

## OBITUARY<sup>1</sup>:

# *Major General Premangsu Chowdry, PVSM, FRGS, MiD\*\**



*Major General Premangsu Chowdry, one of the Institute's World War II veteran, passed away in Sydney on 22 March 2022, five weeks short of turning 102 years.*

Premangsu Chowdry (Prem), joined the British Indian Army at the outbreak of World War II and was commissioned into the Royal Garhwal Rifles in December 1941.

### **World War II**

Prem with his battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Garhwal Rifles as part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Indian Division in North Africa in 1942, took part in the 'Battle of Tobruk'. From early 1943 to May 1945 as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, the battalion took part in the Italian Campaign with deployments in Taranto, Eastern and Central Sectors along the Apennine Mountains and undertook assault river crossings at Sangro, Garigliano and Senio, in the battles of Monte Grande and Cassino. Prem was mentioned-in-despatches (MiD) for his outstanding operational performance. In mid-1945, Prem with his battalion was sent to the Italian border on a 3-months' assignment to prevent Yugoslavian partisans under Marshal Josef Tito entering the Italian-speaking province of Istria (currently in Croatia) to which Yugoslavia had laid claim at the end of World War I.

### **Post-War Indian Army**

In October 1945, Prem returned to India with his battalion which deployed in the North West Frontier Province (in current Pakistan) to suppress an Hazara tribal uprising in Waziristan and the Swat Valley. During the 1948 India-Pakistan war, the battalion was deployed in Kashmir, where Prem earned his second MiD for gallantry. Following the 1948 war, Prem was given command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Gorkha Rifles (Frontier Force).

In December 1950, Prem was promoted to General Staff Officer Grade 1 (GSO1), Headquarters British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan then commanded Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Robertson, an Australian, who appointed Prem as the BCOF Liaison Officer at Headquarters United Nations Forces in Japan under General Douglas MacArthur. In 1951, Prem was posted as GSO1 at Headquarters, British Commonwealth

Division, in Korea.

In October 1952, Prem returned to India and took command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Gorkha Rifles (Frontier Force).

In 1954, Prem attended the Joint Services Staff College in England and then served on exchange with the British Army of the Rhine and later with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. Back in India from 1955 to 1960, several staff and training postings followed before, aged 40, he was promoted to Brigadier and took command of the 114<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in Ladakh.

At the end of 1960, Prem was appointed as Commandant of the Ethiopian Military Academy and as an unofficial military advisor to Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

Back in India, in 1963, Prem took command of the 120<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade. In 1965, he became acting Chief-of-Staff of 1<sup>st</sup> Corps at Mathura which took part in the second India-Pakistan war. In 1967 aged 47, Prem was posted as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Madhya Pradesh Area. The following year, he took command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division at Leh which he commanded until 1970. Prem earned the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM) during this command both for his overall meritorious service and specifically for his direction of a disaster relief programme following an earthquake in the Ladakh region.

In December 1970, Prem became GOC Bengal Area (Calcutta). During the 1971 India-Pakistan war, which led to the creation of Bangladesh, Prem's Bengal Area co-ordinated the entire logistics and movement of personnel, refugees and goods by rail and road in the region as part of the war effort.

### **Post-Army Life**

On 30 April 1974, after 33 years of meritorious service, Prem retired from the Army to pursue a career in business. Prem held senior executive positions in the corporate and public sectors in India.

Prem was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (United Kingdom) and a Life Member of both, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies New South Wales, and the United Service Institution of India.

**Joe Matthews**

<sup>1</sup>A biography of Major General Premangsu Chowdry was published in the *United Service* 71 (2) June 2020 edition.