

1962

CHAPTER VII

FIGHTING IN LADAKH

THE TERRAIN AND CLIMATE

The first problem faced by a soldier in Ladakh is survival, fighting the enemy comes only after that. The peculiar geography of the region had a major impact on the fighting and its outcome. To understand the events, a background to the terrain is essential. The salient features have been noted already in the first chapter.

To recapitulate, Ladakh is a high plateau lying nearly 350 km North East of the valley of Srinagar. The entire region is shut off from the South by the Great Himalayan range that runs North West to South East. The average elevation of the Himalayas in these areas is 5000 metres. The rain bearing clouds thus cannot penetrate to Ladakh. On the North is the Karakoram range while the Ladakh range lies between the valleys of the Indus and the Shyok.

The effect of this has been pronounced desertification. Travelling on the Srinagar-Leh route, the last forests are near Sonamarg. There were some trees in Kargil and Khalsi areas, but beyond this it was impossible to find a single tree(1). This lack of vegetation coupled with high elevation made lack of oxygen more pronounced in Ladakh than anywhere else. The pronounced lack of oxygen produces effect on human efficiency and there is a perceptible 30% loss. Even the internal combustion engines of cars and trucks suffer from the same effect.

In the earlier chapters, mention has been made of the effect of cold. The temperatures alone do not give a true picture, as added to the low temperatures is the factor of wind chill. The wind generally starts around mid-day and continues through-out thereafter. The combined effect can cause cold injuries similar to burn injuries on any exposed part of human body. Touching metal with bare hands is hazardous.

The Ladakh plateau is flanked in the North by the Karakoram mountains, a branch of which runs South East. Due East is the Ladakh range. Beyond these ranges are again the flat areas of Aksai Chin. The majority of fighting in 1962 took place in the areas on the eastern edge of Ladakh plateau and on the western fringes of the Aksai Chin. This geographic configuration meant that North South movement on the Indian side entailed crossing of ranges of 20,000 ft

with passes located above 17,000 ft. Development of road communication had to be parallel to the ranges, and lateral communication between sectors was difficult. On the Chinese side, the terrain made development of road communications a comparatively easier affair. Most Chinese posts in Ladakh were connected with a road with a capacity to handle normal trucks. On the Indian side of the border, due to late start as well as difficult geography, except for Chushul garrison that had a jeepable road along the Indus valley that connected with Srinagar highway at Leh, all other posts were connected with only mule tracks, and at times only footpaths(2). This situation compelled Indian reliance on primarily air supply. The availability of a suitable dropping zone therefore became the main criterion for establishment of Indian posts.

Since the posts had to be completely dependent on air supply, defence of the dropping zone was a major factor influencing its location. The administrative requirements thus dictated locating posts at lower altitudes in relatively flat areas, even at the expense of defence potential, and very few of the posts were thus tactically well sited.

The total front in Ladakh sector ran to over 400 kms. Force level to even police this effectively was nearly 4 battalions or about 4000 men. Leaving aside the large number of men that were required to man rear installations, barely half of this strength was available for manning a border from Karakoram pass in the North to Demchok in the South. The deployment as well as the outcome of fighting in Ladakh was ultimately dictated by the terrain and state of communications as existing in 1962. Thus at the risk of certain repetitions, it is essential to mention some features of the terrain.

Leh has been a major Indian base of operations since 1947 war with Pakistani raiders. It is situated on the banks of Indus and has motor road connecting with Srinagar. Leh was also the ancient trading centre and numerous tracks starting from here go towards Tibet. The Leh airfield is sufficient for most transport aircraft operations and remains open virtually throughout the year.

Leh was the hub of communications(3). In 1962 on the eve of operations a jeepable track was constructed linking Leh with Chushul via Dungal and Karu. The track ran along the valley of the Indus and it took nearly 8-10 hours to cover the distance of around 150 kms. The Indus turns South at Dungal and meanders in a fairly open valley all the way to

Demchok. In this relatively flat and open area, the road ran along joining Demchok with Dungti.

A mule track joining Leh to Manali in Himachal Pradesh also existed. The track passed over very rugged country and could be used only for about two to three months, as the passes over the Himalaya and Zaskar ranges remained closed rest of the year.

Mule tracks from Leh went North over the Ladakh range, crossing it at Khardungla and thence on to the Shyok river. Another track crossed over at Changla and went on to Daulat Beg Oldi and the Karakoram pass. This track bifurcated after Changla one branch turning east along river Tangtse to link up Chushul.

### SLIDE TOWARDS ARMED CLASH

Geography as well as the deployed units divided the Ladakh front into various sectors. The Northernmost was the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) a small outpost on the traditional Silk route that eventually crossed over the Karakoram pass and into the Chinese province of Sinkiang. To the South of DBO the Changchenmo-Galwan valley sector. Phobrang was the support base for this sector. Next came Chushul sector that extended from the Sirijap complex north of lake Pangong upto Rezangla, south of the lake. The Southernmost sector in Ladakh was the Indus valley sector that extended from Dungti to Demchok.

Except for the Chushul and Indus valley sectors, on the Indian side there was no lateral communication available and therefore the fighting was perforce isolated and unconnected with other sectors. The events of 1962 can therefore be conveniently dealt with by sector.

In the early phases of the fighting in Ladakh, the whole of Ladakh had merely a brigade group consisting of 4 battalions. These were deployed from North to South in the following order: 14 J&K Militia (later 14 Ladakh Scouts), 5 Jat, 1/8 GR and 7 J&K Militia. The force was commanded by Headquarters 114 Infantry Brigade located at Leh. 14 J&K Militia with additional company from 5 Jat was in the DBO sector, Changchenmo sector had the rest of 5 Jat battalion (3 companies) 1/8 GR was in Chushul and the Indus valley sector had 7 J&K Militia. In addition, there was a platoon of 1 Mahar (Machine Guns) with 1/8 GR. This force of 4 battalions covered the frontage of over 400 kms. The deployment of Indian troops was not according to any military principles, and had hardly any defence potential. The force was deployed in small outposts to guard various approaches into the

Indian territory not yet absorbed by the Chinese. This meagre force was further deployed in small pockets primarily as the result of the Forward Policy. To understand the fighting and its outcome a small journey into past is essential.

As already mentioned in Chapter III, a meeting was held in the Prime Minister's office in November 1961 to review the measures to be taken on the Indo-Tibetan border. Among the persons present were the Defence Minister, Chief of the Army Staff, the Foreign Secretary, and the Director of Intelligence Bureau, an agency that had the sole responsibility for external intelligence at that time. The Director Intelligence Bureau gave out his assessment that the Chinese would not react to establishment of new posts by India and were not likely to use force even if they were in a position to do so(4). The decisions taken at this conference launched the 'Forward Policy' and had major effect in determining the deployment in Ladakh. The conference decided that Army would patrol as far forward as possible right up to the International border. Clashes with the Chinese were to be avoided. Posts were to be established to prevent any further ingress by the Chinese and were also to be established in such a way as to dominate the existing Chinese posts in the Indian territory. To overcome the numerous administrative and operational difficulties and dangers inherent in this policy, major concentrations of Indian forces were to be established for logistic and operational support force that should have the capability to restore the border situation at short notice if required(5).

