

CHAPTER IV

INVASION OF NEFA - FALL OF TAWANG

INDIA ACCEPTS CHINESE CHALLENGE

As seen earlier, the relations between India and China had much embittered by the summer of 1962. Shooting incidents between Indian and Chinese troops had started frequently in Ladakh. But the border in the Eastern Sector had so far remained comparatively free from trouble. Except the Longju and Khinzemane incidents, the Eastern Sector area remained quiet. The Chinese, however, disturbed that quiet in August 1962 when they crossed the border and occupied the Thag La Ridge. It was followed by the encirclement of the Indian post Dhola on 8 September and firing by the Chinese troops on the post on 20 September and subsequent days.

The incursions of the Chinese into the Kameng Frontier Division and their attacks on the Dhola post south of the river Namkha Chu signified that they had not only violated the International Border aggressively and attacked Indian troops in this sector as well, but they had also militarily occupied the Thag La Ridge south of McMahon Line in order to substantiate their claim in NEFA.

Although the Chinese Government had not formally recognised the McMahon Line, they had also not violated it so far. Prime Minister Chou En-lai had even given indications that China might recognise it provided India accepted their claims in Ladakh.

The Government of India, on their part, had, on more than one occasion, declared publicly that any intrusion by the Chinese into Indian territory across the McMahon Line would not be tolerated. In September 1962, the Chinese did exactly that against which the Government of India had taken a stand publicly. The September incidents, thus, represented a new development and it led to a new response from the Government of India(1).

On 9 September 1962, a meeting was held in the Defence Ministry. Presided over by the Defence Minister V.K.Krishna Menon, the meeting was attended by Chief of the Army Staff, Gen P.N.Thapar, GOC-in-C Eastern Command, Lt Gen L.P.Sen, Cabinet Secretary S.S.Khera, H.C.Sarin, Joint Secretary in the Defence Ministry and a few others, including B.N.Mullik, the Director of Intelligence Bureau(2). At the meeting

was decided that the Chinese must be evicted from south of the Thag La Ridge immediately and by force if necessary(3). General Thapar accepted the decision, and a signal was passed down to Eastern Command and from there to XXXIII Corps and 4 Inf Div to carry out the decision. With the aim of evicting the Chinese from the Dhola area the signal(4) ordered the immediate move of 9 Punjab to the Dhola area; the rest of the 7 Bde was to get ready to join it within 48 hours. The order specified that all troops should go prepared for battle and, if possible, an attempt was to be made to encircle the Chinese troops investing Dhola post. The eviction operation was code-named 'Leghorn'(5).

Two days later, Lt Gen L.P.Sen informed a high level meeting in New Delhi about the progress made in the execution of Op 'Leghorn'(6).

As a proof of the Government's earnestness, another important decision was taken. All forward posts and patrols were given permission to fire on any armed Chinese who entered Indian territory, if the situation justified such action; the use of "unnecessary force" was, however, to be avoided(7).

On 15 September, at another high-level meeting in the Defence Ministry, it was decided to contain the Chinese near the Thag La and, if possible, to establish posts at Karpo La II and Yumtso La(8).

In a meeting in Defence Minister's room on 17 September, Lt Gen Sen informed that it would take more time to concentrate the Brigade in the area than he had anticipated(9).

On 18 September, a Government spokesman announced at a press conference that the Army had been instructed to drive the Chinese out of the Dhola area(10). The intention, obviously, was to let others know about the Government decision(11).

On 20 September, Eastern Command flashed a message in the afternoon that all patrols and posts were to engage Chinese patrols that came within range of their weapons(12). The same day XXXIII Corps passed on the Eastern Command instructions to 4 Inf Div which, among others detailed instructions of operational nature, ordered the preparation and submission of plans for the eviction of Chinese from Indian territory(13) and its submission to XXXIII Corps for Corps Commander's approval before it was launched. The instructions were relayed by 4 Inf Div to 7 Inf Bde for implementation.

RESTRICTED

The same day (i.e. 20 September) at 2240 hrs, while the Brigade Commander was discussing with his Battalion Commander the way how to implement those instructions, two Chinese troops threw hand-grenades into one of the bunkers wounding three Indian soldiers. Indians then began firing, which was returned by the Chinese(14). Firing from both sides continued intermittently upto 29 September 1962(15).

The outbreak of firing on the Namkha Chu and reports of Chinese build-up induced Gen Thapar to ask the Government to reconsider its decision regarding Op 'Leghorn'. Gen Thapar presented his case at a meeting in Defence Ministry on 22 September 1962, which was presided over by K. Raghuramaiah, Deputy Defence Minister, in the absence of both Nehru and Krishna Menon. Gen Thapar argued that the Chinese could react to Indian moves in the Dhola area by sending more reinforcements against that post; they could also retaliate elsewhere in NEFA or in Ladakh. The Foreign Secretary then explained the Prime Minister's instructions on the subject and stated that the Government's view was that no infringement of the border in NEFA was to be accepted. He was of the opinion that the Army must build up strength in the Dhola area and evict the Chinese from Indian territory there even at the cost of Chinese reaction in Ladakh which, according to him, could at the most be to try and capture a post or two(16). After some discussion it was decided that as a matter of policy there was no alternative but to evict the Chinese from the Dhola area(17). Playing safe, Gen Thapar, therefore, requested for a written order of the government to that effect(18). As a result, he received a note signed by H.C.Sarin, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, stating:

"The decision throughout has been as discussed at previous meetings, that the Army should prepare and throw the Chinese out as soon as possible. The COAS was accordingly directed to take action for the eviction of the Chinese in the KAMENG Frontier Division of NEFA as soon as he is ready(19)".

Thapar repeated the Government's orders to Sen with the injunction that all necessary arrangements be made for the eviction of the Chinese troops who had entered Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA at "top speed"(20). At the same time he warned Western Command of the possibility of Chinese reaction in Ladakh and advised that Indian posts there should be strengthened(21). On 24 September Corps Commander, Lt Gen Umrao Singh personally conveyed it to Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad(22). From now on the energies of the Indian Army in the area were to be directed to execute

RESTRICTED

Op. 'Leghorn' with all earnestness.

On 14 September, Lt Gen Sen had ordered Lt Gen Umrao Singh to formulate an outline plan for the operation with the "utmost speed"(23). Passing through Lt Gen Umrao Singh and Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, the order reached Brig Dalvi for execution.

On being pressed(24) by Maj Gen Prasad, Brig Dalvi prepared a plan with a modest aim of capturing Tseng-jong, a small feature on Thag La slopes, and then roll down west to east to the Chinese positions on the Namkha Chu. It was to be attempted with an out-flanking move from Bridge V near Tsangle. While working out the logistics for the plan, Brig Dalvi made it clear that unless the proper logistic base was ready within a fortnight there would be no scope for operations during that winter(25).

Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad approved the plan after some alterations and then it was submitted to Lt Gen Umrao Singh who had reached Lumpu, HQ 7 Bde, on 26 September. Gen Umrao Singh also suggested some modifications in the plan. The draft plan was revised accordingly and it was then taken by the Corps Commander to Lucknow on 29 September. Lt Gen L.P.Sen, refused to accept the requirements stipulated for the operation; it would have been impossible to meet them before the winter set in. Umrao Singh's views and assessment of the situation were rejected once again(27).

There were other differences(28) between the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command and GOC XXXIII Corps, which came out in the open during a meeting on 2 October 1962, presided over by the Defence Minister. At that meeting Lt Gen Sen indicated that under the prevailing situation the necessary build-up for launching the operation to evict the Chinese from the Thag La area would not be completed before 10 October. The first date given for the completion of the build-up was 21 September which was postponed to 29 September and then changed to 1 October and again to 5 October(29).

The next step taken was to divest Gen Umrao Singh of the responsibility for NEFA. It was taken away from XXXIII Corps and handed over to a newly raised IV Corps. Lt Gen B.M.Kaul, the CGS, was to command the new Corps(30). On 3 October 1962, at about 2100 hrs, Gen Kaul was informed of the Government decision, and the next day he assumed charge as Commander IV Corps, with the specific task of evicting the Chinese from the Dhola-Thag La area.

RESTRICTED

In the meantime, as per the order of the Army Commander, noted earlier, on 3 October, 7 Bde ordered Punjabis to occupy Tsangle with one company. On the next morning one platoon, using another platoon as porter, moved from Bridge V around 1700 hrs on 5 October(31). A second platoon left under similar arrangements on 7 October(32).

After his appointment as Corps Commander, Lt Gen Kaul's first move was to go to the Dhola area. The problems facing Indian troops in that area were enormous. And Kaul, in his messages from the Namkha Chu area to higher Commands, posted them about those difficulties. Still he was all prepared to carry out the task assigned to him. In the plan prepared by Brig Dalvi, 10 October had been specified as the date by which Op 'Leghorn' would have to commence if the required administrative and fire support was made available to him and if he was able to concentrate his whole Brigade by that time(33). Kaul decided to treat this date as a deadline, regardless of logistics(34). Soon after reaching the Namkha Chu area Gen Kaul began to give orders to get the Op 'Leghorn' carried out under his personal guidance.

On 8 October, Gen Kaul began his opening moves by ordering the Rajputs and the Gorkhas down from Tsangdhar to join other troops along the river line. Both the battalions reached the river line on 9 October(35).

He then disclosed his plan. Seeing the difficulties of any direct assault "to evict the Chinese from Thag La" by 7 Inf Bde(36), he decided to make a "positional warfare" manoeuvre(37). Indian troops would occupy Yumtso La, a little west of the Thag La peak, where they would take positions behind and dominating the Chinese, as the Chinese had not yet occupied it. Gen Kaul chose the approach through Tseng-jong which had already been occupied by Punjabis(38)

Gen Prasad and Brig Dalvi brought home to the Corps Commander the possibilities of those troops, still in cotton uniforms, being frozen at Yumtso La or being starved to death if their line of communications was cut off by the Chinese. But Gen Kaul brushed aside those misgivings. He, however, agreed to Brig Dalvi's suggestion that as a first step a patrol be sent from 9 Punjab before the whole 2 Rajput battalion (less company at Bridge I) were committed. The patrol should find the best place to cross the river and take up a position at Tseng-jong so as to cover the move of 2 Rajput to Yumtso La at first light on 10 October. The patrol's objective would be Tseng-jong(39).

RESTRICTED

One platoon of 'D' coy 9 Punjab, under Major M.S. Chaudhary left for Tseng-jong to establish a bridgehead on the north bank of Namkha Chu. The platoon occupied the location 1500 hrs on 8 October. One section of this platoon occupied the Karpole II height next morning. One platoon of 'A' Coy 9 Punjab, under Sub Chhail Singh, left for Tseng-jong on 9 October at 1000 hrs to reinforce the platoon under Major Chaudhary(40). The Chinese did not react to these moves instantly. They only threw a grenade at the Indian defence post at Bridge IV at about 2030 hrs.(41).

However, strong Chinese reaction came the next day. At about dawn on 10 October, when groups of men from 2 Rajput were moving up the southern bank of the Namkha Chu, making for Bridge III on their way to Log Bridge - the planned crossing point on the way to Yutso La - a full battalion of Chinese emerged from their positions and moved quickly down the ridge, to form up for an attack on Tseng-jong. At the same time the Indian position at Tseng-jong came under fire from heavy mortars(42).

No sooner was the fire lifted, at 0800 hrs approximately 800 Chinese attacked the Punjabis at Tseng-jong from the East and North-East. After a heavy exchange of fire for about 45 minutes, the attack was repulsed. As the Indian troops had only pouch ammunition with them, the officer-in-charge (Maj Chaudhary) requested for machine gun and mortar fire from Bridge 4 position. This request of Maj Chaudhary was not acceded to(43). A little later, the enemy re-formed for a second time and started assaulting the Indians at 0930 hrs. By then, the Punjabis' section under Hav Malkiat Singh on Karpole II had moved close to the flank of the Chinese. While the latter were bunched together, this Section opened fire. The Chinese completely surprised, were caught in the cross-fire of light machine guns and suffered heavy casualties(44). They reacted by opening up heavy mortars. The Section under Malkiat Singh was asked to withdraw to Tsengjong.

Maj Chaudhary contacted his Battalion Commander Lt Col R.N. Misra, on wireless and informed him that, as the enemy was forming up again, it would be difficult for his men to hold the ground unless supported by MMGs and mortars from Bridge 4. Col Misra agreed to give fire support, but it was turned down by Brig Dalvi after consultations with Divisional and Corps Commanders(45). Brig Dalvi informed the Battalion Commander that reinforcements from 2 Rajput were already on the way(46).

The enemy assaulted the position a third time at 1200 hrs from three sides - North, East and West - with 82 mm mortars, 2-in mortars, grenades and automatic weapons. Hand to hand fighting developed. Realising that the platoon at Tseng-jong was no more in a position to hold the ground, orders were issued at 1230 hrs by the Brigade Commander to the troops to withdraw. Consequently, the Tseng-jong troops reached south of the Namkha Chu around 1530 hrs. In this action, Indians suffered heavy casualties - 6 dead, 11 wounded (including Maj Chaudhary) and five reported missing(47).

The Peking Radio and Press announced their casualties as 77 dead and approx. 100 wounded(48).

In the whole Tseng-jong episode, two Vrc and three MVC were awarded to 9 Punjab. Sep Kanshi Ram overpowered a Chinese and snatched his automatic rifle and brought it with him, for which he was decorated with MVC. Naik Chain Singh was awarded MVC posthumously for bravery. Maj Chaudhary died of his wounds and was given MVC posthumously for "display of remarkable leadership and courage in extricating whatever was left of the platoons"(49). Besides, Hav Malkiat Singh, Sep Suram Chand was another recipient of Vrc.

