

## **Lieutenant-Colonel 'Tich' Harvey**

Lieutenant-Colonel "Tich" Harvey, who has died aged 82, won an MC during the Italian campaign and a Bar in operations against Communist terrorists in the Malayan Emergency.

On April 9 1945, Harvey led "D" Company of the 1st Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, in an attempt to force the Santerno River, in northern Italy. The German positions on the high flood banks were very strong, and the Gurkhas went into battle in Kangaroos, hollowed-out Sherman tanks converted into troop carriers.

Captain Harvey led his men in a dash to the near bank. Many of the flame-throwers that should have provided support became bogged down and, as the leading platoons assaulted the far side, they ran into heavy machine-gun fire from the left flank and mortaring from overhead. No sooner was this position secured than the enemy put in six desperate counter-attacks. Harvey's HQ came under intense shelling, but he sent back precise reports over the wireless which enabled his CO to commit his reserve company at exactly the right moment and to turn a precarious foothold into a permanent bridgehead.

Of the 92 men who went into the attack with Harvey, 44 were killed or wounded. The citation for his MC stated that his coolness, skill and courage had been an inspiration to his men.

The son of an Army officer who had won an MC in Flanders during the First World War, Anthony Stean Harvey was born at Plymouth on August 29 1922. He was educated at Totnes Grammar School, where his short stature led to his nickname, and after working for an insurance company, he enlisted in the Army and served with the 70th Glosters' Young Soldiers' Battalion.

Harvey was commissioned into the 9th Battalion, Devonshire Regiment; he volunteered for the Indian Army's Gurkha brigade and was posted to the 1st Battalion, 1st Gurkha Rifles, at Dharamsala in the Himalayan foothills. He was swiftly promoted captain upon taking command of a company, but he was keen to see action and, in December 1943, he moved to the Divisional Reinforcement Camp at Taranto, Italy. He discovered that the 1st Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, were going to need replacements and so hitchhiked to Cassino.

He found the CO face down in a hedge during the middle of a battle. "I can't remember asking for you," said the colonel, "but since you are here, you had better make yourself useful." Harvey was ordered to relieve the commander of "B" Company, who had been badly wounded. He subsequently led all four companies in turn, as their commanders were killed or fell ill.

The regiment took part in the long slog northwards to Florence. In November 1944, Harvey was leading a fighting patrol of "A" Company when they stumbled across a strong enemy-fortified position. One of his recruits, Rifleman Thaman Gurung, told his comrades to take cover and raced to the next crest, throwing grenades and firing his Tommy gun. This gave Harvey the respite

he needed to withdraw and co-ordinate an attack by the rest of his company. The young Gurkha was awarded a posthumous VC. After VE Day, Harvey moved to Abbottabad, close to the North West Frontier, to take command of the regiment's "C" Company. It was a grim period of religious strife leading up to India's independence and the creation of Pakistan; the task of safeguarding British women and children in the European cantonments and of preventing strife between the Hindus and the Muslims was an exacting one.

The 5th Gurkhas were to become part of the new Indian Army and Harvey managed to obtain a transfer to 2nd Battalion 6th Gurkha Rifles (later 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles), whom he joined in Malaya at the beginning of the Emergency.

From 1948 to 1956, apart from a spell in Hong Kong and a year at Staff College, he was involved in operations against the Communist terrorists, either as a regimental officer or on the brigade staff. He was awarded a Bar to his MC in 1956 for a highly successful series of operations as a rifle company commander in the Jelebu District. The citation stated: "With relentless energy, careful planning, an intimate knowledge, gained first hand, of the country and the people, throughout the last five months, Major Harvey has reduced the enemy force in the District by half."

After a year at the US States Staff College, Harvey spent two years on the staff of HQ BAOR. He commanded 2nd/6th Queen's Own Gurkhas in Borneo in 1963 during the Indonesian "Confrontation" and was appointed OBE at the end of his three-year tour and decorated by a grateful Sultan of Brunei.

Harvey retired from the Army in 1977 to oversee Army training camps in the south of England. He retained the greatest admiration for the Gurkhas. In his memoir, *A Soldier's Life for Me*, he wrote: "Apart from the tremendous personal debt that I owe them in battle or in difficult situations, they have enabled me to have an extraordinarily happy life. Not a single Gurkha has ever let me down. Cheerful, happy, uncomplaining, loyal, marvellous companions, full of fun and utterly brave, they have always lived up to their motto, 'Better to die than to be a coward'." Living in Surrey, he maintained close ties with the 5th and 6th Gurkhas and was the regimental secretary, and subsequently chairman, of the 6th Regimental Association and a trustee of the Gurkha Museum.

A charming, energetic man with a puckish sense of fun, "Tich" Harvey died on February 15. He married, in 1960, Rosemary Hatcher, who survives him with their three sons and a daughter.