On 5 December 1961, the Army Headquarters sent a directive to the Western Command for implementation of the above policy(6). The directive faithfully reflected the Government decisions, except in one crucial area. The pre-requisite of establishment of strong forces to act as bases to implement the forward policy as directed by the Government, was the vital item that was left out by the Army Headquarters while conveying the Government decision to the Western Command. The Forward Policy thus came to be implemented without this crucial security precaution.

As a logical corollary to the non-communication of the decision about strong bases, the Western Command in turn only asked for such additional troops as were needed for the establishment of the forward posts. The Western Command at that time did not have adequate resources to induct and maintain such large forces as would have been necessary if the 'Forward Policy' as indicated by the government was to be implemented, including the setting up of rear bases. According to the time honoured military procedures,

the Western Command then would have been obliged to inform the Army Headquarters its inability to implement the government decision. The reason for this omission by the Army Headquarters are not known from any documentary source, and can only be guessed(7).

Based on the 'Forward Policy', in the DBO Sector, 9 posts were established on the north and south banks of Chip Chap river. Opposite Murgo and Sultan Chusku another 5 posts were established in the valley of a minor river to the south. In the Galwan river valley, post opposite Samzungling was established, referred to as Galwan Post. Based on Chushul, posts were established at Yula, Chartse and Razangia. Based on Koyul at Chang La, and based on Demchok at Jerala and Chardingla, were some of the other posts. Thus by July 1962 there were in all 36 of these posts, mainly of section and lesser strength(8). The establishment of these small posts further reduced the strength in the bases.

The establishment of Galwan Post is a typical example of how the 'Forward Policy' was implemented. Reconnaissance along the Galwan river was discussed in a meeting between Foreign Secretary, CGS and Director IB on 20 September 1961(9). The IB followed this up with a formal note on 26 September 1961 recommending the setting up of the post(10). In December same year the Army Headquarters ordered Western Command, to set up the post(11). On 15 January 1962, at the height of winter, 114 Brigade sent a recce party from Sultan Chushku. The recce party reported that there was no suitable route from that direction. In April 1962 another recce found a route from the south via Hotspring.

In the meanwhile, in Delhi the Intelligence Bureau was active. In a note dated 9 May 1962, the Director, B.N. Mullik, stressed that Galwan river valley provided an access to the Shyok river and the vital route that ran along it, and so it was necessary to establish the post immediately(12). This would confine the Chinese within their 1956 claim line, at least. The Army Headquarters then ordered the Western Command to set up the post. On 4 July 1962, the Commanding Officer of 1/8 Gorkha Rifles set up a platoon post opposite Chinese position at Samzungling(13). The Chinese in the vicinity were connected by a road with their base, and quickly brought up a battalion and surrounded the Indian platoon. Cut off from the south and south east by the Chinese, the Indian troops were then supplied with helicopter drops, which often went into the Chinese hands. In the Chip Chap valley too, even moves of

sections and platoons were being controlled by the Operations Branch at Army Headquarters(14).

### EVOLUTION OF INDIAN PLAN

The Indian Army's deployment and plans evolved out of the Government directive on the Forward Policy, as already discussed in Chapter III. In February 1960 the Army Headquarters issued an Operational Instruction to the Western Command(15). The Chinese threat was assessed to be worth a regiment plus a battalion and some armour. Chinese were assessed to be capable of posing some limited air threat to interfere with Indian supply efforts, as well as air raid on forward posts. The Instruction expressly forbade shifting of any troops from Pakistan border without the permission of Army Headquarters. Keeping in view the threat perception, a brigade group was earmarked for defence of Ladakh.

The task given to Western Command was to prevent any further ingress into Ladakh. In April 1961 this was amended to read 'prevent infiltration into unoccupied areas of Ladakh'. The task underwent further amendment and defence of Leh and denial of main approaches to Ladakh, was the final outcome. The Operational Instruction also laid down the various forward posts to be established and areas to be held. The Operational Instruction was in fact a compromise between military logic and dictates of the 'Forward Policy'. At the time of operations in 1962 the Operational Instruction 26 was still current and formed the basis of Indian Plan of defence.

The Western Command in turn issued its own Operational Instruction in April 1960, which was on the same lines as the Army Headquarters orders. The situation changed in June 1960 when the Army Headquarters asked Western Command to undertake probing action in the Indian territory under Chinese occupation. In the meanwhile at the Western Command, a major war game code-named 'SHEEL' was conducted on 15 and 16 October 1960 to test the efficacy of Indian defensive plans for Ladakh(16). The exercise vividly brought out that should the Chinese intention change, they had the ability to concentrate a much larger force against the Indian brigade, in which case the minimum requirement of troops in Ladakh was envisaged to be a complete division. It was then proposed to form inner and outer rings for defence of Leh. The outer ring consisted of DEO complex, Chushul, Dungti, and Phobrang areas, each to be held by at least a battalion size force. The inner ring of defences was to be based on holding of Khardungla and Changla passes, with sufficient troops in Leh itself.

Thus, on the eve of the conflict, two plans could be said to be in existence. While officially the Operational Instruction No. 26 stood, the Western Command was envisaging a divisional deployment. This was to have a major impact on the course of events. This difference in perceptions needs a detailed look.

On 5 December 1961, the Chief of Army Staff wrote to the Eastern and Western Command asking them to set up posts as far forward as possible on the Indian side of the International border(17). These posts could then dominate the existing Chinese posts in the vicinity. He asked both the commands to send their fresh appraisal of logistic support required. The 'Forward Policy' was enthusiastically backed by the Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant General B.M. Kaul. Kaul had taken over this crucial appointment in May 1961; since then the setting up of posts got a further boost. He flew down to the border areas and personally ordered setting up of new posts based on his aerial reconnaissance. He along with Air Vice Marshal Pinto, who was at that time in charge of Operational Command at Palam and responsible for air support to Ladakh, visited Ladakh on 25 and 26 June 1962. During this visit Kaul landed at Post Alfa (Post 1) near DBO. After talking to the JCO in command of this post, Kaul recounted to other how the Chinese who had attempted to surround the post some time earlier had run away when the Indian JCO merely waved a red handkerchief. Kaul was not happy with the pace of setting up of posts, and remarked that the battalion commanders and other officers were exaggerating the terrain and logistic difficulties. In a dig aimed at XV Corps and Western Command, Kaul noted that these headquarters were acting as post offices and just forwarding the lower formation's views about difficulties. His assessment was that it is better to establish as many posts as possible in Ladakh, even in penny packets, rather than wait for substantial build up. It was his conviction that the Chinese would not attack any Indian post even if they were in a position to do so. The Army Chief agreed with the views of the CGS(18).

These new posts set up were primarily dependent on air supply. Thus the meagre air support resources available were diverted from the tasks of inducting road building material and personnel. The pace of road development, so vital for further operations, had to slow down(19).

As early as May 1962, Western Command had protested against setting up of additional posts and urged consolidation of the existing posts instead(20).

RESTRICTED

In August, 1962, two months before the hostilities broke out, Western Command submitted a re-appraisal of the situation in the light of the new developments, mainly the effect of 'Forward Policy' and Chinese reaction(21).