Corps Commander had personally seen the serious situation in which Indian troops were placed vis-a-vis the Chinese in the Dhola area. That the Chinese could counter-attack in a big way was also clear. Gen Kaul sent a message to Eastern Command and Army Headquarters that "a grave situation had developed" that day at Tseng-jong, and sought permission to personally present the case before them at once and to seek further orders(50). Army Headquarters replied back asking him to come to Delhi forthwith. Before leaving the Namkha Chu area, Lt Gen Kaul told the GOC 4 Div that "the instructions to drive the enemy back were to be held in abeyance till I returned from Delhi. In the meantime, he was to hold his present position"(51).

In Delhi, a high-powered meeting was held at 2230 hrs on 11 October 1962, under Prime Minister Nehru. It was attended by the Defence Minister, the Army and Air Chiefs, the Cabinet, Foreign and Defence Secretaries. The Director of Intelligence Bureau JSIG from the Defence Ministry, officiating CGS, and of course, B.M.Kaul. Gen Kaul presented the tactical picture of the Dhola Sector at the meeting and the position of Indian troops as against the Chinese in the area. At the end he asked for orders on one of

three following alternatives:-

- "(a) Whether I should continue building up this sector and launch an attack on the Chinese despite their superiority and a possibility of a reverse;
- (b) or to cancel the orders of an attack but hold our present positions;
- (c) or to hold a (more advantageous) position elsewhere"(52).

When asked by the Prime Minister, Lt Gen L.P. Sen expressed his disagreement with Kaul about inability of Indian troops to hold the Namkha Chu position and, therefore, he, under the circumstances, was for (b). Gen. Thapar entirely concurred with Sen. Prime Minister, too, therefore, expressed his views in the same light and it was decided that the Namkha Chu position would be held but no offensive action would be taken to oust the Chinese from the northern bank(53).

The next morning Prime Minister Nehru was leaving for Colombo. At the airport a Press reporter asked him as to what orders had been given to the troops in NEFA. "Our instructions are to free our country", he said. But when asked how soon this would happen, he replied "I cannot fix a date. That is entirely for the Army"(54). Several newspapers, however, played it up as Nehru ordering the army to throw the Chinese out.

On 13 October, BGS IV Corps, Brig K.K. Singh sent a signal to GOC 4 Inf Div confirming Lt Gen B.M. Kaul's verbal orders issued on 10 October that positions along the southern side of the river were to be held at all costs, line of communications via Lumpu would be protected, Hathong La would be held, and positions at Tsangle, Tseng-jong and Karpola would be held at the discretion of GOC 4 Inf Div(55).

The next day, IV Corps amended that order so far as Tsangle position was concerned. According to the new order, Tsangle position was to be held at all costs(56). On 16 October, Army Headquarters issued orders to Eastern Command under information to IV Corps asking them (i) to reinforce Tsangle if possible up to a battalion and carry out aggressive patrolling in the area; (ii) to consider harassing fire on enemy movement particularly across the Thag La Pass; (iii) to forward their recommendations at the earliest regarding commencement of Op 'Leghorn' including their requirements, if any, of additional

RESTRICTED

troops, administrative cover and air lift(57). This meant that the Op 'Leghorn' was still on; only it was held up temporarily until deployment and logistical position improved(58).

In view of the reports of further reinforcement by the Chinese, the repeated pleas from the Brigades and the Division Commanders to be allowed to withdraw and even the attitude of Corps Headquarters staff and the IGAR, as well as his own physical condition(59) Gen Kaul sent another message to the Eastern Command and Army HQ arguing that the Namkha Chu position was untenable and pleaded for giving "preference to discretion over prestige and pullback our isolated company from Tsangle South of Namkha Chu"(60).

To sort the matter out, a conference was held at Corps HQ in Tezpur in the morning on 17 October. V.K. Krishna Menon, B.M. Mullik, H.C. Sarin, Gen P.N. Thapar, Maj Gen A.S.Guraya, IGAR, Lt Gen Sen and Lt Gen Kaul attended it. Maj Gen Guraya expressed his views in favour of withdrawal. Kaul also forcefully argued in favour of immediate withdrawal. Then, at the suggestion of Mullik, the three civilians withdrew from the meeting to allow the Generals themselves to take a military decision without civilian interference. After two hours' closed-door discussion, Gen Thapar informed the Defence Minister that it was decided to hold the Namkha Chu front at the Tsangle Sector. Gen Thapar also stated that the shortages in troops, equipment and arms would be immediately made up(61). The same evening, Lt Gen Kaul instructed GOC 4 Inf Div that Tsangle would continue to be held and that a suitable post should be established on the north bank of Namkha Chu opposite Bridge 5 to prevent the Chinese force cutting off the line of communications between Bridge 5 and Tsangle (62)

The next day, Kaul was taken ill and was evacuated to Delhi. In pursuit of the decision of 17 October, Kaul, commanding IV Corps from his sick bed at his Delhi residence, ordered, on the night of 18 October, two more companies to strengthen Tsangle(63). This order would have stretched the supply effort of 7 Bde to breaking point. Dalvi protested to Prasad against this order. Maj Gen Prasad had already brought this to the attention of HQ IV Corps(64). In reply he was told that the build up at Tsangle must be carried out otherwise the officers defaulting in executing/implementing these orders would be removed(65). Niranjana Prasad passed this warning to Dalvi(66).

CHINA UNLEASHES WAR

Since the occupation of Tseng-jong by the Chinese on 10 October, there were continuous reports of their build-up, particularly in the Thag La Sector. Heavy concentration of Chinese troops, camouflaged mountain guns and extensive digging were noticed. Mortar positions at Muksar, facing Tsangle, were being dug in. Chinese patrols at times also attempted to cross the Namkha Chu.

On the night of 15/16 October, the Chinese began to probe Indian positions at Tsangle and Bridge 5. From 16 October onward, Chinese started continuously harassing Indian troops. Firing took place on the night of 16/17 October in area Tsangle. At 0840 hrs on 17 October Chinese threw a grenade in area Bridge 1. The same evening at 1900 hrs, enemy firing started against Indian position at Tsangle. Heavy small arms and grenade fire was also exchanged in area Bridge 2 from 2020 hrs to 2110 hrs. On 18 October at 1000 hrs, Chinese again threw one grenade at Bridge 4. Preparation of new defences by the Chinese in areas Namdong La and on the north bank of Namkha Chu between Bridge 1 and 2 was also observed(67).

On 17 October, large numbers of mules were seen coming across Thag La to the north bank of the Namkha Chu, carrying stores and equipment(68). Preparation of defences and similar other activities by the Chinese were noticed on 18 October(69). At 1105 hrs on 19 October, an Indian patrol from Tsangle area clashed with Chinese patrol. At that very time, a few Chinese came down to the bed of Namkha Chu opposite Bridge 2 and when Indian troops fired, they fled. At 1600 hrs approximately 1,100 Chinese were seen east of Tsangle with possible intention of attacking the Indian post there(70). Thus, by 19 October there were unmistakable signs that an attack was imminent.

The same evening the Chinese in some strength had openly infiltrated through the gaps in the Indian front and had disappeared in the jungles behind Indian line and occupied the hilltops in the rear of Indian defences. The Chinese had also infiltrated towards Wangdhar. Another group came through Karpola II and took positions round the Tsangle post. They had also moved up and nearly surrounded the Khinzemane post(71). The same evening, a Chinese military VIP was observed driving up in a jeep on their side of the front, evidently to inspect the troops and their positions, as though preliminary to an attack(72). And soon thereafter came the invasion.

At about dawn on 20 October 1962, a massive, preplanned Chinese attack came simultaneously in the

RESTRICTED

Namkha Chu Sector and other frontier divisions of NEFA as well as Ladakh.

After the 10 October episode, Indian troops had withdrawn from Tseng-jong, which was occupied by Chinese soldiers. Although Op 'Leghorn' was still on paper, it was as good as abandoned. While the higher commanders were urging bolder tactics to be adopted, the field commanders (GOC 4 Div and Commander 7 Inf Bde) were not willing to do that. They were rather pressing for withdrawal of their troops to tactically more sound positions. After 10 October, 7 Inf Bde was made responsible for the defence of the area from Tsangle/Bridge 5 to Bridge 1 in the east. On 12 October, 4 Inf Div established its TAC HQrs at Zimithang and 7 Inf Bde was instructed to locate its HQ at Rongla - 10 minutes walk from Dhola post on the south bank of Namkha Chu. Line of Communications was also laid between Tsangdhar and Dhola. But all these measures were defensive in nature. Except for Tsangle - just across the Namkha Chu at its western end, at no place were there Indian troops north of the river.

The governments of China and India were exchanging notes, though not worded in very friendly tone thereby reflecting the increasing strains in relations between the two countries. The Government of India had conveyed(73) their agreement to a proposal for discussions at appropriate level starting from 15 October, first in Peking and then in Delhi. It was formally proposed by China in its Note of 13 September 1962(74). And China, in response, had expressed its preparedness "to receive on 15 October the representative to be sent by the Indian side(75).

The situation on the ground, therefore, did not warrant China to precipitate matters. But the Chinese making the Tsang-jong incident as an excuse, unleashed a well-planned and pre-meditated war on India in both the Eastern and Western Sectors.

Speaking to the Nation on 22 October in an AIR broadcast, Prime Minister Nehru highlighted the irony of the situation created by the Chinese invasion. He said, "Perhaps, there are not many instances in history where one country, that is India, had gone out of her way to be friendly and cooperative with the Chinese Government and people, and to plead their cause in the councils of the world, and then for the Chinese Government to return evil for good and even go to the extent of committing aggression and invade our sacred land. No self-respecting country and certainly not India, with her love of freedom, can submit to this, whatever the consequences may be"(76)

TOPOGRAPHY OF TAWANG AREA

In the Kameng Frontier Division, the first onslaught of the Chinese was taken by the Tawang area, the north-western part of the Division north-west of the river Tawang Chu. For our purposes the area can be divided into three parts - western, central and eastern. The dividing line between the western and central parts is the Tawang Ridge. Tawang proper and surrounding areas can be grouped in the central part and the area east of the central part, including Jang, forms the eastern part.

The western part can be further divided into two - the river Nyamjang Chu forming the dividing line. The western segment of this part can be called the Thag La-Dhola or Namkha Chu sector. It is "a cup-shaped elevated hollow surrounded by impressive mountain ranges or ridges on all sides"(77). In the north it is bounded by the Thag La Ridge which runs to south-east and is cut by Nyamjang Chu forming a gorge extending from Shakti village for about 16 km to the north of Le. The depressions of the Thagla Ridge are the Dum Dum La, Karpo La II, Yumtso La and Thag La to the west of Nyamjang Chu. The ridge extends to the east of the Nyamjang Chu to embody Bum La, north of Tawang. The average height of the Thag La Ridge is about 4,260 metres. Its southern slopes are steeper than the northern. The area in the south of the ridge is highly mountainous. The fast flowing boulder-strewn mountain stream, about 25 km long, the Namkha Chu, separates the Thag La Ridge from another called the Tsangdhar Ridge. The main features of this ridge are the Tsangdhar and the Karpo La-I humps. The Hathong La is one of its main depressions.

The Namkha Chu originates from a collection of small lakes, at a height of about 4,250 metres, filling up a hollow of the southern slopes of the Thag La Ridge. At its narrowest point the stream is some 7 metres broad and at its widest about 36 metres. It drops about 2,500 metres in 25 km. It is unfordable after torrential rains or at the time of melting snows but is not a military obstacle except for short periods(78). The stream flowing from west to east - is a feeder to the river Nyamjang Chu, and joins it about 2.5 km south of Khinzemane.

During the operations in 1962, there were five bridges on this stream and the distance from the first bridge in the east (near the junction of Namkha Chu and Nyamjang Chu), to the fifth bridge in the west and south of the Tsangle post, was a little over 19 km (79). A temporary and a log bridge had also been

RESTRICTED

constructed between the fourth and the fifth bridges. The gradient of foot-paths from the second and the third bridges to the Dhola post and from the first bridge to Khinzemane was very steep.

The Dhola post, located on the northern slopes of the Tsangdhar Ridge, about 300 meters above the water level of the Namkha Chu stream, dominated the Namkha Chu valley. But it was itself dominated by Thag La Ridge. The other mountain features which dominated the Dhola post were the Paitsai to the north of the Dhola post and Tsangjong, in the north-east of Paitsai. Both these features were located between the Namkha Chu and the Indo-Tibetan boundary(80).

The Namkha Chu valley is narrow and thickly wooded and movement is very difficult except on the tracks. On its south side, the ground rises gradually from the stream bank for about 450 metres and then steeply to Hathongla Ridge, about 1,220 metres higher than the valley floor(81). Tsangdhar feature, which is the crest of the ridge, was the only dropping zone available in the area.

There were two routes from Lumpo (3,048 metres) to Namkha Chu. The shorter one was through Hathong La (Pass) - (4,125 metres) and involved steep climbs and dangerous descents over stretches of slippery, lichen-covered boulders. Zirkhim (Serkhim) was located on this route, a little to the left of the path, where a helipad had been constructed. The other route which approached Dhola post from the rear, crossed the much higher and more difficult pass named Karpo La-I (4,875 metres) and demanded a dangerous climb rather than a march(82).

There was not a single habitation between Lumpo and Thag La, a distance of about 24 kms. The area consisted of a number of grazing grounds which became quagmires in the monsoon. The locals used logs to make crossing places for their cattle. When large bodies of troops had to move across these logs, they became submerged and the only way to negotiate marshy patches was to wade across in knee-deep mud(83).

Besides these two routes, there were a number of foot-paths and goat tracks which, however, could not be used by load-carrying soldiers.

Nyamjang Chu is the chief river of the eastern segment of the western part. It flows to the south into a broad valley between two mountain ridges. The villages (camping grounds) of Shakti, Zimithang, Brokenthang, Chuthangmu and Khinzemane lie along the banks of this river(84). The Namkha Chu joins

Nyamjang Chu a little north of Chuthangmu. Chuthangmu, a little over 3 km from the Indo-Tibetan border, is situated at a height of slightly less than 1,830 metres(85).

