B/
No. 2912 W – 16th Oct 1883

Communicated to the Supt. Engrs for information –
(Sd) C.N. –

Govt. of {1883} Madras.

MILITARY.

To

THE QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL,
&c., &c., &c.

Ord 10 L.C
F 830/83

Dated October, 5th.

Issued

Recd. *Encl.*

G.O., 5th October 1883, No. 5396.

B No. 2912 W Dy 15/10/83

OCTOBER.
Nos. 89-90.

Defences—Forts.

Correspondence from the Government of India containing remarks in connection with the general question of the inland defences of India, communicated to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Inspector-General of Ordnance.

Supt. Engrs

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

5th October 1883, No. 5396.

Defences—Forts.

Read the following paper :—

No. 89. *From Colonel G. CHESNEY, Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department, to the Secretary to the Government af Bombay, Military Department ; dated Simla, 17th September* 1883, *No.* 887-*M.W.*

Defences—Forts.

The Resolution of the Government of Bombay on the subject of the defences of that presidency, forwarded with your letter, No. 1828, dated 3rd April 1882, has been carefully considered by the Government of India in connection with the general question of the inland defences of India; and I am now to communicate the following remarks on the subject for the information of His Excellency the Governor in Council.

2. All fortified places in India will apparently fall under one or other of the following classes :—

I.—Those on the seaboard to guard harbours against an enemy attacking by sea. There is no question of these in the present case. The reports of the Defence Committee on these have been referred to Her Majesty's Government, and they need not be dealt with on this occasion.

II.—Forts protecting magazines or arsenals upon which the safety of an army would depend, and which it would be necessary to hold in some force, so that in case of the main army taking the field these points would be secured against any enemy likely to come against them. Allahabad, Mhow, Ferozepore, and Rawalpindi may be instanced as places which come under this class.

III.—Important strategic points which it might be necessary to hold in force in the case of extensive military operations. Allahabad, for instance, besides being the seat of an arsenal, also falls under this class. In this class may also be placed works which, although on a small scale, are designed to guard important bridges ; as, for example, the bridge at Attock, the bridge at Allahabad, the bridge at Sukkur, &c.

IV.—Places of refuge distinctly kept up for that purpose, and for that purpose only. These are not forts which are held from any strategic value, or which are of importance in themselves; but they are places into which a small body of persons throwing themselves on a sudden emergency might hold out until the arrival of succour. It may be assumed that these places would have a very small garrison, and that they would not be liable to a regular siege. They would be, in fact, simply what they are termed—places of refuge.

3. It will probably conduce to a satisfactory decision being arrived at in each particular case if this classification be kept in view. According as each existing or proposed fortified place falls under one or other of these heads, the sort of defensive work suitable for it will be readily determined.

4. No question can arise as to the necessity of protecting arsenals and magazines. Except those situated at the presidency towns, every arsenal or magazine should be made secure by adequate defences, where such are not already provided.

5. As regards Class III, it may be observed that the inland magazines and arsenals have all been established at points of strategical importance, so that nearly all the existing forts in Class II also fall under Class III.

6. The construction of suitable covering works to the most important bridges should be an early charge upon the funds available for inland defences. These bridge heads will be taken up in the order of the importance and liability to attack of the bridges they protect. The bridges over the Indus at Attock and Sukkur appear to be the most immediately important of these, and the Defence Committee are now engaged in preparing the needful projects for them.

7. Under Class III may also be placed some forts which have to be maintained for political rather than strategical reasons. Such are the forts Delhi and Agra, for example, to which, besides that they are also valuable as covering important railway junctions, special political value attaches, and the forts being there must be maintained.

8. Some forts which have no such strategic value are still kept up on political grounds only. These should obviously be reduced to the smallest number possible. To lock up the Indian Army in fortified places beyond the absolute necessities of the case weakens rather than strengthens the military position.

9. It may be desirable to provide defensive works also at certain points to cover important railway workshops, &c., where in case of disturbance the rolling stock of the line could be collected and kept in safety. In fixing the position and general arrangements of such works, it should be borne in mind that their defence would probably have to be entrusted to volunteers.

10. But as regards the general question of occupying strategical positions all over the country, with special reference to the places enumerated by His Excellency General Hardinge in the papers attached to your letter now under reply, the Government of India do not consider that the military position in India would be strengthened by the establishment of large and well-armed forts at all important strategic points. Admitting that every one of the places named might conceivably, in case of war or disturbance, turn out to be within the sphere of operations, the source from whence danger may arise in the future is altogether too uncertain to render it practicable to make provision for every possible contingency. Moreover, an enemy, whether internal or external, will probably be most effectually met and overcome in the future, as he has been in the past, by seeking him out and attacking him wherever he is to be found, and therefore it should always be a principle of our military policy to keep as large a part as possible of the army available to take the field, and to lock up as few men as possible in fortified places, and therefore to have no fortified places except where they are absolutely necessary or of unquestionable advantage.

11. These are the opinions of the Governor-General in Council upon the general question. It follows from this point of view that forts in India may be a source of weakness rather than of strength if their existence reduces the number of men available for offensive operations; and, while no hard-and-fast rule can be laid down in a country so extensive as India, and subject to such varying conditions, and each case must be dealt with on its own merits, still the general principle to be aimed at appears to be that the use of forts should be limited so far as possible to the protection of magazines.