Western Command letter dated 17 August 1962 addressed to the CGS, is an important document that throws light on the basic differences in perception that existed between the two headquarters and it deserves detailed scrutiny. The letter stated that as early as 1959, when the Army took over the responsibility of defence of Ladakh, the minimum requirement was assessed as 5 Infantry battalions. Yet even by 1962, there were only 4 battalions in Ladakh as the logistic support was still lacking. Consequently the deployment of this force was for just showing the flag, and had no defence potential. The Western Command drew pointed attention to the change in situation brought about as a result of the forward policy, and warned that the Chinese capacity to build up was far superior to the Indian, and they started with a 1:4 advantage. The Chinese appeared to be working to a plan and a number of clashes had taken place already. The Command pointed out that it appeared clear that Chinese would not tolerate any threat to their established posts, and they intended to occupy what they had claimed i.e their 1960 claim line.

Drawing the Army Headquarters attention to the relative strengths, the letter further noted that, as against four Indian battalions and one platoon of machine guns, the Chinese had a full division with all its supporting arms. The Chinese posts were all connected with roads capable of sustaining 3 ton vehicular traffic and they also had lateral roads. Indian road building activity was in the initial stages. Thus the Chinese were superior in both mobility and fire power. Just then India was in no position militarily even to defend what it had; the build up of defensive potential would need more time. At that moment, it was suggested that India should concentrate on defence of Leh. The Command felt that the military logic was out of step with potential needs. Lt Gen Daulat Singh, Western Army Commander, pleaded for caution, for the time being at least. He advocated halting the forward policy till India was militarily in a strong position.

It is not clear from available documentary sources how seriously this appreciation was studied at Army Headquarters. However on 5 September 1962, just 45 days before the Chinese attack, the officiating CGS, Major General Dhillon, sent a reply to Western



Command stating that the views of the Command were alarmist. He quoted the Galwan post incident of 10 July 1962 in support. On that occasion, the Chinese had surrounded this platoon post with overwhelming numbers, but did not launch attack. The officiating CGS felt that this proved that the assumptions of the 'Forward Policy' were correct, and the Chinese would not use force even if in a position to do so(22).

In the meanwhile, events in the East were moving fast. On 22 September 1962, a meeting was held in the Defence Minister's office which was attended by Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary and other senior government officials. The decision of the Government to throw out the Chinese from Thag La Ridge area was conveyed to the Army Chief, General P.N. Thapar. The General pointed out that such action in NEFA might invite retaliation in Ladakh. The Foreign Secretary stated that some loss of territory in Ladakh was acceptable to the PM(23).

#### CHINESE FORCES : DEPLOYMENT & PLANS

The Aksai Chin highway connected Gartok in Tibet with Yarkand in Xinjiang (Sinkiang) Province of China. This route was a two-way road capable of taking even the heavier Army vehicles. The total distance was around 1200 kms. This road passed through an extremely hostile terrain, rising from 1500 metres in Sinkiang to about 5000 metres in Aksai Chin area.

For the Chinese, Ladakh region formed part of Sinkiang military region, with one Army (possibly the 3rd Army) deployed there. In addition, in order to pacify and "Hanize" the region, in early 50s itself the Chinese had disbanded two armies and settled them on collective farms in Sinkiang that had a predominantly Muslim population with ethnic affinity with the Muslim republics in the Soviet Union. Out of this Army, probably one division was earmarked for Ladakh. It was estimated, though, that in 1960, there was only one Regiment (equivalent to Brigade) in Ladakh, with its headquarters at Rudok(24).

In 1960 the estimated detailed deployment of the Chinese Regiment in Ladakh was as follows:

- (a) A Battalion based at Rudok with responsibility upto Tashigong.
- (b) A battalion at Shingzhang with companies at Sapngur, Khurnak Fort and Dambuguru.
- (c) A battalion based in Lanak La area with company at Kongka La and Hot Spring.

RESTRICTED

- (d) A battalion based on Qizil Jilga with companies at Samzungling and Dehra La.

In the period between 1960 and October 1962, as tension increased on the border, the Chinese inducted fresh troops in occupied Ladakh. Unconfirmed reports also spoke of the presence of some tanks in general area of Rudok. The Chinese during this period also improved their road communication further and even the posts opposite DBO were connected by road. The Chinese also had ample animal transport based on local Yaks and mules for maintenance. Their division had full complement of artillery. Presence of upto a battalion of horsed cavalry was also reported. The horses were primarily for reconnaissance parties. At the time of conflict, in October 1962, the Chinese enjoyed a 1:3 superiority in Infantry, and also advantage in artillery. The road communication network on their side gave them a further advantage, as they could concentrate their troops, and specially artillery, opposite Indian posts at will. By July 1962, the Chinese had inducted a complete division in Ladakh. Their deployment on the eve of the conflict was as under(25):

- (a) DBO area - A regimental group.  
(b) Changchenmo/Hot Spring area - One regiment.  
(c) Chushul - One Regiment with some tanks.  
(d) Indus Valley - A battalion group.

Only a guess can be made about the Chinese plans and aims. However, their pattern of deployment and inducted forces do suggest that they were satisfied with reaching their 1960 claim line. It seems doubtful if they had the aim to capture Leh. On the other hand, their caution could well be due to the organised defences and steadfastness shown by Indian troops. Their tactics were to intimidate the isolated Indian posts with fire and show of strength. This was in order to gain success at less cost. Almost at every place, just a show of overwhelming strength did not work, and the Indian jawan refused to get intimidated, although the result of a fight was a foregone conclusion. He was defeated, but not disgraced in Ladakh.

The fighting in Ladakh in 1962 was in three distinct phases. The first phase began on 19 October night when Chinese commenced their attacks against the isolated 'Forward Policy' posts. This phase lasted till 27 October. Between this time and 18 November

there was a lull in fighting. This period was utilized by both sides to build up their strength, while the Chinese build up was mainly opposite Spangur gap, the Indian side strengthened defences in depth. In the third and final phase the Chinese overwhelmed the Indian defences on the Eastern edge of Chushul airfield. On declaration of Cease-Fire on 21 November 1962, the Chinese had rendered the airfield unusable for Indians. The battle for posts is best described sectorwise.

D.B.O. SUB SECTOR

As already mentioned, the northernmost sub sector of the Ladakh front was based on Daulat Beg Oldi, abbreviated as DBO(26). DBO was a vitally important post, and four tracks radiated from it. The old Silk Route went north, crossed the Karakoram Pass (5575 metres) and went on to Yarkand in Sinkiang. The second route, providing enemy access to the area, went east along the Chip Chap river to Qizil Jilga, and onwards to link up with the Aksai Chin highway of the Chinese. The other two routes connected DBO to Leh, over 200 kilometres away, and requiring atleast 12 days of long and difficult marching to reach it. The Eastern or Winter route went due south from DBO, crossing the Track Junction, Chip Chap river and the Depsang Plains to reach the important post of Murgo. After Murgo, this Winter route went south over the frozen Shyok river, passed Sultan Chushku and the village of Shyok, crossed the Ladakh range by the Changla, and down the Indus to Leh. This route was very difficult in summer, because the fast flowing Shyok river went through many gorges, which provided no track along the banks. During the summer months, the favoured route went westward from Murgo, crossed the Shyok at Saser Brangsa, and then the Karakoram range by the Saser La (5326 metres). It went down the Nubra Valley, crossed the Shyok again, climbed up the Ladakh range to the Khardung La (5606 metres) and then went down to Leh. Between DBO and Saser Brangsa, another rarely used and very difficult track looped west along the headwaters of the Shyok, passing through Gapshan meadow, but was utterly unsuitable for large groups or in inclement weather.

Between Changla and Shyok villages, on the winter route to DBO, an important track took off to the east. This track, passing through Tangtse, went on to Phobrang, which served as the base for the Changchenmo sub sector. From Tangtse another track carried on to Chushul.