There were no roads and only mule tracks existed in the area and as such the distance was to be covered on foot. The Khinzemane route was a major approach to Le (Tibet) from, Tawang. Starting from Tawang, the track reached Lumla (2,740 metres) after covering a distance of 32 km. From Lumla the track descended into the Nyamjang Chu valley and after a little over 29 km reached Shakti village.

From Shakti the track went north and crossed the Nyamjang Chu near Hanggang grazing ground and then proceeded along the west bank of the river. After Gorsam the track re-crossed Nyamjang Chu near Kyalengteng. A little before the above crossing, a diversion from the main track went north towards Lumpo, which had a helipad. After crossing the river the main track ran along the eastern bank of the river Nyamjang Chu upto Zimithang, 24 km from Shakti(86). A helipad had been built at Zimithang and it could take MI-4 Russian helicopters. A little further on the route crossed the river again and kept running along the west bank for about 6 km and reached Chuthangmu. North of Chuthangmu the route re-crossed the river and then ran along its eastern bank and again re-crossed to the west bank at Drokung Samba, a little over one km from Khinzemane. From Khinzemane a side-track led to Thag La Pass while the main track went on to Le in Tibet. The track to Thag La involved a climb of 1,825-2,130 metres and would require two days to negotiate the distance(87).

Hathongla Ridge, Nelya Ridge, Lumpo Ridge, BTK Ridge and Gorsam Ridge are the spurs of the mountain range separating the region from Bhutan which envelope the western part of the Tawang area from the south.

The central part of the Tawang area is bounded by the Tawang Ridge on the west, the Great Himalayan range on the north and by the river Tawang Chu on the east and south.

Tawang hemlet in 1962 was a well spread-out collection of settlements; the monastery village, the anigompa (nunnery) ridge, the Political Officer's Colony, the Assam Rifles and Army barracks, the helipad lower down, and other scattered buildings. These settlements were dispersed over an area of five to six square km(88).

Tawang (2,800 metres) itself does not give the impression of being located in a trough. Rather it

appears an amphitheatre, bounded on the south by the Tawang Chu and on the other three sides by hills of higher altitude. In the south-west of Tawang is situated Lumla, the road-head for Namkha Chu sector. In 1962, Lumla was connected with Tawang only by an AT track.

Of all the three approaches from the McMahon Line to Tawang, Bumla-Tawang approach - a foot track - was the easiest and the shortest (26 km). The track lay to the east of Khinzemane-Shakti-Lumla-Tawang approach. Bum La - the pass itself - is wide and flat. Vehicles could pass through this gap quite easily and move towards Tawang with a minimum of engineering effort(89).

Starting from Tawang, the track ran along the spur of the Samatso Ridge and reached Pangateng Tso (now named PTSO), at a height of 3,960 metres. It proceeded further to the north and reached Nagu La-Milaktong La (Mi La) area. Mi La is an important track junction and a camping ground, as the track from Jang via Landa village also terminated there. From Mi La the track turned to the east and after about five km it crossed the Tongpeng La. From there it turned to the north and crossed another ridge, known as the 'Twin Peaks'. Finally, the track reached Bum La and then entered Tibet to end at Tson Dzong(90).

The Tawang 'Vital Ground', that had been nominated for defence, was a knot of minor ridges about 15 to 18 km north of Tawang proper, an uninhabited area between Tongpeng La and Mi La. This area was a comparatively flat stretch, about 8 km south of Bum La. Within this area lay an important junction of three tracks - one coming from Bum La, the second from Tawang and the third from Zimithang.

Viewed from the east, the central part of the Tawang area appears to be a huge massif which starts at the river Tawang Chu in the south (altitude about 2,285 metres) and climbs all the way up to Bum La (4,570 metres).

The river Tawang Chu and the nearby area towards its east and south form the eastern part of the Tawang area. Many perennial streams, like Set Chu and Babrang Chu, join Tawang Chu before its junction with Nyamjang Chu. As such the Tawang Chu basin is criss-crossed by a number of snow-fed streams which have cut deep gorges in their lower reaches specially near river junctions. Every pair of these streams has a watershed of an appreciable height and this fact makes the terrain of the Tawang area high

RESTRICTED

mountainous. The most important watershed in the area is the Se La Ridge in the south and the Great Himalayan Range in the north. Besides these, there are three important spurs projecting from the latter and running to the south. One is the Tawang Ridge which terminates near Lumla. The second terminates a couple of kilometers in the north-east of Tawang, which may be called the Sumatso Ridge. The third spur is the feature which runs towards Jang village and abruptly ends in a cliff at Bridge 4 on Tawang Chu. At its southern end it commands a view of the Nuranang valley upto a long distance(91).

The Tawang Chu river cuts a deep valley extending from Jang village to its confluence with Nyamjang Chu on the boundary of Bhutan. Near Jang village, the height of the valley is 1,830 metres which reduces to 1,220 metres at the river junction.

Jang is about 39 km south-east of Tawang. From Jang one can have a clear view of the hills on which Tawang is situated. The river Babrang Chu joins Tawang Chu a little south of Jang. The road coming from Bomdila and Se La passes through Jang and then crosses Tawang Chu at Bridge 4 a little down stream after Babrang Chu joins the river Tawang Chu. Then the road starts ascending the hills terminating at Tawang.

The Bridge 4 on Tawang Chu was the only means of crossing the deep and fast flowing river to reach Tawang from Jang in 1962(92).

Jang could also be reached from Bum La via Landa by a foot-track which by-passed Tawang.

During the 1962 Operations, the Bomdila-Tawang road was motorable up to Jang village(93). The Chinese extended the Tsona Dzong-Bum La road to Tawang and connected it with Jang during the course of the invasion.

INDUCTION OF TROOPS

In November 1959, when 4 Inf Div was assigned the responsibility of protecting the areas along the Indo-Tibetan border in Sikkim and NEFA, one of its brigade, viz., 7 Inf Bde was made responsible for the defence of Kameng Frontier Division. When the brigade moved to NEFA under 4 Inf Div, it was able to concentrate at Misamari in the end of November 1959(94). Divisional Headquarters were established at Tezpur(95).

At that time only a jeep track existed upto Bomdila, forward of which all movement was by foot.

RESTRICTED

The Bde located its Headquarters at Bomidila, with rear Headquarters at Misamari.

In 1960, 7 Inf Bde had the following battalions under it(96):-

(i) 1/9 GR (ii) 14 Punjab and (iii) 2 Sikh. Of these, only 1/9 GR could be pushed forward and the whole Bn could concentrate at Tawang by August 1960(97). 2 Sikh had moved upto Dirang Dzong and 14 Punjab was at Tenga Valley.

In January 1961, 9 Punjab (ex 11 Inf Bde) was placed under 7 Inf Bde. 9 Punjab relieved 14 Punjab at Tenga Valley and 2 Sikh at Dirang Dzong. The battalion stayed there till it was ordered to concentrate at Tawang by 15 December 1961(98). In the meantime, 1 Sikh had also been placed under 7 Inf Bde in place of 2 Sikh. By the end of 1961, the deployment of three battalions under 7 Inf Bde was as under:-

1/9 GR at Tawang

9 Punjab at Dirang Dzong (but ordered to concentrate at Tawang by 15 December 1961)

1 Sikh at Tenga Valley.

In May 1962, Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, soon after he took over as GOC 4 Inf Div, visited Tawang. At that time the following were positioned at Tawang(99):-

HQ 7 Inf Bde

9 Punjab

1/9 GR.

In June 1962, by which time Dhola Post had been established, 9 Punjab was given operational responsibility for the Namkha Chu Valley, which, till then was the responsibility of 1/9 GR(100). The other battalion at Tawang - 1/9 GR - was under orders to move to a peace station in the plains and in its place 1 Sikh, positioned then at Tenga Valley, was ordered to move to Tawang(101). In place of 1/9 GR, Grenadiers were being moved from the plains to be put under 7 Inf Bde(102).

In the beginning of September 1962, when Chinese activity increased in the Namkha Chu sector, the position of troops in the area was as follows:-

RESTRICTED

HQ 7 Inf Bde - Tawang.

9 Punjab - The battalion had started moving out of Tawang on 27 August and on 8 September some of its elements were at Lumpo, some were on the way to Lumpo and the rest at Tawang(103). The whole battalion was at Lumpo on 11 September 1962(104).

CO 9 Punjab with Bn column left Lumpo for Dhola on 14 September. 'A' Coy was left at Bridge 1 on 15 September and 'B' and 'C' Coys were left at Bridge 2 on the Namkha Chu river. CO alongwith 'D' Coy moved forward to Dhola Post. He left 'D' Coy under Maj Chaudhary at Dhola and returned to Bridge 2 at 'B' and 'C' Coy's position(105).

1 Sikh - Bn less three Coys was at Tawang and its three Coys had moved between 11 and 21 September for deployment along the Tawang-Bum La axis(106).

1/9 GR - The battalion was at Misamari, awaiting its move to a peace station, but after the September 1962 happenings in the Dhola area its move to peace station was cancelled on 12 September, and it was ordered to concentrate at Tawang at the earliest for onward move to Lumpo(107).

Other Battalions - 4 Grenadiers had moved to NEFA to relieve 1/9 GR and the Bn reached Misamari on 11 September 1962(108). Another battalion, 2 Rajput, which had been moved to NEFA in November 1959, as one of the Bns under 4 Inf Div, was in Charduar since August 1962 waiting for its move to a peace station(109). In view of 8 September incident, the bn was placed under 7 Inf Bde and ordered to move to Dirang on 10 September. It reached Dirang on 11 September and Tawang on 16 September 1962(110).

Brigade Commander 7 Inf Bde, who had his HQ at Tawang, left it with his Rover Group at 0530 hrs on 14 September, arrived at Shakti the next day and reached Lumpo on 16 September(111). After Bde Major and other elements of the Bde HQ reached Lumpo on 20 September, Bde TAC HQ was established there on 21 September 1962. But it could not function efficiently due to non-availability of signal equipment, which was held up at Lumla and Shakti for lack of porters(112).

4 Inf Div established its TAC HQ at Tawang on 17 September 1962, while its main HQ remained at Tezpur(113). XXXIII Corps also established its advance HQ at Tezpur on 17 September but its main HQ remained at Shillong(114).

At the end of September, when intermittent firing had been taking place in the Dhola area, the

position of Indian troops was as follows:-

With the movement of 7 Inf Bde to Lumpo, HQ 4 Arty Bde was moved from Tezpur on 17 September 1962, to take over the responsibility of defence of Tawang. The area of its responsibility was whole of Kameng Frontier Division west of Se La, less the traditional trade route area - Tawang-Lumla-Khinzemane and the Namkha Chu sector(115).

HQ 4 Arty Bde at Tawang had 1 Sikh (detached from 7 Inf Bde after its move to Lumpo), 'A' Wing of 5 AR and elements of artillery under it, which were with 7 Inf Bde but had not moved forward with that Brigade. 4 Grenadiers, though placed under it at Misamari, had not reached Tawang by that time(116).

HQ 7 Inf Bde at Lumpo

Troops under 7 Inf Bde

9 Punjab - deployed along the river Namkha Chu with one Coy at Tsangdhar, the DZ for troops at Dhola.

1/9 GR - Lumpo (the bn left Misamari on 16 September, reached Tawang between 20 September and 22 and then the whole bn arrived at Lumpo on 29 September)(117).

2 Rajput - left Tawang for Lumpo on 17 September 1962, and its first column had reached Lumpo on 22 September and its one Coy had relieved one Coy of 9 Punjab at Bridge 1 on 26 September 1962.

After the creation of a new IV Corps (HQ - Tezpur) with Lt Gen B.M.Kaul as its Commander on 3 October 1962, with the task of defending Indo-Tibetan border in NEFA, an element of urgency came in the movement and deployment of troops.

Meanwhile, the increasing Chinese activities left no doubt that a Chinese offensive across the Namkha Chu and perhaps down, the Nyamjang Chu Valley also (Khinzemane had also reported a build-up of Chinese troops opposite Indian post) was in the offing. To meet the threat GOC 4 Inf Div, therefore, carried out a new organisational arrangement on 11 October 1962. The whole Divisional Sector was split into three sub-sectors - Tawang sub-sector, under HQ 4 Arty Bde with Brig Kalyan Singh as its Commander, Khinzemane sub-sector with the Nyamjang Chu Valley

RESTRICTED

covering the old trade route, placed directly under Div TAC HQ at Zimithang; and third sub-sector, all along the Namkha Chu from Tsangle in the west to Bridge 1 in the east, under 7 Inf Bde.

The position of Indian troops under 4 Inf div, as on 16 October 1962, was the following:-

HQ 4 Inf Div - Tezpur

TAC HQ 4 Inf Div - Zimithang (moved from Tawang on 12 October.

Tawang sub-sector

HQ 4 Arty Bde - Tawang

Infantry

1 Sikh

4 Garh Rif - Moved from Ramgarh in mid-September as less Coy part of 62 Inf Bde. On reaching Chardur on 1 October, placed under HQ 4 Arty Bde; reached Tawang by road on 7 October(118).

'A' Wing of 5 Assam Rifles with HQ at Tawang.

Supporting troops

7(B) Mtn Bty of 22 Mtn Regt - At Tawang since September, did not move forward with 7 Inf Bde(119).

2(D) Mtn Bty of 22 Mtn Regt - Reached Tawang from with Regt HQ Misamari on 8 October less animals(120).

116 Hy Mor Bty of 33 Hy - Moved from Shillong on Mor Regt 4 October and reached Tawang on 8 October(121).

97 Fd Bty of 5 Fd Regt - Reached Tawang on 9 one Pl 6 Mahar (MG) October.

Khinzemane sub-sector
(under TAC HQ 4 Inf div)

Lt Col Raltan Singh, OC - sub-sector Commander (this appointment was 5 Assam Rifles made on 19 October 1962(122).

