

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY REAR ADMIRAL THE EARL MOUNTBATTEN
OF BURMA AT THE ROYAL INDIAN MILITARY COLLEGE
13TH FEBRUARY 1948.

✓ [I should like to begin by saying what a thrill it is to come back here to the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military Academy, 26 years all but one month after it was founded, because I happened to have been here on the 13th March, 1922, as a young A.D.C. on the Prince of Wales' staff when His Royal Highness came here and declared the College open.]

✓ [I feel that your College here has a really important future before it, because now that India has got her freedom the Armed Forces of India will be of course officered entirely by Indians. I hope that this College in future will also produce candidates who will enter for the Navy as well as the Army and the Air Force.]

✓ [The Armed Forces of India have a very important part to play, particularly at this time. It is not just a question of keeping prepared for war; a real contribution can be made by the Armed Forces in time of peace. In this country, where at the moment there is still some communal trouble, as you all know, the Armed Forces can provide a great measure of stability. It is the Armed Forces more than any other organisation in the country which can carry out the policy which Mahatma Gandhi gave his life; and can help to forward the policy which Pandit Nehru has laid down, of building a great secular democratic state in which everybody has a real opportunity to develop a life of their own.]

✓ [When you go forward eventually as officers into the Armed Forces, will you, therefore, remember never to mix politics with soldiering. Will you remember that you are there to serve your country and to serve your Service and not to serve yourself.] (Will you also remember that however many gadgets and machines may be invented nowadays to help the Armed Forces, those machines won't work by themselves. Those machines will only work if men make them work and therefore when you do go into the Service it is vital for you to look after the morale and well-being of your men.)

Now in the Burma campaign when I was in command out there, we had no priority. By that I mean that every other theatre of war was

given the equipment that they wanted before any was allotted to us. More than that we were even asked to send back some of the little we had. For example we were ordered to send back a lot of 600 pound pounder ammunition to General Eisenhower. The only thing we did have was a very high morale; and this we had to create for ourselves in the face of all these difficulties. By this I mean that all the men felt that we were better fighters than the Japanese; that we had a better cause than the Japanese; and that we could beat them and would beat them, and the result as you know was that we did beat them.

✓ [Here, in this School, you have the greatest possible opportunity of acquiring a first-class education and of developing your character. Both are of the greatest importance. Education is not a question of just sitting there and being spoon-fed. You have got to work hard to acquire it yourself. I can assure you that you can go away after six years here just as ignorant as the day you came, unless you have made a real effort to acquire the knowledge made available to you here.]

✓ [I unfortunately never realised when I left school, what a difference it makes to life to know about things. The whole of life becomes interesting if you know about things. You need never stop learning. It becomes more and more fun as life goes on. I learnt more during the last year in India than at any time in my life.]

✓ [Exactly the same thing is necessary in the case of character development. Make up your mind what you are aiming at? I suggest you that if you wish to become really first-class officers; if you wish to become leaders of men, to whom the others will look up, then want each to try and make yourself into the sort of man that other will look up to; not just subordinates, nor even necessarily contemporaries, but also your superiors. What would make them look up to you? In my opinion what would make them look up to you would be the fact that you were known to be completely honest with yourself. That is to say, that when you make up your mind about anything, people would know that it was your honest conviction; that you had an open mind, and were prepared to see both sides of the

question. People would feel that you were completely fairminded and that when you come to a decision it was done for the highest motives and not for some selfish reason; and that you had enough courage to stick by your decision even if it happened to be an unpopular one or sneered at. That is the sort of character you want to have.]

✓ [You have a unique opportunity in this School to acquire both education and develop a fine character. India is short of establishments like this. There are 300 millions in the Dominion of India. Very few have the opportunities that you have. You are among the pioneers round whom the future of India can be built.] [It is the men with education, with knowledge, and with character who can make this country great, so remember when you go out that you owe something to the country in return for the opportunities that you have had here.]

✓ [In conclusion, I would like to tell you a small incident as an example of what I would call the very best form of leadership.]

✓ [During the war, in South-East Asia, we were going to fly in a whole lot of men behind the Japanese lines in Burma to disrupt them. They were to be flown in under the command of General Wingate. I had got from America a special air unit known as No. 1 Air Commando, which was to fly these men in in special gliders with tug aircraft to tow the gliders. Wingate had been operating behind the Burma lines the year before; two sites had been selected in the jungle on which gliders could be landed, and given the code names of BROADWAY and PICCADILLY.]

✓ [Picture to yourself an evening in March 1944, an airfield in Assam from which this great expedition is to start; row upon row of gliders into which the men are marching with their full equipment. The pilots of the tug aircraft are warming up their engines. Men are attaching the tow ropes; and at this moment the Photo Reconnaissance Flight comes in with the latest pictures taken of the landing strips in the jungle. Photographs 4 days before showed they were clear, but as an officer runs out of the dark room waving the wet prints of the photos taken at BROADWAY and PICCADILLY that evening, they find

PICCADILLY has been obstructed by tree trunks which elephants had drawn across. On the other hand BROADWAY shows no such obstruction, but the question is whether the Japanese have got wise to the whole plan. However, General Slim, who commanded the 14th Army and Air Marshal Baldwin who commanded the 3rd Tactical Air Force decided that the operation was to continue. That meant that all the pilots of the tug aircraft, and all the pilots of the gliders, who were going to go to PICCADILLY, would not have to go to BROADWAY. Not only was it a strip that they did not know, but it would have to accommodate twice as many gliders. You must realise that for weeks beforehand the pilots had been trained with maps, photographs and models of the PICCADILLY strip and now at the last moment they were going to be asked to fly to an unknown strip, having only a few minutes to look at photographs and maps. Imagine the effect on their morale, going out on something already risky and now made twice as dangerous.]

✓ [The Commander of the Unit, was young Colonel Cochran, an American Air Ace. General Slim was very keen to see how he would deal with his pilots. He followed and watched Cochran as he jumped on to the bonnet of a jeep, and collected the pilots of the aircraft and gliders originally destined to go to PICCADILLY and now switched at the last moment to BROADWAY. I repeat that this was a very trying moment because it was enough to upset any pilot to feel he was going to have his objective changed at the last moment. But Colonel Cochran got up with magnificent enthusiasm and said "Boys, we have found a better place to go to". Their spirits actually went up instead of down. This is the spirit of true leadership and the sort of spirit I feel you want to carry through with you in after life.]

✓ [It is a very great privilege to come back here again. It is a pleasure to see all of you and to know that the Royal Indian Military College is carrying on the great traditions with which it started. I wish you all the best of luck.]