12. There remains to be considered the class of minor but necessary works already referred to above,—Class IV, places of refuge. The circumstances of India render these necessary, but it is desirable that they also should be as few as possible, and that they should be adapted solely for the purpose for which they are intended. It is not considered necessary to have one at every place where there is a small community of Europeans; on the contrary, it would be in every way desirable that, in the event of serious disturbance, the Europeans should concentrate as much as possible, and where such concentration seems feasible, under the circumstances likely to arise, one place of refuge only should be provided

and maintained at the point where the concentration could most conveniently take place.

13. These places of refuge should not be heavily armed, nor need they be of such strength as to be able to withstand a regular siege. They should be conveniently placed for ready access to those for whose protection they are intended, should contain storage room for a certain amount of provisions, &c., and a sufficient water-supply, and should be free from the neighbourhood of buildings or anything calculated to give cover to an enemy. If a place of refuge contains dwelling accommodation sufficient to shelter those who will take refuge there, this will be an advantage; otherwise sufficient space must be reserved for tents.

14. Turning now to the immediate subject of this correspondence, the forts in the Bombay presidency. If it be considered in the case of each of these to which class of defence that fort should be deemed to belong, then it will be much easier to deal with the proposals than if the matter is considered merely from a general point of view. The first point to ascertain in each case is for what purpose the fort in question is likely to be required; the scheme may then be adapted accordingly.

15. But if the whole of these forts be taken up and dealt with together, the case becomes very complicated, while there appears no particular convenience in treating them as parts of one scheme. The decision which may be come to on such a place as Asirgarh, for example, would be formed on grounds independent of those which might govern the decision with regard to Mhow or Ahmedabad. The Government of India will therefore address the Government of Bombay separately regarding each of the forts which has been the subject of previous correspondence, in continuation of this letter.

No. 887-M.W.

Copy forwarded for information to the Secretary to the Government of Madras, Military Department.

* * * * *

(By Order.)

SIMLA,
17*th September* 1883.

(Signed) J. E. BROADBENT,
Asst. Secy. to the Govt. of India.

No. 90. ORDER THEREON, 5th October 1883, No. 5396.

Communicated for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Inspector-General of Ordnance.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) E. L. HANKIN, Colonel,
Secretary to Government.

To the Quartermaster-General.
" Inspector-General of Ordnance.
" Public Works Department.
" Political Department.
" Adjutant-General, for information.

Exd. A. F. Goodall.

No 2912 Wdy 15th Oct 83

Communicated to Supt Engineers for information

CS.
11/10

Fn. No. 8830

Govt. of {1883} Madras.

MILITARY.

To

THE QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL,
&c., &c., &c.

10 S.C.

B Lre 2912 Wdy 15-10-83

Dated October, 5th.

Issued

Recd. 11/10/83 *Encl.*

G.O., 5th October 1883, No. 5396.

98.C.

OCTOBER.
Nos. 89·90.

Defences—Forts.

Correspondence from the Government of India containing remarks in connection with the general question of the inland defences of India, communicated to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Inspector-General of Ordnance.

Dcr 10/10

Supt Engineers
Do Circle Cuddapah

One Copy Sent 4-00 by
Parcels order

Sent in Receipt Regr.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

5th October 1883, No. 5396.

Defences—Forts.

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BUILDINGS AND ROADS.
MILITARY WORKS.

Govt. of {1881} Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

To

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEERS,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated November, 7th.

Issued

Recd. *Encl.*

G. O., 7th November 1881, *No.* 2754 W.

NOVEMBER.
Nos. 35-36.

Projects for Defences.—Inspection of certain places, by the Deputy Inspector-General of Military Works or the Secretary to the Defence Committee, with reference to —.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

7th November 1881, No. 2754 W.

Buildings and Roads.
Military Works.

Read the following paper :—

No. 35. Docket from the Government of India, Public Works Department, (Military Works,) dated Simla, 28th October 1881, No. 853 M.W.

Copy of the following forwarded to the Government of Madras, in the Public Works Department, for information and necessary action with reference to paragraph 2.

(By Order.)

(Signed) W. G. CUMMING, Major, R.E.,
Offg. Asst. Secy. to the Govt. of India.

From the Government of India, Public Works Department, to the Inspector-General of Military Works, dated Simla, 28th October 1881, No. 852 M.W.

In reply to your letter No. 5,447, dated 19th instant, I am directed to state that the Government of India approves of your deputing either the Deputy Inspector-General of Military Works or the Secretary to the Defence Committee to visit any or all of the places specified in the margin in which there are no Military Works Divisions, with reference to projects for defences now under the consideration of the Defence Committee.

Madras, Bombay, Hyderabad, Rajaputana, B. Burma.

2. The Local Governments and Administrations concerned will be asked to render all necessary assistance to the officer so deputed.

No. 36. Order thereon, 7th November 1881, No. 2754 W.

Communicated to Superintending Engineers and to the Military Department for information and guidance.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) R. H. SANKEY, Colonel, R.E.,
Secretary to Govt., P.W.D.

To Superintending Engineers.
To the Military Department.

Exd. S. T. Austin.
Spare Copies