RESTRICTED

- One (B) Coy of Garh Rif - Zimithang (arrived there from Tawang on 12 October; placed for the defence of TAC Div HQ) (123).
- One Coy of 4 Grenadiers - Drokung Samba (south of Khinzemane)
- One Coy less Pl 4 Grenadiers - Serkhim (north of Zimithang)
- One Pl - Hathongla (had moved from Lumpo where the bn had reached on 8/9 October from Tawang where it had reached on 4 October)(124).

Three Pls of 'C' Wing of 5 Assam Rifles(125).

Nankha Chu Sub-Sector

HQ 7 Inf Bde - Rongla, 10 minute walk from Dhola post(in pursuance of 12 October decision, Bde Headquarters established here on 16 October)(126).

Infantry

- 2 Rajput less 3 Coys - Bridge 4
One Coy - Bridge 3
One Coy - Temporary Bridge
One Coy - Log Bridge

(Bn had arrived from Lumpo at Tsangdhar on 7 October and on 8 October it moved out of Tsangdhar and was concentrated south of the Nankha Chu)(127).

1/9 GR less Coy and Pl - Area Chaurihat above Dhola

One Coy - in gap between Bridge 2 and 3 ahead of Rongla.

One Pl - Tsangdhar.

(In the wake of Corps Commander's orders of 5 October that all troops be concentrated at Tsangdhar by 7 October, it reached Tsangdhar and by 10 October concentrated in Dhola area)(128).

9 Punjab less one Coy - Bridge 2
One Coy - Bridge 5/Tsangle

4 Grenadiers less two Coys - Bridge 1

One Pl from 'C' Wing 5 Assam Rifles - Dhola

Arty

34(M) Hy Mor Bty less Tp - Tsangdhar

Tp 17 Para Fd Regt Tsangdhar

'C' Coy 6 Mahar MG less One Pl.

One Pl - with 1/9 GR.

One Pl - with 2 Rajput at Bridge 4.

Five Observation Post Parties from 51 Mtn Regt.

Engr

100 Fd Coy less Pl - at Rongla, Bde HQ(129).

On 18 October 1962, Div HQ ordered 7 Inf Bde to send one Coy 1/9 GR to reinforce the Tsangle position(130).

BATTLE OF NAMKHA CHU

(1) Deployment of Troops

(i) Chinese Forces

On the eve of their attack on 19-20 October night, the Chinese had about four battalions south of the Thag La Ridge and two Coys in the vicinity of Khinzemane. They had also moved a battalion to Shao and nearly another battalion to the subsidiary passes between Thag La and Karpola II. The Chinese were also holding the rear positions between Thag La and Marmang in depth. On 19th afternoon, the Chinese had infiltrated in some strength (400 approximately) through the gaps in the Indian front. They had disappeared in the jungles behind Indian line and had occupied the hill-tops in the rear. They had also infiltrated towards Tsangdhar(131). Another group came through Karpola II on the Thag La Ridge and took positions round the Tsangle post. They had also surrounded the Indian post at Khinzemane. The Chinese had deployed their troops in three tiers of defence positions; the first was on the river bank of Namkha Chu opposite the Indian troops, the second half-way up

the Thag La slopes and the third on the crest of the Ridge(132). By 20 October, the Chinese had built up their strength to an estimated one Division in the Thag La and Khinzemane areas(133). It was also reported that they had positioned an additional Division in Bum La area.

The Chinese had access to three routes (tracks) to reach Tawang. The direct route from the border to Tawang, starting from Shao in Tibet ran through Bum La and Milaktong La. The base of the Chinese troops covering this route was at Shao. The second route was from Le in Tibet and ran through Khinzemane to Zimithang and downwards. The Chinese troops covering this track had their base at Le. The third route, which was longer and the most difficult and not much in use lay through Thag La and was being held in sufficient strength by the Chinese troops(134).

(ii) Indian troops

The rapid and heavy build-up of the Chinese troops, armed with heavy mortars and machine guns and equipped with modern entrenching tools, had forced the Indian Government to postpone the operation to evict the Chinese from their illegal encroachment, north of the Namkha Chu. It was felt that the task would, for the time being, have to be limited to holding the line of the Namkha Chu while operational and logistic build-up for an offensive on a larger scale could be organised. 7 Inf Bde, with its Headquarters at Rongla (on the south bank of Namkha Chu and near the Dhola post) was provided with four Inf Battalions, less two Coys, to accomplish this task. The deployment of these troops was as under:

(a) Troops at Namkha Chu

Bridge 1 - 2 Coys of 4 Grenadiers with Bn HQ

Bridge 2 - Three Coys of 9 Punjab with Bn HQ

Bridge 3

Bridge 4

Temporary Bridge/Log Bridge - 2 Rajput with Bn HQ at Bridge 4.

Bridge 5/Tsangle - one Coy of 9 Punjab.
(North of Namkha Chu)

RESTRICTED

Area between Bridge 2 and Bridge 3 | Three Coys of 1/9 GR with Bn HQ (2 Coys behind Dhola post and one behind Bridge 2 at Bde HQ).

Tsangdhar - Two Platoons of 1/9 GR.

Area between Tsangdhar & Bridge 5 | - One Platoon of 1/9 GR.

Dhola Post - One Platoon of 5 Assam Rifles.

Supporting arms/troops

One Tp of 34 (Maratha) Hy Mor Bty - Tsangdhar

F Tp of 52 Para Fd Bty of 17 Para Fd Regt - Tsangdhar

One Pl (No.9) of C Coy 6 Mahar MG - with 1/9 GR

One Pl (No.8) of C Coy 6 Mahar MG - with 2 Rajput at Bridge 4.

Five Observation Post Parties from 51 Mtn Regt.

75 mm guns (only two in number) and 4.2" heavy mortars (four in number) were located at Tsangdhar. Total ammunition at the ammunition dump at Tsangdhar was approximately 500 rounds of field gun ammunition and 450 rounds of 4.2" mortar ammunition. Due to short range, the mortar positions had to be approximately 11/2 miles (3 km) north of Tsangdhar DZ and all the mortar troop personnel were busy in preparing mortar positions(135).

The 34 (M) Hy Mor Bty Commander was told by the Bde Commander on 10 October that as they were now to be on the defensive, guns and mortars should be deployed to cover the Bridges on the Namkha Chu. No firing of guns/mortars were to be allowed without Bde Commander's specific orders(136).

(b) Troops at Zimithang-Khinzemane approach

The troops in this area were directly under TAC HQ 4 Inf Div at Zimithang. When GOC Inf Div visited Khinzemane on 19 October afternoon, he appointed Lt Col Rattan Singh, OC, 5 Assam Rifles, Sector Commander for this area. The troops under him were:

'C' Coy of 4 Grenadiers - Drokung Samba (South of Khinzemane)

One Coy less Pl of 4 Grenadiers - Serkhim (north of Zimithang)

RESTRICTED

- One Pl 4 Grenadiers - Hathongla(136-A)
- One Coy (B) of 4 Garh Rif - At Zimithang (for the defence of TAC Div HQ)
- One Pl (No. 4) of B Coy 6 Mahar MG - Zimithang (reaching Zimithang on 17 October by helicopter on way to Dhola but could not move ahead)
- Three Platoons (3, 5 and 22) of 'C' Wing of 5 Assam Rifles - Khinzemane(137).

One Pl of 'C' Coy (13 Dogra)(138) with CO of the Bn and Coy Cdr, were flown by air to Zimithang on the afternoon of 20 October. The Coy Cdr with his platoon occupied defensive position at Chuthangmu.

(2) Fighting at Dhola (HQ 7 Inf Bde, Bridge 3 and Bridge 4).

The Chinese, who had been subjecting the Indian post at Tsangle on the north bank of Namkha Chu, to heavy shelling since 17 October, achieved surprise by leaving this post alone when at 0500 hrs on 20 October, they engaged other posts all along the Namkha Chu by heavy mortar fire. The Chinese had crossed Namkha Chu during the previous night between Bridges 4 and 5. They attacked Bridge 3, Dhola and Tsangdhar between 0600 hrs and 0700 hrs, with the aim to cut off the Indian troops in area west of Bridge 4 and Bridge 5/Tsangle(139).

In the very first few minutes of the shelling, telephone lines, linking the Bde Headquarters with the Units, became dead, thereby leaving the Units/Companies to act on their own and take any action they considered the best. At about 0700 hrs, Bde Headquarters was informed by two Assam Rifles ORs, posted at Dhola post, that the Dhola post had been completely over-run by the Chinese. At approximately 0715 hrs Capt Ravi of 2 Rajput came to Bde Headquarters to report that his company had been wiped out. He informed that the Chinese attacked his position from rear through the Dhola area. At approximately 0730 hrs, Bde Comdr had a conversation with C Sig 4 Inf Div on RT, who was at that time with 1/9 GR. He informed the Bde Comdr, on behalf of 1/9 GR, that the extreme left Coy was fighting a pitched battle with the Chinese there. this 1/9 GR Coy was

RESTRICTED

over-run by the Chinese at approximately 0745 hrs and the Coy Cmdr with two other officers was reported killed. At approximately 0800 hrs a few stragglers from 1/9 GR arrived at Bde Headquarters and stated that the 1/9 GR arrived at Bde Headquarters and stated that the 1/9 GR positions had been over-run. By this time the left flank of Bde Headquarters had become completely open with some of the Chinese troops approximately 1,000 yards to the rear and as near as 400 yards to the western flank, and the Bde Headquarters was under small arms fire. At this stage, Comdr 7 Inf Bde spoke to GOC 4 Inf Div and obtained his permission to withdraw the troops to Tsangdhar, so as to be able to give the Chinese a fight there(140). Indian troops were completely taken by surprise when they were assaulted from the rear. They tried to mount their guns outside the trenches, but were shot immediately by the enemy, rendering the MMGs ineffective(141). HQrs 7 Inf Bde, 2 Rajput and 1/9 GR located at Bridges 4 and 3 and the area between Bridges 3 and 2 were ordered to move back to occupy better tactical ground at Tsangdhar. The Rajputs and the Gorkhas deployed at these locations gave tough fight, but were soon over-powered. There were many casualties on both sides. After having annihilated opposition from main Indian troops deployed along the Namkha Chu on Bridges 2 to 4 and the surrounding areas, the Chinese directed heavy fire on Indian positions at Tsangle and Bridge 5(142). The artillery link between Bde Headquarters and Tsangdhar had also failed. The battery Commander of 34 (M) Hy Mor Bty, who was acting as Bde Commander's artillery adviser, was trying since 0600 hrs to contact his mortar positions and the gun positions at Tsangdhar. But contact could not be established, as the Chinese had jammed the radio frequency used by the gunners. As a result the guns did not fire a single round(143).

Of the units deployed on the Namkha Chu, the Rajputs suffered the most. They were preparing for the morning 'stand to' - routine practice in adopting defensive positions in battle order - when they were caught between the frontal fire of the Chinese guns and the main attack from the rear. Their companies were widely dispersed and each fought its own battle, taking on wave after wave of the enemy as long as men remained standing. In many cases, entire platoons were wiped out. The very fact that 282 soldiers were killed shows their bravery(144). The unit fought a heroic battle, literally to the last round.

RESTRICTED

among the dead there were many officers. Nearly all the Company Commanders were killed except the Battalion 2 I/C - Maj Gurdial Singh. After most of the posts had been over-run by the enemy, Maj Gurdial Singh rallied the remnants and led them in a final charge. Most of these men died fighting, or fell wounded; Gurdial Singh was over-powered and captured. He was awarded a MVC while in captivity. The Commanding Officer of the Battalion - Lt Col M.S. Rikh, was also wounded.

The Gorkhas, who were holding positions on the northern slopes of Tsangdhar, between Bridges 3 and 2, too fought as hard as they could. They were surprised when they were attacked suddenly from the flanks and later from the rear. They could not withstand the onslaughts of the enemy and the Commanding Officer of the battalion - Lt Col B.S. Ahluwalia - ordered his troops to abandon their positions and move to Tsangdhar. He was wounded in the battle and later on was taken prisoner alongwith a few of his men in the afternoon.

The Bde Commander requested GOC 4 Inf Div to order 9 Punjab and other troops at the Namkha Chu to withdraw from their positions and to join his troops at Tsangdhar, as 7 Inf Bde had no links with these units and could not convey orders directly to them. The Bde Commander, accompanied by GSO 3 (Int), two Arty Officers, one Engr Officer, Comdr's protection party and part of 100 Fd Coy left Bde Headquarters at Rongla at 0810 hrs. The Cmdr asked his BM to join him at Tsangdhar quickly after destroying all the documents at the Bde Headquarters. 7 Inf Bde Headquarters were occupied by the Chinese at 0900 hrs(145).

The Commander's party which was following the track along the Nullah to Tsangdhar, immediately came under heavy shelling by the enemy. The party left the main track and started climbing the ridge on the left. The Engineer Officer and part of 100 Fd Coy got separated there. The Bde Cmdr and his party, who were withdrawing to Tsangdhar to give a fight to the Chinese, had to abandon all such hopes when they came to know of the occupation of Tsangdhar by the Chinese(146).

(3) Chinese Occupy Tsangdhar

Chinese started shelling Tsangdhar at about 0800 hrs again and at approximately 0830 hrs, they

attacked the Indian positions from the west in great strength. It was captured by the Chinese quickly as they attacked with a large force estimated to be 1,500 personnel(147). However, isolated pockets kept on offering resistance till dusk. When Bde Comdr and his party came to know of the capture of Tsangdhar by the Chinese, they headed for Serkhim area through Dhola pass (5,640 metres) but decided to commence their journey at 0300 hrs next day. At the end, the Bde Comdr was left with only one officer - Capt Talwar of 17 Para Fd Regt - and a few ORs. The Bde Comdr and his party ran straight into the Chinese near Serkhim on the afternoon of 21 October and were taken prisoners by the Chinese(148).