14 J&K Militia was responsible for the defence of the DBO area. In addition, a company of 5 (C Coy) was also deployed alongside.

The deployment of the Indian troops followed the pattern set by the 'Forward Policy'. Thus DBO itself had the Battalion Headquarters and nearly a company strength. The rest of the available force was distributed on the two possible approaches. Chip Chap river valley had a total of 10 posts. Posts 1 to 4 were located north of the river Chip Chap, while posts 5 to 10 were to the south. Posts 10 to 14 guarded the approach from an uncharted river valley further south. In addition there were some troops in Murgo, Sultan Chushku, Track Junction, and all the way down to Shyok village, to provide staging posts for supply as well as the columns that regularly moved between the main base at Leh and DBO. DBO itself was mainly supplied by airdrops and a few available MI 4 helicopters. Out of these 21 posts, DBO had a company strength and also posts 1 and 4 on the North of Chip Chap river had a platoon each (roughly 25 to 30 men). Posts 5, 7 and 14 also had platoon each. Rest of the posts had section strength (between 10 to 15). These posts were dependent upon DBO for their supply. All the posts were equipped only with small arms with the exception of post 1 that had a section of 3-inch mortars. The posts thus were not in a position to dominate more than 500 metres distance around them, this being the effective range of the light machine guns. The average distance between the posts was 2 to 3 kms and some like post 14 were nearly 10 to 12 kms (or one days march) away from the nearest Indian posts. There was thus no possibility of mutual support or any interference with Chinese movement as they lacked the basic means, i.e. weapons with adequate range and lethality(27).

The Chinese had been building up their strength in the sector from July 1962 onwards. Their roadhead linking Qizil Jilga with their post in the vicinity of Indian post No. 4 enabled them to bring in their heavy weapons (mortars and guns) very close to the Indian posts even before their attack. As brought out earlier, both the policy of not provoking the Chinese and lack of resources made Indian posts cause no hinderance to this build up. On the eve of conflict, on 19 October 1962, all the Indian posts in Chip Chap valley area were surrounded or dominated by the Chinese in superior strength. It was estimated that the Chinese had nearly a regiment based at Qizil Jilga, of which two battalions took part in the attack, with probably a third battalion being held in reserve at Qizil Jilga itself.

The Chinese offensive in this sector commenced with simultaneous attack on posts No. 5 and 9 on 19 October 1962 at 2300 hrs. Post 5 (Pramodak) was manned by 14 Jawans under an NCO of 14 J&K Militia.

Post 9 (Bhishan) was held by 5 Jawans of the Jats. The Chinese subjected both the posts to heavy fire from mortars and medium machine guns. Both the weapons having longer ranges than what the Indians had, the Chinese could remain out of range of Indian fire. The Indian defences were merely open trenches and Sangars (stone heaps above ground level), as digging into the frozen soil was difficult, and there were no stores for construction of overhead cover to protect the Jawans from the splinter effects of the mortar or artillery bombardment. Both the posts were constantly in touch with the commander at DBO, Major Randhawa. It is estimated that the Chinese attacked post 5 with nearly 2 companies and Post 9 with a company. The posts continued to resist the Chinese till first light on 20 October, when both the posts went out of communications with the Headquarters. There were very few survivors. The Chinese occupied Post 5 and effectively blocked the withdrawal and supply routes of other posts deployed to the South East.

Around 0230 hours on 20 October, the Chinese brought pressure against posts 2 and 3 manned by 5 Jats and located on the Northern bank of Chip Chap river. The personnel of these two posts were then asked to fall back on post 4 by first light on 20 October. Post 1 (Chandani) manned by a platoon of 14 J&K Militia was now isolated. This post was well sited on high ground and was not easy to assault. On 20 October at 0600 hrs Chinese commenced shelling of Post 1. The bombardment continued for nearly one hour. After this the post was attacked by the Chinese. The commander at DBO attempted to send reinforcements to it. But the Chinese, who had by then occupied Post 5 which effectively dominated the route, made it impossible. Finally, after resisting 3 attacks by the Chinese in strength, Post 1 fell. The enemy now turned their attention to other isolated posts in the south and subjected them to heavy mortar bombardment. In the meanwhile, fall of Post 1 had opened up the north eastern approach to DBO. The local commander then sent two small patrols to occupy Pt 18029 and Pt 17911. Post 4 continued to hold in spite of incessant shelling. The situation at the end of the first day was that while the Chinese had gained important successes by eliminating posts 1, 2 and 9, the other posts continued to resist.

Since the Chinese had eliminated all posts on the northern bank of Chip Chap river (except Post 7 that continued to resist) they were in a position to pose a direct threat to DBO from the east. The more worrying fact from the point of view of the DBO defenders was that with Post 5 in their hands the

Chinese were in a position to threaten Track Junction area, through which the routes of maintenance for the garrison passed.

Around 1900 hrs on 20 October, the Chinese recommenced the shelling of Post 4. Seeing the gravity of the situation, officiating commander to the DBO garrison, Major Randhawa, ordered the men of 5 Jat located there to withdraw to DBO. The men, however, lost their way in the dark and out of nearly 40, only 1 JCO and 9 Jawans could be traced by a search patrol sent from DBO.

All this while the DBO Headquarters was in constant touch with 114 Brigade Headquarters at Leh, and through them with XV Corps Headquarters at Udhampur. Assessing the gravity of the situation, 114 Brigade had informed Corps that, since the Chinese were in a position to pose a threat to the sole line of communication, the brigade felt that isolated posts should be asked to concentrate at DBO. Post 10, after resisting for some time, was asked to withdraw to Burtse, a little to the north of Murgo.

Post Jodha was located 7 kms due East of Murgo and was held by a platoon of 14 J&K Militia. The Chinese, having taken Post 10, approached Jodha post from the north and launched their attack at 1600 hrs on 21 October. The post stood firm against heavy bombardment of mortars and MMGs. Around 1800 hrs, nearly two companies of Chinese surrounded the post from all sides and brought down intense fire. The post had already lost 3 men and 4 more were wounded. Seeing the futility of any further resistance, the post was ordered to break out and reach Burtse. Braving heavy fire and intense cold, the men successfully reached their destination. In the process, 2 jawans were taken prisoners by the Chinese.

On the evening and during the night of 21 October, the remaining isolated posts (except for the furthest one, Post No. 14 called Jyotish) were ordered to fall back to Burtse, Sultan Chushku, Murgo and DBO itself. The Sultan Chushku-Murgo-DBO track was now being dominated by the Chinese. In addition the fly-in route, that closely followed this track, also became unsafe for the supply drops at DBO.

On 22 October around 1300 hrs, the post commander of platoon post at Jyotish (Post No. 14) reported that the Chinese were now concentrating opposite his isolated post. Lt Col Nihal Singh, the commanding officer of 14 J&K Militia had reached DBO by that time. After seeing the overall situation and consulting the brigade, he ordered the withdrawal of Post 14 along the uncharted Nachu Chu gorge to Sultan Chushku.

