. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 432.

however, on account of its genius and tradition, the Maratha army ought to have given a better account of itself than it really gave. The Marathas did not really resist the British, and both in the case of the Marathas and that of Tipoo Sultan, the British won cheap and easy victories. This is clear from the fact that the battles fought by the armies of these first class Indian states were by no means sanguinary. We find that at the battle of Malvelly, the only serious engagement between the Madras army and Tipoo, the Company lost 7 or 8 killed and about 40 wounded, obviously a trifling loss considering the importance of the battle.¹ (Maj. General Floyd to the Governor General). Similarly, at the battle of Assaye, the losses of the Company were small considering the prestige of Sindhia's forces and the importance of the battle for the future of the Maratha Empire. In this battle, the total loss of the Company—Indian and European—was 435 killed and 1622 wounded, obviously not a formidable figure.² In the battle of Argaum, only 46 were killed and 308 were wounded from among those engaged on the side of the Company.³ The Indian armies obviously gave up the fight without contesting it doggedly and as soon as the British force attacked them by a charge on their position. Thomas Munro's observation corroborates this: "His (Sindhia's) infantry was regular enough, but it wanted steadiness, in which it must always be greatly inferior to ours.....At the battle of Assaye, the severest that took place in the course of the war, I do not recollect among all our killed and wounded officers one that suffered a musket-ball or ayonet, a convincing proof that the Maratha infantry made very little serious opposition."⁴

The insignificant moral value of the armies of the Indian states shows that individual soldiers in these armies were not very much interested in the issue of the battle. Soldiers and armies fight with dogged persistence only when they believe that the issues they are fighting for are worth risking or even losing their lives. Indian armies of the 18th century had no philosophy, no idealism and no cause. The mercenary soldiers looked upon a lost battle as at worst a temporary loss of employment. The officers of these armies likewise did not look beyond their personal interests. The people of India did not support these armies, because the armies and states of India at the end of the

1. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellesley's Despatches; p. 122.
2. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 301.
3. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellington's Despatches; p. 325.
4. Sidney Owen: Selections from Wellesley's Despatches; pp. 791-92.

To sum up : Marquess of Wellesley's aggressive policy was successful only because he had a powerful army to back him in his decisions. This army was so powerful that not even the strongest Indian army could withstand it for a single season. Its military advantage consisted in a resourceful diplomatic policy, monopoly of sea-power in Indian waters, an efficient organisation for the maintenance of communications and supplies, a powerful artillery and a well-equipped and disciplined infantry and cavalry. The English conquered India with ease because their strength was hardly challenged on anything like equal terms. The Maratha armies and Tipoo's forces were at the same time badly handled. They fought in a season unfavourable to themselves, without fortified positions and under leaders whose military science was inferior to that of the enemy. Maratha armies' Europeanisation has often been wrongly criticised as the true cause of their failure. The real cause was the absence of morale and decay of the military spirit in the nation.

[illegible]