(4) Fighting at Khinzemane, Bridge 1 and Drokung - Samba Bridge.

On 20 October at 0400 hrs, when the Assam Rifles men were still in "STAND TO", the Chinese fired star shells over Khinzemane and the whole area got illuminated. They attacked No. 5 Platoon position, which was the forward-most on the track. The men fought gallantly but could not stand for long due to numerical superiority of the enemy. The platoon position was over-run by the enemy by 0600 hrs with heavy casualties on both sides. Thereafter the Chinese launched a three-pronged attack simultaneously from north, west and east on No 3 and 22 Platoons' positions, which were in the depth. These two platoons gave an excellent account and halted the enemy advance for five hours, upto 0900 hrs. Enemy suffered heavy casualties and the attack was broken thrice. In spite of the defenders' determination, the enemy's superiority in fire power and numbers prevailed and the localities were finally over-run by 0930 hrs. The Wing did not get any support despite repeated request for further reinforcement. The CO of 5 Assam Rifles (Lt Col Rattan Singh), alongwith Maj H.P.Singh, Wing Commander, and 23 ORs were made prisoners by the Chinese(149).

Rfn Bishan Singh, LMG detachment Commander of 22 platoon, displayed courage and kept on firing against heavy odds and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. When enemy found that it was impossible to dislodge Rfn Bishan Singh from his post, they fired a rocket at him. The LMG was blown away due to the blast and Bishan Singh suffered injuries on hands and waist. But still this brave soldier did not give up. He came out of his bunker and entered into another LMG bunker. When the ammunition was finished, he escaped from Khinzemane towards Zimithang. For this act of bravery, Rfn Bishan Singh was awarded Sena Medal.

The bridge on Nyamjang Chu at Drokung-Samba, which was being held by 'C' Coy of 4 Grenadiers, was also subjected to shelling by the Chinese from 0500 hrs onwards. 2/Lt G.V.P. Rao, OC 'C' Coy, at great personal risk, went from bunker to bunker inspiring his men and urging them to hold on to the position. Soon after the shelling, the Chinese attacked the Coy's position in large number. The Coy Comdr himself went to the forward most bunker and manned the LMG, and kept on firing. In the meantime, the Chinese destroyed the bridge. Having seen their only route of withdrawal cut, 'C' Coy still fought on and held the enemy till their last round was finished. Chinese also attacked the 'B' Coy position at Bridge 1 and in this attack Lt Balasubramaniam of 51 Mtn Regt was killed(150). 2/Lt Rao OC 'C' Coy was awarded Maha Vir Chakra for his bravery.

Lt Col K.S. Harihar Singh, OC 4 Grenadiers, spoke to GOC 4 Inf Div at approximately 0900 hrs and apprised him of the situation on the front. He assured the GOC that 'FIGHTING FOURTH' would try to hold on till the last round despite heavy odds against them(151). The GOC 4 Inf Div spoke to Lt Col Singh at 1130 hrs and ordered him to hold the Bridge 1 till 1700 hrs and then fall back on Hathongla. The CO assured the GOC that the Grenadiers would hold on till 1700 hrs at all costs. The CO reviewed the whole situation with his Coy Commanders and ordered that strict fire discipline be exercised, as only 'POUCH' scale ammunition was held by the Bn. A withdrawal plan was chalked out under which No 5 Platoon of 'B' Coy, which was across Bridge 1, was moved first of all. The troops of this platoon were extricated without permitting the enemy to inflict heavy casualties on them. The withdrawal of the Battalion was carried out quietly and unobserved by the enemy(152).

(5) Fighting at Bridge 2 and Bridge 5/Tsangle.

By approximately 0830 hrs the enemy had been able to over-run Indian positions on Bridge 3 and 4 in the west and Khinzemane and Bridge 1 in the east. By the time the Rajputs, the Gorkhas and the Grenadiers collapsed, the eastern, the western and the Tsangdhar columns of Chinese troops had swung round. These troops engaged with small arms fire Indian troops at Bridge 2, where 3 companies of 9 Punjab with Bns Headquarters were positioned. Chinese fire was returned by the Punjabis. As already mentioned, the line of communication of the unit with Bde Headquarters had been disrupted within half an hour of the shelling by the enemy all along the Namkha Chu in the early hours of the day, and a patrol had been sent

by the unit to repair the line, at about 0800 hrs. This patrol at about 0900 hrs informed that they could not find any of their Indian troops at Bde Headquarters positions and that there were lots of Chinese moving around in that area. The patrol was ordered to return to base.

At about 1000 hrs, the 2 I/C of the Battalion, Major D.S. Sandhu, who was at Lumpo at that time, informed the Commanding Officer on behalf of the GOC 4 Inf Div, that 'A' Coy should withdraw all troops from north of the river including Tsangle. This order was conveyed by the CO to Maj S.L. Khanna, OC 'A' Coy. (Even though Unit's communication link with Bde Headquarters had been disrupted, its wireless contact with Tsangle and Lumpo was intact.) 'A' Coy was to abandon their position at Bridge 5 and concentrate at Tsangdhar. Route of withdrawal was left to the discretion of the Coy Commander. All heavy equipment as to be destroyed on site.

The CO of 9 Punjab apprised the GOC 4 Inf Div of the situation at the Namkha Chu at 1030 hrs, after which the GOC ordered CO 9 Punjab at about 1100 hrs to withdraw the Bn and take up a lay back position at Hathongla. Withdrawal was to take place along the ridge and not along the track to avoid enemy interference. The Battalion started withdrawal at 1200 hrs and completed it by 1430 hrs. By this time the Chinese had started shelling Bridge 2 positions and also formed up on the north bank of the river for assault(153).

The 1/9 GR platoon, which was positioned on the track Tsangdhar-Bridge 5, was subjected to heavy shelling. The OC 'A' Coy, Maj A.G. Minwalla, who was heading this platoon, went ahead with a few of his men to Bridge 5 but found the position abandoned by the Coy of 9 Punjab. Seeing the Chinese coming in mass, Maj Minwalla returned. He did not return to Nelum, where he had left the other soldiers of his platoon, but crossed into Bhutan. The men at Nelum were left to care for themselves. Some of them returned to Lumpo while others crossed into Bhutan.

The Chinese were giving covering fire to their assaulting troops from well prepared and well stocked positions, north of Namkha Chu. They were using artillery mortars and medium machine guns firing on fixed lines from forward slopes of Thag La Ridge, which dominated the Indian positions.

(6) Withdrawal from Namkha Chu

By the afternoon of 20 October, the Chinese had driven back all the Indian troops from Bridges 1 to 5 along the Namkha Chu, Tsangle (north of Namkha Chu

RESTRICTED

across Bridge 5), Khinzemane (above the junction of Namkha Chu with Nyamjang Chu) and Tsangdhar (the only dropping zone available to the troops in the Namkha Chu area). Contact with 7 Inf Bde and its units - deployed in the area Tsangdhar and Bridges 3 and 4 - had been lost since 0800 hrs. The troops at Tsangdhar had been ordered to withdraw to Lumpo via Karpola-I and to destroy all the stores/equipment which could not be carried by them from Tsangdhar. An Indian helicopter which landed at Tsangdhar at approximately 1000 hrs with Maj Ram Singh of Div Sig Regt to establish communication link between Div Headquarters and Bde Headquarters was shot at(154). The pilot (Sqn Ldr Sehgal) was killed while Maj Ram Singh was captured by the enemy alongwith the helicopter(155). The troops at Bridge 2, 1 and Serkhim were ordered to concentrate at Hathongla(156).

In a message sent by the GOC 4 Inf Div on the night of 20 October, which was received at 2100 hrs (157) at Headquarters IV Corps, he intimated that there was no information of HQ 7 Inf Bde, one Coy 9 Punjab (deployed at Tsangle), 2 Rajput (deployed at Bridges 3, 4 and Temporary Bridge), 1/9 GR (deployed in the area between Bridges 3 and 2), 'C' Coy 6 Mahar MG less one Platoon, Troop 17 Para Fd Regt, 34 Hy Mor Bty less Troop, 100 fd Coy less detachment, and one platoon of 5 Assam Rifles. He further added that his intention was to hold general line of Hathongla - Chuthangmu, so as to check the advance of the enemy to Lumpo and to keep the Lumpo DZ out of heavy mortar range of the enemy.

(7) Chinese Occupy Hathongla-Serkhim Area

After the occupation of the Indian positions along the Namkha Chu river and Tsangdhar, the Chinese, instead of marching ahead and following the withdrawing Indian troops, thought it better to consolidate their positions. There was a pause in their artillery and mortar fire from the evening of 20 October to the early hours of next day.

The next day the enemy started attacking Hathongla at 0500 hrs and shelling Chuthangmu at 0530 hrs while Brokenthang was brought under fire at about 0625 hrs. One platoon of 4 Grenadiers, which was positioned at Hathongla on 20 October, was in no position to offer any resistance to the enemy and it was over-powered in their first assault. Considering the inadequacy of the troops to face the advancing enemy, the troops at Chuthangmu were ordered to withdraw from there and they started withdrawing at 0800 hrs(158). The withdrawing troops were harassed by the enemy with mortar fire on their route - Chuthangmu-Zimithang-Shakti.

D Coy of 4 Grenadiers, less platoon, which was located at Serkhim, held on to their position till 0930 hrs. But when they received reports of enemy advancing towards their position and seeing Lumpo in flames, the troops vacated their position of their own(159). The main battalion (consisting of Commanding Officer, A and B Coys and part of Adm Coy which was positioned at Bridge 1 was still in the area, searching for a safe track downward, when they were met somewhere near Hathongla by Lt Col R.N. Mishra, CO 9 Punjab, with a handful of his Jawans, at 2000 hrs on 21 October.

(8) TAC Headquarters 4 Inf Div Abandon Zimithang

By night of 20 October, 7 Inf Bde had disintegrated and 4 Div Headquarters had ordered withdrawal of troops from Bridge 2 and Bridge 1 to Hathongla. It had lost communication link with all the troops deployed ahead of its own Headquarters and as such was not clear about the Chinese troops coming down the Thag La Ridge. The enemy had been able to drive a wedge between the Namkha Chu front and Hathongla and as such both the Bns (9 Punjab at Bridge 2 and 4 Grenadiers at Bridge 1) had failed to reach Hathongla, as planned. By the first light of 21 October, TAC Headquarters received information from Lumpo that the Chinese were moving towards Serkhim. This meant that there was nothing in between Serkhim-Zimithang-Lumpo which would halt the Chinese and it was matter of hours before the Chinese could attack TAC Headquarters at Zimithang.

The Div Commander called a conference of his staff and the OC 13 Dogra (Lt Col Oberoi, who had arrived there the previous day). He gave out orders for the destruction of all papers and told them to prepare to pull back(160). Personnel who were not required were ordered to start withdrawing straightaway. The Div Headquarters had also lost contact with the Corps Headquarters. Knowing that the troops guarding the Khinzemane-Zimithang approach had also been over-powered, it was decided to fall back on Tawang (instead of Shakti) immediately to reorganize its defences. At 0947 hrs TAC Headquarters 4 Inf Div left Zimithang enroute Tawang on foot as by that time it had become clear that the Chinese main objective was to capture Tawang. The Army Commander flew over Zimithang at approximately 1000 hrs to contact TAC Headquarters 4 Inf Div, but could not land there as the place stood deserted.

The platoon of 'C' Coy 13 Dogra, which had been moved to Zimithang by air on 20 October, covered by the withdrawal of 4 Garhwal Rifles from Chuthangmu and

RESTRICTED

then acted as Rear Guard to cover the withdrawal of TAC Headquarters 4 Inf Div from Zimithang. Later on this platoon also covered the withdrawal over Shakti bridge of about 2,000 stragglers from the forward battalions withdrawing from the Namkha Chu(161).

By the afternoon of 21 October the Chinese advance parties of the eastern and Tsangdhar columns had reached Serkhim. Here, the Chinese force divided itself into two task forces. The bigger force continued the advance towards Tawang while the other was asked to proceed to Lumpo to clear the area of Indian troops(162). The Chinese occupied Zimithang on night 22/23 October and Lumpo at 0930 hrs on 23 October (163). With the occupation of Lumpo by the Chinese, Indian troops lost all physical contact with Dhola - Thag La area.

After covering a distance of approximately 35 km on foot, the Div Cmdr and his party reached Lumla at 0200 hrs on 22 October. From there he contacted the Army Commander, who was camping at Tawang and was told by the latter to hold Lumla. These orders of holding Lumla were changed by the Army Commander himself at 0900 hrs and the Div Commander reached Tawang at 1800 hrs on 22 October(164).

The Chinese, by their concentrated attack on the Indian positions west of Bridge 2, were able, according to their strategy, to break up the Bridge front into two halves and they captured the left portion, including Tsangdhar, first. In this move, they were also able to cut the communication link between Headquarters 4 Inf Div and HQ 7 Inf Bde. Getting no news from the left wing of the front GOC 4 Inf Div ordered the right wing (consisting of Grenadiers and elements of Punjabis) to withdraw from the forward position on the Namkha Chu so as to organise the defences on Hathongla. The Indian troops, which were deployed on the left wing, in the initial stages of their withdrawal from the Namkha Chu, had planned to reach Tsangdhar but when they came to know of the occupation of Tsangdhar by the enemy, they were non-plussed and were left to themselves to plan out their retreat. The result was that, in the absence of any clear directions from the higher authorities, everybody fended for himself and most of them entered Bhutan.

Eventually, even the troops deployed on the right wing of the front and who had been charged by the GOC 4 Inf div to hold Hathongla after their withdrawal from the forward positions were over-powered by the enemy. This left the route to Tawang, via Shakti and Lumla, wide open for the enemy by the afternoon of 21 October, and forced GOC 4 Inf Div to fall back on Tawang immediately to reorganise its defences.