The position at the Track Junction had become very grave by then. Right from the 20 October onwards, heavy Chinese concentrations were reported by the overflying aircraft, which were fired upon by the Chinese with small arms. Conscious that Track Junction was vital, the battalion commander sent reinforcements to this post. But the party from DBO found it difficult to reach Track Junction, as their way was blocked by nearly a battalion of Chinese troops about 8 kms South East of DBO. The battalion commander then suitably re-organised the defences to face the Chinese threat from south also. The Chinese were already stationed north since 20 October after the fall of the northern out posts. DBO was now surrounded, and the small detachment at Track Junction stood isolated.

On 22 October, seeing the grave situation at DBO, the battalion commander sought brigade commander's permission to withdraw the troops to a more defensible position. The Corps Headquarters was fully aware of the grave situation in DBO sector and as early as 20 October itself had sent out a signal to 114 brigade ordering it to withdraw the isolated posts, specially Post 14 (Jyotish). The Corps Headquarters wanted DBO, Track Junction, Sultan Chushku, and Galwan Shyok river junction to be strengthened and held. The emphasis was now on holding tactically sound and defensible positions(28).

The local commander at DBO had suggested a shorter withdrawal. He wanted troops from DBO to concentrate at Gapshan and those from Track Junction to fall back on Murgo. The Brigade, however, wanted the DBO troops to withdraw to Saser La, a bottle-neck on the mighty Karakoram. The Corps also agreed with Brigade. Major S.S. Randhawa had sent a message through a helicopter pilot on 22 October. He felt that the Chinese had concentrated sufficient numerical strength in the area and should they chose to cross their self proclaimed claim line of 1960, they could pose a serious threat even upto Leh(29).

At 1800 hrs on 22 October 1962, 114 brigade gave permission to 14 J&K Militia to commence withdrawal. The withdrawal started at 2100 hrs. The only route available was the difficult western track that went along the upper reaches of Shyok river and crossed the Karakoram mountain at Saser La. The troops from Track Junction were to join the main column at Gapshan. The Battalion Commander passed a false message to 114 Brigade at the same time, indicating that he had decided to hold on to DBO and Track Junction. This added precaution was taken so that the Chinese, who were believed to have been intercepting the radio traffic, should not get wind of Indian plans(30).

The withdrawing troops destroyed all the heavy stores, including 3 inch mortars, recoilless guns and most wireless sets. Each man carried his personal weapon and 100 rounds. The platoon of 1 Mahar, despite difficulties of carrying the heavy Vickers machine guns, refused to destroy them and carried them along. It was a tough retreat through very difficult mountains and under arctic conditions. The 7 odd vehicles (mostly jeeps and a few 1 tons) were loaded with the sick and wounded and tried to use the frozen river surface. However, barely 24 km from DBO, the frozen river bed gave way under the weight of the vehicles and these had to be abandoned. It was an organised withdrawal. The advance party was led by Major Randhawa, who was familiar with the route. Main body was under Lt Col Nihal Singh. A rear party consisting of a platoon of J&K Militia under Capt S.P. Rigzin, occupied the dominating feature of Pt 18763. This platoon only withdrew on 23 October at first light. By this time, all other troops were safely on their way to Saser Brangsa. The march back by tired and heavily laden troops through the high Karakoram mountains was a test of endurance and discipline, in which the troops came out with flying colours. The transport aircraft carried out a much needed air drop at Gapshan on 23rd, and again at a point half way to Saser Brangsa on 25 October. Some of the serious casualties were evacuated by helicopters from Gapshan and Saser Brangsa.

Right upto the officially declared cease-fire on 21 November 1962, there was no further fighting in the DBO sector.

The fighting revealed the enduring traits of Indian soldiers. Located on isolated and non-defensible check posts, the Jawans carried out the orders of 'Fighting to the best of their ability'. The non-military deployment of troops could leave no one in doubt about the eventual outcome. Yet in many instances, like at Post 1 (Chandani) or Post 4, Subedar Sonam Stobdan and Havildar Saroop Singh of the 14 J&K Militia made the supreme sacrifice after taking heavy toll of the enemy. Both were honoured with the nation's second highest gallantry award, the Maha Vir Chakra. A large part of the credit for the steadfastness and properly organised retreat goes to the officiating commander of the DBO sub sector, Major Sardul Singh Randhawa of 14 J&K Militia, who was also decorated with the MVC.

At the end of effective fighting on 24 October 1962, all the forward posts established in the Chip Chap and Nachu Chu river valley were withdrawn. DBO



was also abandoned. The Indian troops, however, continued to hold Saser Brangsa, Murgu, Sultan Chushku, as well as the Galwan and Shyok river junction. The Chinese had established their effective control upto their 1960 claim line(31).

CHANGCHENMO AND GALWAN SUB SECTOR

South of the DBO sector, area east of Shyok river is difficult to negotiate. Scattered mountains rising to 6000 metres make east west or north south movement difficult. The first possible route of ingress is through the Galwan river valley. Nearly 10 km to the south of Galwan river lies the Changchenmo valley. The shortest route to this area was based on a mule track that went over Changla (17000 ft), located 70 km from Leh. The route thence travelled through the Tangtse valley to reach Phobrang, which was the base for operations in this sector. The deployment in this sector also was basically in the Changchenmo and Galwan river valley, in order to prevent Chinese ingress in these areas. In October 1962, 5 Jat less one company was responsible for this sector. The detailed dispositions were as dictated by the forward policy. The posts were isolated and their routes of supply were vulnerable. Primary reliance was placed on air drops and helicopters. The Chinese had established strong posts in the vicinity of Indian posts and dominated them. The Chinese posts were connected with the Aksai Chin highway with motorable tracks.

5 Jats had a company strength at Galwan post, and rest of the Battalion at Phobrang. Platoon-sized posts were established at Hot Spring, Nala Junction, Patrol Base. A post was also established opposite the Chinese position at Tsoqtsalu. The route of maintenance for the posts was Phobrang, Shyok and thence along the northern banks of Changchenmo onwards to Nala Junction. The route of maintenance for the Galwan post that was opposite the Chinese position of Samzungling was via post Patrol base.

Galwan and all other posts were earlier (till 10-12 October 1962) occupied by 1/8 GR. 5 Jat, which had originally been inducted to relieve 1/8 GR, took over these posts in the first week of October. The Galwan post was in the news right since its establishment on 4 July 1962. The Chinese had immediately surrounded it and moved very close to the post in attack formation. The Indian troops did not budge. The troops also did not open fire, as under the then prevalent orders they needed the permission from Army Headquarters(32). The Chinese, however, did not permit land route contact with the post.

RESTRICTED

platoon strength patrol with rations and other provisions loaded on Yaks started from the Indian post at Patrol Base on 10 September 1962, but was halted by the Chinese barely 1/2 km away. The relief party was not given permission to open fire and therefore had to return to patrol base. The Chinese made use of loudspeakers to constantly bombard the Indian troops with propaganda about peaceful Chinese intentions. The broadcasts asked the Indians to go back. The Chinese also attempted to persuade the Gorkha troops that, being Nepalis, this was not their war. The steadfast behaviour of Indian troops in face of these grave provocations, and the Chinese unwillingness to assault the position, led to conviction in the Army Headquarters that, shown firmness, the Chinese yielded. The details of this assessment are mentioned earlier.

In October 1962, the Gorkhas were due for turnover, and the in-coming battalion, 5 Jat, was in the process of replacing them. As a part of that process, between 4 and 12 October 1962, a company of 5 Jats was helilifted to the post in Mi 4 helicopters.