(9) Comments

The withdrawal of the Indian troops from Dhola sector was unavoidable. The Indian field Commanders, and especially the Commander 7 Inf Bde, were against the concentration of troops at that area. Dhola area, according to them, was unsuitable as forming up place for mounting any major action against the intruding enemy as Chinese had 3-tiers of defence positions - the first was on the river opposite the Indian troops, the second half-way upto the Thag La slopes on Paitsai Spur and the third on the crest of the Ridge(165). Any frontal attack by the Indian troops would have been suicidal. The area was also militarily indefensible as it was dominated by the enemy's positions. It had poor approaches, no fields of fire and no mutual support. The Indian field commanders were thus not in favour of concentrating the troops in this area.

The defenders of the Namkha Chu were acting under manifold handicaps. Only three battalions plus were to defend a 20 km long front. The normal marching time between the two extremes of the riverline was an incredible five days. There were fatal gaps between the scattered pockets of troops. There were no troops in the area between the Temporary Bridge and Bridge 5, covering a distance of about 10 km. Ill-clad and without proper administrative and medical cover, the Indian troops had limited ammunition with no reserves, little fire support(166), not a single strand of barbed wire or a single anti-personnel mine(167). All the troops were dependent on an unsatisfactory dropping zone at Tsangdhar. Tsangdhar the life-line and the only gun position of the Bde was held by a weak Inf Coy. The Bde had only two Arty Observation Parties for all the widespread localities(168). And all this made the defence of the Namkha Chu positions against a full scale military attack by a well-equipped and numerically superior enemy an almost impossible task.

It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the Indian objective at the Namkha Chu was not to defend but to attack and capture the Thag La Ridge and throw out the Chinese intruders. This objective was really unattainable, because the Chinese at the Thag La were stronger, and were in a position to retain their superiority by bringing in more and more reinforcements as required. The Indians were thus bound to remain weaker than the Chinese at the Namkha Chu, at least for the time being.

To begin with, the strategic objective was offensive and not defensive. To eject the Chinese

RESTRICTED

from the Thag La, the Jawans had to start their advance from the valley and the river line, and they could not, therefore, remain on the Tsangdhar ridges, which were certainly more defensible and stronger military positions. The real criticism of the 7 Infantry Brigade might be that the troops were not properly dug in, had not made proper preparations for meeting any Chinese attack, and it was only because of these tactical omissions that an entire brigade of the Indian Army disintegrated within a few hours. Surely, there was nothing to prevent Brig Dalvi or Major General Niranjan Prasad from making full defensive preparations, in which case the brigade could not have been over-run so easily even by the massive Chinese assault. Furthermore, on 12 October the task of 7 Bde was changed, and it was now required only to hold the front instead of advancing to throw the Chinese back. This vitally important change does not appear to have resulted in any reorganisation or redeployment at the Namkha Chu, to indicate any defensive posture. To an extent, this was a command failure at the local level. Brig Dalvi's statement, that "there was no overall strategic plan or dispositions to give depth to 7 Brigade, or to provide lay back positions to cover the withdrawal of the Namkha Chu garrison" appears, therefore, as almost a self-indictment(169).

The under-mentioned officers and personnel of the Indian Army were awarded gallantry awards after the operations in the Namkha Chu and Khinzemane area(170):-

MVC

- | | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 1. | Maj Gurdial Singh
(IC-1880) | - 2 Rajput |
| 2. | Maj S.P.S. Shrikant
(IC-5192) | - 1/9 GR |
| 3. | Capt Mahabir Prasad
(IC-8423) (Posthumous) | - 1 Sikh |
| 4. | 2/Lt B.D.Dogra
(IC-13176)
(was made prisoner) | - 1/9 GR |
| 5. | 2/Lt G.V.P.Rao
(IC-13413) (Posthumous) | - Arty |
| 6. | Capt G.S.Bhatia
(IC-8596) (Posthumous) | - 2 Rajput |

7. Sepoy Jagpal Singh - 2 Rajput
(2944566) (Posthumous)
8. Sub Bhab Bahadur Katwal - 1/9 GR
(JC-5180) (Posthumous)
9. 2/Lt N.C. Kohli - 9 Punjab
(IC-12955) (Posthumous)
10. Hav Ganga Bahadur Rawat - 1/9 GR
(5832160) (Posthumous)
11. Sub Brajendra Chandra Roy - 2 Rajput
(JC-40451)
12. L/Nk Sardar Singh -
(2640716) (Posthumous)
13. Hav Saudagar Singh - 1/9 GR
(2932655)
14. Hav Kula Singh Thapa - 1/9 GR
(5831357) (Posthumous)
15. Sep S. Joseph - AMC (20 Fd' Amb)
(6797987) (Posthumous)

WITHDRAWAL FROM TAWANG

(1) Deployment of Forces:

(i) Chinese

Approximately two Brigades of Chinese troops which had assaulted the Indian positions at the Namkha Chu and Khinzemane approaches had reached Shakti by the evening of 22 October and the outskirts of Lumla by first light of 23 October(171). In addition, the Chinese were reported to have positioned a Division in the Bum La area. All these troops were ready to take part in a multi-pronged attack on Tawang.

(ii) Indian

Order of Battle of Headquarters 4 Arty Bde in Tawang on 21 October 1962 was as under(172):-

Infantry

1 Sikh

4 Garh Rif less one Coy ('B' Coy was under TAC Headquarters 4 Inf Div).

One Coy 13 Dogra (Two Coys arrived at Tawang on 21 October. One was ordered to move on to Lumla and the other placed under HQ 4 Arty

RESTRICTED

Bde. The first Coy, having failed to reach Lumla, was ordered to return, but as Tawang was being abandoned the Coy by-passed it and moved towards Se La on 23 October).

'A' wing 5 Assam Rifles (6 Op Pls)

Arty

22 Mtn Regt less two Btys

97 Fd Bty

116 Hy Mor Bty (33 Hy Mor Regt)

'C' TP 34 Hy Mor Bty (36(M) Hy Mor Regt) and others.

Troop deployment along the Bum La axis(173):-

1 Sikh -

Bn HQ with one Coy - At Milaktong La, 5 km south of Tongpeng La.

One Coy - On a high feature west of bn Headquarters.

One Coy less Pl(11) - At Tongpeng La, 3 km south of the IB ridge.

One (11) pl - In the IB ridge area, about 2 km south of Bum La.

5 Assam Rifles

One Pl 'A' Wing - At Bum La post

In support

7 (Bengal) Mtn Bty of 22 Mtn - Milaktong La. Regt

116 Hy Mor Bty of 33 Hy Mor Regt - 'A' Tp at Tongpeng La and 'B' Tp at Pamdir.

On the Sulu La - Somatso -Tawang Track :(coming Zimithang via Milaktong La)

One Coy 1 Sikh

One Pl 'A' Wing 5 Assam Rifles

RESTRICTED

Troops for defence of Tawang

- 4 Garhwal Rifles(174) -
- Bn Headquarters - Tawang
 - One (A) Coy - 2 km north of Tawang at prominent place overlooking the track to Bum La.
 - One (C) Coy plus Pl - Landa village on the track
 - One (D) Coy minus pl - Pankentang, with a pl at Gyshie La.

(The idea of such deployment of C and D Coys was to block the track that ran south-eastwards directly down to the riverline at Jang via Landa, which by-passed Tawang)

- 5 Assam Rifles
- HQ 'A' Wing - Tawang (175)
 - with two Pls

(In addition, one Coy 13 Dogra was available(176), and Commander 62 Inf Bde with his Headquarters (part) had also reached Tawang by 22 October 1962(177).

In support

- 97 Fd Battery(178) - Tawang (Political DZ) its 8 25-pounders were deployed at the start of Tawang - Bum La track).
- 2 (Derajat) Mtn Bty of 22 Mtn Regt(179) - Mukdeng La (only 2 guns inducted by 22 October)
 - 'C' Tp of 34 (M) Mor Bty (36 (M) Hy Mor Regt(180) - Gurund Hill, just north of Tawang
 - One Pl plus one section of 6 Mahar MG(181) - Where required
 - 18 Fd Coy(182) - Given the task of defending the bridge at Jang, till relieved by other tps.

(2) Actions on Bum La Axis:

The Unit - 1 Sikh - was deployed to defend this approach from Tibet. The most forward Company of the Sikhs was the 'D' Coy and its 11th Platoon was located about (550 metres) half an hour's trek south of Bum La (over 4340 metres). Between the "Twin Peaks" and the ridge on which the Pass is situated, there is a gap. In this gap there was an Inspection Bunglow. The 11th Platoon was stationed in the IB Ridge area and covered the best approach to the "Twin Peaks"(183). The task of this platoon was -

- (a) to deny the approach to the "Twin Peaks" to the enemy as long as possible, and
- (b) to enable the deployment of OPs at the "Twin Peaks" to facilitate the engagement of enemy concentration areas beyond the McMahon Line.

The enemy could attack Tongpeng La from the east or the west of the "Twin Peaks" Ridge or through the ridge itself. There is a high cliff on the east; therefore, this approach was not feasible. Of the two remaining approaches, the "Twin Peaks" ridge was better(184).

(i) Assam Rifles Post at Bum La attacked.

On the morning of 20 October, a JCO of the Assam Rifles at the Bum La post, noticed that more than 1,000 Chinese or Tibetan labourers, with digging implements, and protected by Chinese soldiers, arrived on the Raider's Ridge. This JCO visited the 11th Platoon position in the afternoon to apprise the post of the possible danger. 11th Platoon detailed a Section under Hav Sucha Singh to reinforce the Assam Rifles post. Simultaneously, the JCO In-Charge 11th Platoon asked for ammunition from his Coy Headquarters at Tongpeng La. Nothing happened till 0430 hrs on 23 October when suddenly the Chinese started firing with mortars and anti-tank guns. The anti-tank gun fire was to destroy the Indian bunkers. As soon as the firing ceased, about 600 Chinese attacked the Assam Rifles post. The Jawans put up a bold resistance but soon the post was over-run. Hav Sucha Singh, after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, was able to withdraw his section to the Platoon position at IB Ridge(185).

(ii) Attack on IB Ridge

After over-running the Assam Rifles' post at Bum La, the enemy attacked the forward platoon position of 'D' Coy the Sikhs at the IB Ridge, at about 0500 hrs

with the objective of capturing "Twin Peaks"(186). As the climb from the bed of the Nullah to the platoon position was steep, the Sikhs were able to inflict heavy casualties on the Chinese, compelling them to retire. Heavy mortar OP at IB Ridge also engaged the enemy with mortars.

In the meantime the Platoon Commander, Sub Joginder Singh, asked for more ammunition from the Company Headquarters. But by that time the enemy had succeeded in cutting the platoon's land communication with the Coy Headquarters and had concentrated at Tongpeng La. The Coy Cdr, Lt Haripal Kaushik, asked Sub Singh to retire to Coy Headquarters but in reply, the latter assured that the enemy would not be allowed to get through the IB Ridge to the "Twin Peaks". In the fighting, Sub Joginder Singh was wounded and made prisoner. While in the enemy's custody, he died because of his wounds. He was awarded PVC (posthumous) for his bravery(187).

(iii) Engagements at Tongpeng La

The CO 1 Sikh had reinforced the 'D' Coy by an additional platoon under Hav Partap Singh on its left flank. The right flank was protected by a steep rock. Thus it was difficult and risky for the enemy to approach from the right. Still the first Chinese attack came from the right at about 0600 hrs. Capt Gosel, the artillery observer, accurately directed the artillery fire on the steep rock where the enemy had massed for the attack. The Chinese suffered heavy casualties and dispersed. The enemy then made an encircling movement and launched a second attack from a different direction. The OP party also came under enemy sniper fire, but again the OP officer brought down heavy and accurate fire, and this time, too, the enemy was beaten back with large number of casualties(188).

In the meantime, 4 Arty Bde had issued orders for withdrawal from the Tawang area to Jang(189) and according to the withdrawal plan, 1 Sikh with 1 Coy of Garh Rif was to deny Milaktong position to the enemy till last light of 23 October. The 'D' Coy was to hold its position at Tongpeng La and check the enemy till 1500 hrs and then to withdraw to Milaktong La (Mila). After 'D' Coy's arrival at Milaktong La, the Bn Headquarters was to start its withdrawal from there for Jang and 'D' Coy was to hold Milaktong La against the enemy till 2300 hrs.

The enemy launched its 3rd attack on Tongpeng La at about 1130 hrs from the direction of the first attack and was again thrown back. Throughout this

RESTRICTED

day, the OP officer kept bringing down accurate and heavy fire on the enemy and thereby made it possible for the infantry to hold the position till about 1530 hrs(190). The enemy suffered heavy casualties and could not penetrate the defences of the 'D' Company.

The enemy tried to bypass the 'D' Coy position at Tongpeng La to attack Milaktong La direct from the east, but failed. Thus the 'D' Coy proved an iron wall to the enemy. The 'D' Coy withdrew to Milaktong La at the appointed time. During the withdrawal, the OP climbed up the hill and directed the artillery fire on the enemy with telling effect. The Battery fired about 600 rounds during the day(191). Thus the 'D' Coy smoothly broke contact with the enemy and after an orderly withdrawal reached Milaktong La to act as rear-guard to its battalion. The 'B' Coy of the Bn also arrived at Milaktong La at 1600 hrs and the Sikhs left Milaktong La at the last light, leaving 'D' Coy to cover the withdrawal. Thus it was due to the gallant action of 'D' Coy at Tongpeng La and its 11th Platoon at IB Ridge that, even though under enemy pressure, the Bn was able to keep the enemy out of Tawang, and withdraw according to plan with all its personnel, weapons and pouch ammunition. The Chinese continued to bombard the Milaktong La position, but they did not dare attack in the mountainous terrain in the dark. The 'D' Coy held the position up to the fixed time and saw that the battalion extricated itself from Tawang safely. Capt Kaushak, who was guiding and leading the 'D' coy was awarded the VrC for his leadership qualities and gallantry. The 1 Sikh, except for a few casualties in the 'D' Coy, reached Jang intact on 23-24 night. By 1100 hrs on 24 October the Unit stood concentrated at Se La(192).

The under-mentioned officers were awarded gallantry awards after the operations in Bum La-Tawang axis(193) :-

PVC

Sub Joginder Singh - 1 Sikh
(JC-4547) (Posthumous)

VrC

Lt Haripal Kaushak - 1 Sikh
(IC-11811)

(3) Withdrawal to Jang

By the evening of 22 October, the Chinese forces had reached Shakti and the bridge at Shakti had also been blown-up. They reached Lumla in the early hours

of 23 October. Even on the evening of 22 October, when 4 Div Commander had reached Tawang, it was appreciated that the Chinese were in a position to launch four-pronged coordinated attack(194) on Tawang on night 23/24 or morning 24 October, with more than a Division of troops along the following routes :

- (a) A regiment via Khinzemane - Sulula - Samatso - Tawang track.
- (b) One regiment closely followed by another on axis Bum La - Tawang.
- (c) One regiment via Shakti - Lumla.
- (d) Strong columns to cut off L of C at Jang and Se La.

On 22 October, except for 1 Sikh and 4 Arty Bde, all other troops, which were deployed or ear-marked for the defence of Tawang, had been pushed up to the Namkha Chu and were lost. Two Coys of 4 Garh Rif had recently arrived and had taken up position on the Chaksang (Jang track) approach, but the over-all defensive layout, which had been planned, was thoroughly upset and the net potential of the Tawang defences had been much reduced(195). With the troops at his disposal - viz, only one and half Inf Bn and some supporting arms, but short of ammunition, the GOC concluded that Tawang was not really defensible against a determined Chinese attack.

Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad had a hunch that the Chinese would, in all probability, by-pass the Sikhs on Bum La - Tawang track and make for Se La by the Chaksang track. By blowing up the bridge at Jang the Chinese could trap the Indian troops on the Tawang side of the river. The GOC accordingly, made up his mind to withdraw all the troops from Tawang to Se La and fight the main Corps battle from there. The Army Cmdr, Lt Gen L.P. Sen, who was in Tawang from 1030 hrs 22 October to 0800 hrs on 23 October must have been apprised of the situation in Tawang by the Bde Cdr. To the suggestion of GOC to withdraw the troops to Jang on way to Se La, the Army Commander reportedly said : "You are Divisional and Corps Commander. Do as you like"(196). However, the Army Commander before leaving by helicopter for Tezpur at 0800 hrs on 23 October ordered Brig Kalyan Singh to abandon Tawang forthwith. Confirmative withdrawal orders in writing were received at about 1030 hrs from HQ IV Corps. This order, however, enjoined the troops to withdraw all the way to Bomdila during day light 23 October(197). Another signal from the Corps to 4 Div confirmed it by ordering the induction of fresh troops for build up

to hold Bomidila(198). But, according to the revised order received in the evening of 23 October, the troops were now instructed to hold Se La(199). The change in decision, as told by the Chief of Army Staff to BGS, IV Corps, was in the light of a "Cabinet decision"(199A).

Comdr 4 Arty Bde prepared a withdrawal plan(200) as under:-

- (a) 1 Sikh with one Coy Garh Rif to deny Milaktong La position till last light 23 October.
- (b) 4 Garh Rif less two Coys and one Coy 13 Dogra to protect withdrawal route Tawang-Jang.
- (c) 22 Mtn Regt Gp to provide fire support to 1 Sikh till last light 23 October.
- (d) 18 Fd Coy to protect Bridge 4 on the Tawang Chu and to prepare it for demolition.
- (e) all non-essential personnel at Tawang to withdraw to Jang forthwith and carry four days supplies. Stores which could not be carried were to be destroyed.
- (f) Bde Headquarters to withdraw from Tawang at 1630 hrs.

Withdrawal of the troops from Tawang could not be carried out according to the plan, as while the withdrawal plan was being worked out, Chinese had already started pushing down the Indian troops deployed on Bum La-Tawang approach.

7 (Bengal) Mtn Bty, deployed at Mi La under 1 Sikh withdrew at last light on 23 October and brought all guns on animals from their gun positions. Two guns of 2(D) Mtn Bty at Mukdeng La could not be withdrawn and had to be destroyed as there were no animals on the gun positions(201).

97 Fd Bty guns could not be withdrawn from Tawang(202) as the 4 gun-towing vehicles got bogged down in deep mud between gun positions and lower helipad at Tawang. Both towing vehicles and guns had to be abandoned. 116 Hy Mor Bty men handled the mortars from their gun positions to Pankentang but could not carry them to Jang and all mortars had to be destroyed in area north of Tawang(203). All the four mortars of C Tp 34 Hy Mor Bty, positioned north of Tawang, were safely withdrawn to Jang in vehicles(204).

RESTRICTED

4 Arty Bde HQ, left Tawang at 1630 hrs on 23 October and reached Jang at about 2300 hrs. The Bde established its Headquarters at TUSKER's Officers Mess at Jang as at that place telecommunication link with the Div HQ at Dirang-Dzong was available(205).

The Chinese advancing columns from Lumpo were in a position to attack Tawang from three directions - west, north and north west on the morning of 23 October while 1 Sikh positions in the north-east of Tawang on Bum La - Tawang approach were being hammered with force by the enemy. 4 Garh Rif received orders for its withdrawal from Tawang to Jang at 1030 hrs and the task assigned to the Battalion was to protect the withdrawal of Tawang garrison from Tawang to Jang till first light of 24 October. The battalion planned the withdrawal of its different companies as under (206):-

- (a) 'A' Coy, which was deployed 2 km north of Tawang was ordered to withdraw to Jang and the Coy abandoned its position at 1100 hrs on 23 October and reached Tawang at 1500 hrs. By this time, the Chinese had started firing at Tawang from the three expected directions. (The Coy joined the Battalion at 1030 hrs on 24 October at Jang).
- (b) The 'C' Coy, plus platoon, under Maj Rai, which was positioned at Landa to check the advance of the Chinese by the Bum La - Landa - Jang track, was asked to withdraw at 1730 hrs to Rho first and then to Jang. There were reports that about 500 Chinese were moving to Jang along this track to cut(207) Indian line of communication at Jang on night 23-24 October. The Coy Commander did not seem to be in a hurry to withdraw as his troops had not so far come into contact with the enemy. The distance from his position to Jang was hardly 20 km and it was all the way downhill upto Bridge 4. Secondly, he felt that even though his troops had not come into contact with the enemy, his men might be sniped at in daylight on their withdrawal route. Considering, all these factors he decided to withdraw his troops at last light. Marching throughout the night, the troops joined the Unit at Jang by 0500 hrs on 24 October(208).
- (c) 'D' Coy, less platoon, also withdrew to Jang under command 1 Sikh and the troops reached Jang at 0430 hrs, 24 October.

Headquarters 4 Garh Rif withdrew to Jang under Capt Dharam Pal and reached there at 2100 hrs, 23 October. 'B' Coy of this Unit, which had been deployed at Zimithang to protect TAC HQ 4 Inf Div there, reached the outskirts of Tawang at 1800 hrs on 23 October. There it came to know about the withdrawal of the Indian troops from Tawang, and being out of contact with the Bn HQ, the Coy Cdr decided to march to Dirang Dzong(209) by taking a de-tour through Sakden, and it reached there on 28 October.

When the whole Bn (less 'B' Coy) had concentrated at Jang, 4 Garh Rif was assigned the task of holding Jang till last light on 24 October. For this the Bn Cdr made its 'C' coy responsible for the defence of the Bridge 4(210) and the rest of the Bn was positioned around the 'flat ground' above Jang village, where the Border Roads Organisation had its headquarters. This Coy was also to act as covering troops in area Nuranang for the main defensive position of the 62 Inf Bde, deployed in area Se La. The demolition of the Bridge 4 was left to the discretion of the Coy Comdr, Maj Rai. All the troops in the area - a Coy of 13 Dogra less platoon and about a platoon strength of 4 Grenadiers, were placed under the Bn.

The Bn also established a patrol Base above Rho crossing (a fordable point over Tawang Chu) with 20 OR, with a view to patrol Tawang Chu and keep the Bn HQ informed regarding any attempts by the enemy to cross Tawang Chu within its jurisdiction. This patrol was ordered not to abandon its position until ordered by the Bn Commander(211).

(4) Chinese Occupy Tawang without Battle

Following the dispersal and annihilation of Indian forces in the Namkha Chu area, the defence of Tawang had been considerably weakened. Brig Kalyan Singh, Commander 4 Arty Bde, had assumed leadership in the absence of GOC 4 Inf Div and organised the defence of Tawang, as already described. Under the threat of a three-pronged attack by the enemy on Tawang - from the west, the north and the east - the only alternative left with the Indian Army was to organise a planned withdrawal of the troops from its Tawang Garrison. This was more necessary, considering the dis-organised withdrawal of the troops from the Namkha Chu Valley. Brig Kalyan Singh held out until the Tawang Garrison was ordered to fall back to Jang, in the interval also planned orderly withdrawal of troops. When the Chinese entered Tawang on 24 October, all the Indian troops had withdrawn and the enemy occupied Tawang unopposed.

Battle for Jang Bridge

In the evening of 24 October, just before the light the sentry on the bridge noticed some movement on the Tawang track and passed on the information to his NCO. The Coy Cdr - Maj Rai - also noticed some movement across the bridge. By this time, the Coy had taken up firing positions and the plans needed only a signal to open fire. Enemy started shelling from 3 different locations, north of Jang. Indian Artillery engaged the Chinese in area opposite Jang bridge and the Chinese retaliated with approximately 200 mortar bombs and rifle grenades(212). The Indian troops on the bridge site fought off enemy attempts to capture the bridge intact. With the approval of the Cdr 4 Arty Bde, who was present at the site at that moment, the bridge was blown up at approximately 1800 hrs on 24 October by the engineers of 18 Fd Coy(213).

After the bridge had been demolished, the intensity of enemy shelling decreased and small enemy parties were seen probing forward at Lao and Rho crossing areas. After this, Comdr 4 Arty Bde left for Muranang to join his TAC HQ at Km 106 and ordered 4 Garh Rif to occupy the next delaying position in the area of Bridge 3. The Battalion started thinning out at Jang delaying position at 0030 hrs 24/25 night with a view to occupy the next delaying position, and was able to concentrate at Bridge 3 by 0700 hrs(214), 25 October.

(6) Comments

Was the order for the withdrawal of the troops from Tawang a correct step? The decision was of GOC 4 Inf Div. He was of the opinion that after the fall of Namkha Chu, Tawang could not be defended by him with the troops at his command against a determined Chinese attack. The Army Commander is said to have been of the view that Tawang could have been defended. In the absence of the Corps Comdr, he could have reversed the withdrawal order issued by the GOC 4 Div. But he preferred not to interfere. The Indian troops in Tawang - Garhwalis and Sikhs as well as an Arty Unit - were well placed and were well dug-in for the defence. The Sikhs put up a heroic resistance on the first day and caused a great deal of damage to the enemy. Further, Tawang was at the end of a motorable road, it was possible to send further reinforcements to Tawang. Tawang was well stocked and the Sikhs were particularly well acclimatized and knew the ground well. The Garhwalis were also in good shape. But these two battalions, even with support

RESTRICTED

from the retreating troops, could not have held the Chinese hordes at Tawang for many days. The enemy would have suffered more casualties, but there was also the danger of the defenders getting cut off and trapped by the enemy seizing Jang or Se La.

*** **

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Referring to the Sino-Indian border problem, Prime Minister Nehru was reported to have said, on 2 October 1962, that India stood by its policy of non-violence but found herself being dragged, perforce to the path of war. China's aggression, even though limited to mountain stretches, had come as a blow. Nehru was reported saying on 2 October 1962: "Being peace lovers we shudder at the thought of going to war, but it is humiliating for us to give the impression that we have been cowed". Statesman (Delhi), 3 October 1962. Before leaving to take up his assignment as Commander of the newly created IV Corps, Lt Gen B.M. Kaul called on Prime Minister Nehru on 3 October 1962. During that meeting also Nehru is reported to have revealed the Government thinking on the subject. According to Gen Kaul, Nehru said that he agreed with some of his advisers in the External Affairs Ministry that we had tolerated the Chinese intrusions into our territories for too long and a stage had come when we must take - or appear to take - a strong stand irrespective of consequences. In his view, the Chinese were establishing their claim on NEFA by coming into Dhola which we must contest by whatever means we had at our disposal. He, therefore, hoped the Chinese would see reason, and withdraw from Dhola but in case they did not, we would have no option but to expel them from our territory or at least try to do so to the best of our ability. If we failed to take such action, Nehru said, Government would forfeit public confidence completely. The Untold Story, pp.366-367.

At a meeting held at Tezpur at 1530 hrs on 13 September 1962, presided over by Lt Gen L.P. Sen, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, the issue was raised that on the available maps with the Army, the McMahon Line was shown to run south of the Thagla Ridge. It was then clarified that in the sketch map the boundary line did not correspond to the situation on the ground. The boundary ran along the crest of the Thagla Ridge on the basis of the watershed principle. From Official Records.