Ever since September, the area had had heavy snow-fall. The troops in the isolated post of Galwan faced great hardships. Often the supply drop meant for them fell into Chinese hands. The Chinese posts nearby, in contrast, were connected by motor road and were well stocked with rations and firewood. The Chinese often broadcast to the Indians over the loudspeakers that, instead of suffering deprivations, the Indians should evacuate. The Chinese even promised not to interfere with the withdrawal.

Coinciding with their attack elsewhere in the sector, Chinese launched their attack on Galwan post in the early hours of 20 October 1962. The Jats reported hearing sound of light machine gun and 2 inch mortar firing from the direction of the post. All communications with the surrounded Galwan post also ceased on 20 October. On 21 October Indian helicopters flew over the area, but were fired at by the Chinese, and no contact could be established with Galwan post. The pilot on landing back reported that he saw no signs of life on the post. The account of fighting at the post only came to light when the prisoners of war returned.

As recounted by them, ever since its establishment the Galwan post was surrounded by the Chinese, and the only contact was through helicopter sorties of Mi 4. Since September there was heavy snow fall and the troops were living under extremely

difficult conditions. Everything ranging from ammunition and food to defence stores was in short supply. The men knew very well that they had neither any chance to escape nor was there any hope of reinforcements. The gallant fight put up by the men is a glorious chapter of Indian history. The Chinese attack on the post started with heavy artillery and mortar bombardment on 20 October at 0530 hrs. The ramshackle shelters and tents were almost destroyed in the initial phase itself. After an hour of shelling the Chinese attacked the forward sections with nearly a battalion strength. The men who had moved to open trenches fought a bitter last ditch battle. The Indians had only small arms and no artillery or mortars. The capture of forward positions did not mean end of fighting, as the rear positions continued to resist. It was only towards the evening that the Chinese finally succeeded in over-running the post. In all the Chinese launched three attacks. The casualties suffered by the defenders, 36 killed out of a total of 68 all ranks, show how bitter the fighting was !

The valour shown by the defenders of Galwan did not go in vain. It imposed caution on the Chinese and instilled in the enemy a healthy respect for the Indian Jawan's fighting prowess. There is no reliable estimate of Chinese casualties, but it is apparent from the caution they showed in dealing with the other posts like Patrol Base, Nala Junction and Hot Spring, that the Chinese must have suffered heavily. Galwan post battle is among the brightest spots in Indian Army's history, as it showed that, even when there was certainty of defeat and death, the Indian soldiers rejected the Chinese offer of surrender and fought to the last man and the last round. At the same time, the fall of Galwan post demolished the assumptions that were the foundation of the 'Forward Policy'.

Once the Chinese had eliminated the Indian presence in the Galwan valley, they turned their attention to Changchenmo valley which lies due south. In this sector there were platoon-sized posts located at Patrol Base, Nala Junction and Hot Spring. The Company Headquarters was at Hot Spring. On 21 October, the Chinese shelled all the three Indian posts. As Galwan post had fallen, there was no longer any need to maintain Patrol Base post which was just a link between Nala Junction and Galwan posts, and was protecting the route to Galwan. Taking an overall view of the situation, Western Command ordered personnel from Patrol Base to withdraw to Nala Junction. The troops had stood their ground despite intense shelling. As darkness fell, the platoon broke contact and successfully withdrew to Nala Junction.

To cover the withdrawal of the platoon, a section strong rear party remained behind. The next morning, 22 October, Chinese launched an assault on this section. The men fought with great bravery and caused many casualties to the Chinese. The post commander, Subedar Amar Singh, in the true traditions of leading by example, made the supreme sacrifice. Nala Junction was now strengthened and continued to resist Chinese attempts to out-flank it and get behind Hot Spring.

In the meanwhile, unknown to the valiant defenders in Changchenmo valley, the Chinese launched attacks on their southern flank on 22 October 1962. Kongma post was being defended by a platoon 5 Jats. The attack on Kongma started at 1400 hrs in broad daylight. The Indians were well sited and beat back the first Chinese assault. The fight continued for nearly four hours. Out of the strength of 33 only seven men survived and withdrew to battalion base at Phobrang under the cover of darkness. The Chinese also attacked the platoon post at Ane La on the same day. The post fell by last light on 22 October after offering stiff resistance. With the fall of these two posts the Chinese were now in a position to pose a threat to the rear of the Indians deployed in Changchenmo valley.

The situation on 23 October became even more critical, as from Kongma the Chinese were now in a position to cut off the Jats deployed at Hot Spring, Nala Junction and Tsogatsalu. XV Corps on 23 October issued fresh orders to withdraw all troops, including ITBP, to prepare positions at Tsogatsalu, abandoning the posts at Nala Junction and Patrol Base. As the withdrawal from Nala Junction was in progress, the Chinese shelled the position, but did not press their attack. In the meanwhile, 114 Brigade had ordered even Tsogatsalu area to be abandoned and the troops to withdraw to Phobrang. As the easier southern track via Marsimik La was threatened by the fall of Kongma and Ane La, the troops withdrawing from Hot Spring followed the more difficult northern track along the Changchenmo river. Nearly every one suffered from frost bite or chilblains before reaching Phobrang. The situation soon stabilised, and a platoon under Major Ajit Singh of 5 Jat, even reoccupied Nala Junction on 24 October. By 28 October, 5 Jats had consolidated their positions from Shyok to Phobrang. The forward positions at Tsogatsalu continued to be held and Indian patrols continued to dominate the area. The Chinese did not attempt any further advances in this sector and situation remained unchanged right upto the ceasefire(33).

## CHUSHUL SUB SECTOR

South of Changchenmo valley running north west to south east is the continuation of Karakoram range, with heights over 6000 metres. The mountains end on the shores of Pangong lake. This is a long lake with crystal clear but undrinkable brackish water. The lake is over 1 km wide, and very deep. It freezes in winter and even vehicular movement over the frozen ice is possible. In the afternoon strong winds give rise to high waves, making it difficult to cross. On the south bank of the lake again there are high broken mountains that slope south to Spangur lake. West of this lake there exists a clean gap between the mountains, the Spangur gap. It is nearly 2 km wide and joins the Chushul plateau with the main Tibetan plateau lying to east. West of Spangur gap lies the village of Chushul. Between Chushul village and Spangur was located the Chushul airfield. By October 1962, through efforts of Army engineers, this was capable of taking AN-12 and Packet aircrafts.

Just before the conflict the garrison at Chushul was also connected with Leh by a road that passed over Tsaka La, a high pass, before reaching Dingtai that lies due south of Chushul. From this point onwards the road travelled north west along the bank of Indus river to Leh(34). The shorter northern route to Chushul was via Changla near Karu. This road came via Dorbuk, Tangtse and Tartar camp along the southern bank of Pangong lake. This was an old caravan route and was fit for mules and yaks.

West and north west of Chushul was the high Ladakh range rising to over 6000 metres (20000 ft). This range continues due south east.

In the early phases of fighting in Ladakh, Chushul defences were held by two companies of 1/8 Gorkha Rifles battalion. After being relieved by 5-Jat in second week of October 1962, a company less platoon strength was deployed in Sirijap complex north of Pangong lake. This post was supplied by boats across the lake and had no land link with the battalion. South of Pangong lake was the Yula complex consisting of three posts manned by another company of 1/8 GR. Nearly two companies defended the Spangur gap. Both the hills on the northern shoulder named Gurung hill and to the south named Magar hill, were held. In addition there was a post in the gap itself.

Since early September the Chinese had surrounded the Sirijap post. They had also constructed a road joining their posts with their headquarters at Khurna fort. The total Chinese strength opposite Chushul sector was estimated to be a regiment.

The Chinese attack on Sirijap complex consisting of three posts, Sirijap, Sirijap-1 and 2, commenced at around 0600 hrs on 21 October 1962. The Chinese carried out heavy shelling of Sirijap-1 for nearly 2½ hours. They then attacked this post with light tanks, against which the post had no weapons. The ferry point near Tokung had a small Indian post and it was possible to observe the battle from there. Soon after the shelling started the posts at Sirijap went out of communication. A patrol under an NCO Nk Rabilal Thapa reached as close as 1000 yards from Sirijap-1; after observing the post the NCO came back and reported that the entire post including the company commander Major Dhan Singh Thapa had died in the attack. After capturing Sirijap-1, the Chinese turned their attention to Sirijap-2 and captured it after fierce resistance. Very few escaped from this battle. The returning soldiers also narrated that after collecting the wounded the Chinese lined them up and shot them dead. Yula complex of posts had begun the process of consolidating all the personnel at Yula-2 and 3 by evening of 21 October. By 22 October the Chinese were in complete control of the Northern bank of Pangong lake and maintenance of Yula posts by boats became difficult as Chinese were firing with MMGs on boats. Decision was taken on 22 October to withdraw troops from Yula complex to a high ground north of Gurung hill(35).

On 21 October, Indian transport aircraft flying in the area reported seeing a two mile long column of Chinese vehicles proceeding towards Spangur gap. The troops deployed in area also confirmed move of vehicles that alarmed brigade headquarters who thought that threat to Chushul was imminent. The entire front of nearly 60 km from Changchenmo to Dingtai had only one weak battalion. 13 Kumaon battalion which was located in Leh was ordered to move to Chushul on 21 October. In the meanwhile a platoon of 1 Mahar that was equipped with medium machine guns, was also ordered to Chushul. XV Corps took energetic action and airlifted one battery (8 guns) of 25-pounder guns to Chushul. The Chushul defences were now strengthened and the airlift of stores and ammunition continued. The Chinese did not launch an immediate attack and the lull period set in after 22 October in Chushul sector. The quick build up served the purpose of averting an immediate danger. The Chinese were to attack the area later.

#### THE INDUS VALLEY

The Indus valley sector lies south of Chushul. Dingtai was an important location from where a road

went north to Chushul, west to Leh and south along the Indus to Demchok. The Indus river valley south of Dungti is a flat open area flanked by low hills on the east and high mountains of Zanskar range to the west. The International boundary followed the eastern hills. These hills had several passes opening to Tibetan plateau. Vehicular movement along the valley presented no problems and excellent airfield existed at Fukche. The road communications on the Chinese side were not well developed and the only approach was from the south. The Chinese were estimated to have had a battalion located in Tashigong.

On the Indian side 7 J&K Militia was responsible for the defence of this sub-sector with its headquarters at Koyul with one company, company worth at Dungti and the rest of the troops being deployed along the passes and bottlenecks along the International border. The Chinese attacks in this sector started on 27 October. Chinese attacked simultaneously at Changla, Jarala, New Demchok and High Ground (north west of Demchok).

The Chinese plan of attack in this sector followed the pattern established elsewhere. They launched simultaneous attacks on Changla and Jarala posts that held the line of low hills on eastern side of Indus valley. Once having tackled these posts they then infiltrated between Fukche and the extreme southern posts of New Demchok and High Ground, thus making these untenable. Once having occupied the Kailash range that dominated the eastern banks of the Indus valley, they in effect denied its use by the Indians.

Changla post was well dug-in with wire obstacles around it. It was defended by 17 men of 7 J&K Militia under a JCO. In the early hours of 27 October, the Chinese approached the vicinity of the post in 30 odd vehicles. The vehicles were mounted with machine guns, which opened fire on the Indian post. The response from Indians was quick in coming using 2-inch mortar, two Chinese leading vehicles were set on fire. The men held their fire till the Chinese came close and within their rifle range. The two light machine guns effectively engaged the attacking Chinese. After nearly three hours of fire fight, the vastly outnumbered post commander decided to withdraw his men. Nearly 300 Chinese soldiers had surrounded the post. The post commander divided his party in two and while one party moved, he himself gave covering fire with LMG. Most of the men could thus withdraw safely to Fukche but the post commander laid down his life while covering the withdrawal of his men.

danger of being isolated. In addition, the threat to *Dungti* and *Koyul* needed to be averted and therefore the troops in conjunction with those at High Ground were asked to carry out a withdrawal by night 27/28 October. The withdrawal was successfully completed by 2330 hrs. The defenders successfully evaded the Chinese road-block under the cover of darkness and arrived in *Koyul* in good spirit.

The newly established 3 Himalayan Division as well as XV Corps gave a serious thought to order withdrawal from *Koyul* as well, but in the end left the decision to the commander on the spot, Lt Col R.M. Banon. He preferred to stay put and strengthen the defences rather than withdraw. The Indians continued to occupy these positions. There was some confusion regarding outposts at *Hanle* and *Zarser* and *Chumar* lying to the south west of this sector. These posts were held by CRP/ITBP and went out of communication on 27 October. These were also presumed to have fallen to the Chinese. But by 31 October it transpired that all these posts were intact.

At the end of the fighting on 28 October, the Chinese had established control of the eastern hills flanking the Indus valley. The road that passed through the valley was being dominated by them and could not be used by the Indians. The Chinese appeared to be satisfied with this gain and there was no further fighting in this sector(36).

THE LULL : 28 OCTOBER - 18 NOVEMBER

On the 20 October 1962, once the Chinese launched their well co-ordinated attack in Ladakh and NEFA, the basic assumption underlying the 'Forward Policy' ceased to exist. The Western Command, which all the while had been pleading for deployment based on 'military logic', now put into action its own plan for defence of Ladakh. The earlier operating injunction about not withdrawing resources and troops facing Pakistan was revoked, and between 20 October and 30 October, nearly a division worth of troops were inducted in Ladakh.

It was a feat achieved in the face of heavy odds. To augment the meagre transport resources, even the first line transport from units and formations was withdrawn to form ad hoc motor companies to facilitate induction. Divisions facing Pakistan were milked for battalions. The Air Force transport fleet also rose to the occasion and flew much beyond its normal capability(37).

Basically the induction was for defence of *Leh*. The outer and inner ring plan has already been discussed earlier; it was this plan that had been implemented. The strength in the forward



The post at Jarala was attacked at the same time as Changla. This post was also held by 17 men under a Havildar. The Chinese 200 in number surrounded the post from all sides and opened machine gun fire on Indians. The Indian post also replied with 2-inch mortar and LMG. The fire fight continued right through the day. Around dusk the post commander decided to break out of the encirclement and rejoin the battalion main defences at Koyul. Using the tactics of fire and movement he successfully carried out a withdrawal by night.