"Government are also not prepared to accept any intrusion of the Chinese into our territory and if they come in they must be thrown out by force". Minutes of Meeting at Tezpur on 13 September 1962. From Official Records.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Referring to the Sino-Indian border problem, Prime Minister Nehru was reported to have said, on 2 October 1962, that India stood by its policy of non-violence but found herself being dragged, perforce to the path of war. China's aggression, even though limited to mountain stretches, had come as a blow. Nehru was reported saying on 2 October 1962: "Being peace lovers we shudder at the thought of going to war, but it is humiliating for us to give the impression that we have been cowed". Statesman (Delhi), 3 October 1962. Before leaving to take up his assignment as Commander of the newly created IV Corps, Lt Gen B.M. Kaul called on Prime Minister Nehru on 3 October 1962. During that meeting also Nehru is reported to have revealed the Government thinking on the subject. According to Gen Kaul, Nehru said that he agreed with some of his advisers in the External Affairs Ministry that we had tolerated the Chinese intrusions into our territories for too long and a stage had come when we must take - or appear to take - a strong stand irrespective of consequences. In his view, the Chinese were establishing their claim on NEFA by coming into Dhola which we must contest by whatever means we had at our disposal. He, therefore, hoped the Chinese would see reason, and withdraw from Dhola but in case they did not, we would have no option but to expel them from our territory or at least try to do so to the best of our ability. If we failed to take such action, Nehru said, Government would forfeit public confidence completely. The Untold Story, pp.366-367.

At a meeting held at Tezpur at 1530 hrs on 13 September 1962, presided over by Lt Gen L.P. Sen, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, the issue was raised that on the available maps with the Army, the McMahon Line was shown to run south of the Thagla Ridge. It was then clarified that in the sketch map the boundary line did not correspond to the situation on the ground. The boundary ran along the crest of the Thagla Ridge on the basis of the watershed principle. From Official Records.

"Government are also not prepared to accept any intrusion of the Chinese into our territory and if they come in they must be thrown out by force". Minutes of Meeting at Tezpur on 13 September 1962. From Official Records.

4. From Official Records.
5. From Official Records.
6. On 11 September 1962, in a meeting in the Defence Minister's room, Lt Gen, L.P. Sen informed that it would require one Infantry Bde to mount operation 'Leghorn' and he had already ordered the Bde (7th) on this mission. It would take about ten days for the concentration of the Bde in that area.

On 12 September, Gen Sen went to Tezpur and personally repeated the orders to Lt Gen Umrao Singh, GOC, XXXIII Corps, Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, Div Cdr, and others that Chinese must be thrown back over the Thagla Ridge since the Government would not allow any intrusions over the McMahon Line.

According to Lt Gen B.M. Kaul, both the Corps Commander and Div commander had told the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, that due to comparatively adverse build-up, limited re-inforcement ability in view of the lack of troops and roads, shortage of rations, winter clothes, ammunition, and inadequacy of fire support, "the task of clearing the Chinese south of Thagla Ridge was beyond the capability of our troops". Gen Thapar had pleaded to the Government against any armed action in NEFA for fear of serious repercussions in Ladakh. Lt Gen Daulat Singh, GOC-in-C, Western Command, had told the Defence Minister and COAS that if the Chinese attacked us in Ladakh, we would be annihilated. In a meeting in the Defence Ministry, on 14 September, Lt Gen Sen, too, expressed his inability to deal with the situation in NEFA if the Chinese came in strength. But the Government insisted on action irrespective of the consequences. Kaul, B.M. The Untold Story, pp.356-358.

7. From Official Records.
8. Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.358. Also From Official Records.
9. Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, 359.
10. Ibid. p.360.
11. According to Neville Maxwell, India's China War p.319, the London Times in its despatch of 23 September, reported about this decision. Times of India also confirmed it in The

RESTRICTED

following words:

"The Government of India took the political decision 10 days ago to use force, if necessary, to throw the Chinese intruders out. The Army was accordingly instructed to take the steps necessary to clear the Chinese from the Indian territory across Thagla Ridge, if they did not withdraw on their own in reasonable time.

" The Army authorities have been given the freedom to chose the time and tactics best suited for an operation of this type, the object of which is not to capture or inflict casualties on the Chinese intruders but to force them to withdraw to their side of the border.

" The Government of India has made its position quite clear that, while it is ready to negotiate a settlement of the border dispute in Ladakh on reasonable terms, it will not hesitate to meet with force any attempts by China to violate NEFA border by force". The Times of India (New Delhi) 27 September 1962.

From Official Records.

From Official Records. Other three points were:

- (i) to concentrate troops and build up logistics at top speed;
- (ii) during the concentration period, take steps to contain the Chinese in their existing area, establish own troops north of the Namkha Chu, and if possible establish a post at Tsangle; and
- (iii) any Chinese south of the Namkha Chu were to be eliminated.

Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.361.

Also From Official Records.

Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.362.

From Official Records.

Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.362.

From Official Records.

On 30 September 1962, the Defence Minister told Army officers at a meeting in the Minister's room that "Government policy was to make an impact on the Chinese in NEFA before they settled down for the winter". Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.363. Also From Official Records.

20. From Official Records.
21. Ibid.
22. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.51. Although Lt Gen Umrao Singh conveyed once again, on 27 September, to Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad the Government decision that the Chinese must be expelled from our territory at the earliest, he, like his Div Cdr, was highly sceptical about it. When the Corps and Div Cdrs raised many logistical and other difficulties in the implementation of the order, the Army Commander, Lt Gen Sen brushed them aside. Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.363.
23. From Official Records.
24. Both Prasad and Dalvi were of the view that a plan to capture Thag La was not feasible in the then existing state of build-up. But Gen Prasad agreed to produce "some sort of a cooked up plan merely to satisfy Sen" under covert advice from Brig H.K. Sibal, BGS, Eastern Command. (Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.36). Brig Dalvi evolved this plan "under duress from the Chief" because he was ordered to, in which by setting out the tactical and maintenance problems forcefully he could educate the higher authorities. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, pp.235-236.
25. From Official Records.
26. Ibid.
27. The assessment about disadvantageous position of Indian troops as against the Chinese in the Thagla area, is given in the Official Records.
28. Lt Gen Umrao Singh had also protested as interference in his command. Gen Sen's order sent to him was to send a company strength patrol to Tsangle with a view to establishing a post there.

Lt Gen Umrao Singh was also against that move as he thought that Tsangle was not a good position to hold tactically, also it would have given away Indian plans to the Chinese. The Army Commander had, however, overruled the Corps Commander and had ordered the occupation of Tsangle. From Official Records.

29. Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.364; also Niranjan Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.4.
30. From Official Records.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Praval, K.C., Indian Army After Independence, p.267.
35. From Official Records.
36. Ibid.
37. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.285.
38. From Official Records.
39. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.290.
40. But according to another version, a fifty strong patrol of Punjabis, under Major Chaudhary crossed the river about noon on 9 October and occupied Tseng-jong just before dusk without opposition. The patrol Commander sent a section with a Bren gun up on to the Ridge to give cover from the flank. Neville Maxwell, India's China War, p.337. According to S.R. Johri, it was a company of 2 Rajput that occupied Tseng-jong unopposed. Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.61. Reporting this development, Gen Kaul sent a long signal in which he said that by 'bold and speedy tactics', he had been able to occupy Tsangle, Tseng-jong and Karpola and thus "secured our LEFT flank". From Official Records.
41. From Official Records.
42. Maxwell, Neville, India's China War, p.338.
43. According to Jem Mohan Lal, who was commanding the machine gun platoon at Bridge IV, Lt Col Misra, OC 9 Punjab had disallowed gun support but had permitted mortars to open up. But that order was countermanded by the Brigade Cdr on Corps Commander's orders. From Official Records.
44. Hav Malkiat Singh was awarded VrC (posthumous) for this brave action.

45. From Official Records.

Besides the desire for not letting the Tseng-jong incident escalate into a war, Brig Dalvi might have also taken into account comparatively much superior fire power available to the Chinese at that time which could have inflicted very heavy casualties on his men.

According to Jem Mohan Lal, the Senior Commanders' reason for not allowing gun support for the Tseng-jong platoon was that it would give the Chinese excuse to fire on Bridge IV and that there was not sufficient ammunition with the MMGs. But, as regards the availability of ammunition, Jem Mohan Lal had informed them that he had 12000 rounds with him and that was sufficient to break up the Chinese attack. He was expected to receive fresh supply of ammunition, the next day. He, in fact, received 22,000 rounds, as expected.

Jem Mohan Lal was confident that if he had been allowed to fire, he could well have prevented the attack as there was little cover available for the Chinese, and they would have all the time been enfiladed to his guns.

46. From Official Records.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.383. Also From Official Records.

52. Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p,386.

53. Ibid. Also Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, pp.363-364.

54. Statesman (New Delhi), 13 October 1962. S.S. Khera, the then Cabinet Secretary, has also attributed to Nehru exactly the same statement except the word 'territory' instead of 'country'. India's Defence Problem, p.226. Some of the newspapers, in their enthusiasm, however, commented on it somewhat differently. Statesman commented: 'For the first time since

the NEFA operations began Mr Nehru categorically stated that the armed forces had been ordered to throw the Chinese aggressors out of NEFA'. Ibid., The Times of India (Bombay) of 13 October 1962, reported Nehru as saying that instructions had been issued "to throw the Chinese out of our territory". Quoted in S. Bhat, India and China, p.144, Nehru's statement, as reported in the press, was construed as a declaration of war. Praval, K.C., Indian Army After Independence, p.274. Some people like B.M. Kaul, wondered if that statement, hurting Chinese pride "did not precipitate their (Chinese) attack". Kaul, B.M. The Untold Story, p.387.

55. From Official Records.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. According to Brig Dalvi, the Defence Minister had, in fact, specified 1 November 1962 as the "last date acceptable to the Cabinet" for completion of the Operation. Himalayan Blunder, p.330.

59. Kaul suffered from pulmonary cedema and he was evacuated from Tezpur to Delhi on 18 October 1962. While getting medical treatment he continued to command his Corps from his residence in Delhi.

60. From Official Records.

61. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, pp.369-371.

62. From Official Records.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.327.

67. From Official Records.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid. It was after this development that GOC 4 Inf Div sought permission from IV Corps to

withdraw the Tsangle post. BGS IV Corps rang up the GOC in Delhi. But GOC IV Corps did not agree to withdrawal. Instead, he conveyed decision "to stay put and fight at Tsangle".

71. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.373. Also From Official Records.
72. Mankekar, D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.55.
73. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs New Delhi to the Embassy of China in India 19 September 1962. WHITE PAPER, VII, p.78.
74. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Peking, to the Embassy of India in China 13 September 1962. Ibid., pp.71-73.
75. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 3 October 1962. Ibid., p.98.
76. 'Menace to Freedom' - Text of "Broadcast to the Nation", 22 October 1962, in Prime Minister on Chinese Aggression (Publications Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi), pp.1-2. Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaya (erstwhile Malaysia), had described India as "a country being stabbed in the back by a so-called friend and neighbour whose cause she had espoused everywhere for the sake of peace and amity". Tunku Abdul Rahman, 'Danger to Non-Communist Asia', in R.S. Paul (ed), Our Northern Borders : India - China Border Dispute, p.105.
77. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.33.
78. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.208.
79. Ibid., p.360.
80. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.35.
81. Maxwell, Neville, India's China War, p.334.
82. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.270.
83. Ibid., p.204.
84. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, pp.35-36.
85. Ibid., p.36.
86. Ibid., p.39.

87. From Official Records.
88. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.120.
89. Ibid., p.68.
90. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.94.
91. Ibid., pp.90-91.
92. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.116.
93. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.92.
94. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.56.
95. From Official Records.
96. Ibid.
97. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.58.
98. From Official Records.
99. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.18.
According to Brig J.P. Dalvi, Commander 7 Inf Bde, the HQ of his brigade had moved to Tawang in April 1961. Himalayan Blunder, p.118.
100. From Official Records.
101. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.144.
102. From Official Records.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid.
132. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.218.
133. From Official Records.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
- 136A. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.

- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Praval, K.C., Indian Army After Independence, p.278.
- Ibid., p.279; Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, pp.80-81.
- From Official Records.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.394.
- From Official Records.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- Niranjan Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.107.
- From Official Records.
- Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.82.
- From Official Records.
- Niranjan Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, pp.109-110.
- Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.218.

166. The only fire support for the entire front was from two para-field guns with 421 rounds. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, pp.360-361.
167. Ibid., p.361.
168. Ibid., p.361. But according to Official Records, the Regiment sent five observation post parties (from 139, 140 and 141 Mtn Btys) to the Namkha Chu area.
169. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.361.
170. Encyclopaedia of Soldiers with the Highest Gallantry Awards (compiled by S.S. Gandhi, 1980).
171. From Official Records.
172. Ibid.
173. Praval, K.C., The Red Eagles, pp.262-263; Niranjan Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.121. Also From Official Records.
174. From Official Records.
175. Niranjan Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.121.
176. From Official Records.
177. Ibid.
178. Ibid. Also Prasad, K.C., The Red Eagles, p.263.
179. From Official Records.
180. Ibid.
181. Ibid. Also Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.97.
182. From Official Records.
183. Ibid.
184. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, pp.97-98
185. Ibid., p.102.
186. From Official Records.
187. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.103. Also From Official Records.

188. From Official Records.
189. Ibid.
190. Ibid.
191. Ibid.
192. Ibid.
193. Encyclopaedia of Soldiers with Highest Gallantry Awards (Compiled by S.S. Gandhi, 1980).
194. From Official Records.
195. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.112.
196. Ibid., p.114.
197. From Official Records. (The word used was Jungle Hat, the nickname for Bomdila.)
198. Ibid.
199. Ibid.
- 199A. Statement of Brig K.K. Singh, BGS IV Corps. (From Official Records). But, in an interview with Dr P.B. Sinha, Joint Director, War Studies Division, Ministry of Defence, in New Delhi on 1 December 1987, Lt Gen K.K. Singh (now retired) informed that it were the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen P.N. Thapar and Director of Military Operations, Brig D.K. Palit (now retired as Major Gen) who, against the advice of Commanders on the spot, opted for Se La. The Government did not interfere in this. They left it to the Army to decide the place and manner of putting up defence against the enemy.
200. From Official Records.
201. Ibid.
202. Ibid.
203. Ibid.
204. Ibid.
205. Ibid.
206. Ibid.
207. Ibid.

208. Ibid.

209. Ibid.

210. Ibid.

211. Ibid.

212. Ibid.

213. Ibid.

214. Ibid.

*** *** ***