In the south at New Demchok post that was on the eastern bank and High Ground that was on the western bank, it was a different story. High Ground was a formidable position held by 5 platoons, well dug in. Selective mine-laying had also been carried out. Besides the Infantry weapons, this post had two sections of 3-inch mortars and two medium machine guns also. Indeed a formidable combination. The Chinese approached the post in the early hours of 27 October, under the cover of darkness with a strength of around 200 to 300. The Chinese tried to attack the post from the nallah in south. There, the Chinese came under the devastating fire of mortars and machine guns. The Chinese suffered heavy casualties and had to beat a hasty retreat. Then onwards from 1100 hrs till 1700 hrs, the Chinese did not attempt an assault but confined themselves to firing at the post only. The post returned the fire and inflicted further casualties on the Chinese who were caught in the open while the Indian troops remained in trenches. This post could have been held on indefinitely but for the fact that fall of Changla, Jarala and New Demchok, cut the route of withdrawal as well as maintenance of the post. Reluctantly the battalion ordered the withdrawal of this post at 1930 hrs on 27 October and the men were redeployed at Fukche.

New Demchok post across the Indus was not tactically sited but was mainly a 'Forward Policy' post on the International border. Initially it had only a section strength, but as tensions mounted it was beefed up by two platoons which were deployed in the historic Zorawar fort area. The Chinese approached the post from the Jarala side on the morning of 27 October. The fire from Zorawar fort came as a nasty surprise for them and the nearly 400 Chinese who had come in for the attack suffered heavy casualties. In the meanwhile some Chinese crossed the Indus and positioned themselves in the area of old Demchok on the western bank between High Ground and New Demchok. This move by the Chinese as well as their road-block further north created a situation where the southern positions of 7 J&K Militia were in

most posts' was increased only marginally. Most deployment was in the rear areas well away from the immediate Chinese attack.

Major General Budh Singh, MC, raised the 3 Himalayan Division on 26 October 1962 at Leh. The 114 Brigade Headquarters was moved to Chushul and was responsible for Chushul and Phobrang sectors. Brigadier R.S. Grewal, MC, arrived in Leh with 70 Infantry Brigade Headquarters on 25 October and took over responsibility of the Indus Valley sector. By 3 November it was established at Dungti and later at Asale in the rear. On 24 October Delta sector was raised out of existing troops to look after the Northern sector, with its Headquarters at Thoise. 163 Infantry Brigade arrived in Leh to look after the close defence of Leh proper. The Western Command had been pleading for the induction of a division since 1961, and the troops did materialise in the midst of the conflict. The new formation did not have any immediate operational problems, as 114 Brigade was being commanded directly by XV Corps. Aware of the need to maintain continuity, the 3 Div left the existing structures intact and interfered very little in the fighting, burnt of which was being borne by 114 Brigade. Significant addition to the fire power of troops in Ladakh was the induction of 13 Field Regiment equipped with 25-pounder field guns. One battery was already in Chushul. By 3 November another battery reached Dungti. The third battery was located in Leh along with the regimental headquarters. 114 Heavy Mortar battery equipped with 4.2 inch mortars was inducted in Chushul between 26 October and 31 October. One troop was sent to Lukung to support 5 Jat and the rest of the battery was sent to Dungti. The Indian Air Force achieved a major feat when the AN-12 aircraft airlifted a troop of AMX-13 tanks to Chushul on 25 October. The troop belonged to 20 Lancers.

In the meanwhile new Infantry battalions were also being inducted, and included 9 Dogra, 3/4 Gorkha Rifles, 3 Sikh LI, and 1 Jat. The troops were being airlifted in small groups and were being deployed post haste to plug the various gaps in the defences. Visualizing the likelihood of the road of Chushul garrison being cut off, the Army engineers were ordered to construct an alternative route via Karu, Changla, Tangtse and Tartar Camp.

The Commander XV Corps informed the Army Commander on 30 October 1962 that he was not asking 3 Div to make any plan for withdrawal from Chushul. He felt this would have only adverse effect on the morale of the troops defending Chushul and Dungti. Both

these positions were to be defended to the last man. He also urged him that provision of close air support would be of immense help in the defensive battle.

All the possible routes to Leh were now held in strength. In the north, D Sector with a strength of nearly 2 battalions held the Saserla, Sultan Chushku, Shyok, Galwan-Shyok river junction. The route passing over Changla was defended at the pass itself, as well as at Dorbuk. Giving depth to the Changla defences were the troops deployed at Phobrang and Chushul with some artillery support. In the Indus Valley sector, a whole brigade blocked the axis at Dingt, Chumathang and areas further back. In Leh proper there was nearly a battalion worth of troops to defend the surrounding hills. The newly inducted troops were thus placed in a reasonable position to defend Leh. Only one battalion, 1 Jat, was deployed in Chushul area. On 27 October itself, request for further troops for defence of Chushul, made by 114 Brigade Commander, was turned down by the Corps Commander, his mind being made up that Leh must remain secure at all costs(38).

#### BATTLE OF CHUSHUL

The lull period was utilised by the Chinese to build up their strength in the Spangur area. Indian troops in the Gurung hill and Yula III area kept a vigilant watch on these activities. In the absence of long range weapons and decision not to use Air Force, the Chinese build up continued unhindered(39). The Indian build-up also was proceeding at the same time, yet as a matter of deliberate decision, it was decided not to put the newly inducted troops in threatened areas like Chushul. The emphasis on the Indian side was on defence of Leh.

Once 3 Himalayan Division was raised, 114 Brigade moved to Chushul on 27 October as already stated, defence of Chushul was now the sole responsibility of the brigade. In the Chushul area the brigade had 1 Jat, looking after Tokung, Yula III and Lukung with a company each. The rest of the battalion was at Gompa Hill. 1/8 GR was deployed to cover the Northern flank of Spangur gap. Nearly two companies were on Gurung hill, and a company to the North of Pt 5167. The fourth company was located in the Spangur gap itself. The battalion headquarters was located at the airfield with an ad hoc company as reserve. 13 Kumaon looked after the Southern flank with two companies on Muggar Hill, a company with section of 3 inch mortars at Rezangla and battalion headquarters with one company at Track Junction. Tsakala also had a company of 5 Jat. The brigade was

holding nearly 40 Km of frontage with three battalions. Most of the troops were committed to ground holding role and the only reserves available at the brigade level were two troops of tanks and an ad hoc company located at the airfield.

The defences were only occupied in last week of October, and the winter conditions made preparation of defences a very difficult task. The general shortage of snow clothing made matters worse. Digging in the hard rocky surface proved difficult, hence recourse was taken to construct stone heaps above ground level (called Sangars) to prepare firing positions. The three weeks respite that Indian troops got for defensive preparations was barely adequate. None of the equipment of the Indian Army was designed for operating in temperatures below zero. For instance, the rifles and LMGs could not be fired with gloves on, as the trigger guard forces the firer to discard the gloves. It caused a large number of casualties due to frost bite.

The Chinese in the meanwhile had apparently concentrated nearly a regiment plus a battalion, at least, in the vicinity of the Spangur gap. The movement was regularly monitored by the Indian troops. The two major concentrations were in area North of Gurung hill and in Spangur gap itself. The Chinese had deployed their heavy mortars in the gap in full view of the Indians deployed on Gurung hill. The Chinese were forced into this, as their mortars had inadequate range. The field battery of 25-pounders of the Indians had similar problems, and in order to support both Gurung hill as well as Muggar hill, the battery was split in two troops, and was located due west of these positions. On 29 October the Chinese opened mortar fire on Gurung hill. In an instant, the Indian guns opened up and engaged the Chinese Observation Post located at Black Top, a hill that overlooked Gurung hill. The Chinese promptly stopped their fire.

The real Chinese attack in this sector started on 18 November, coinciding with their attack on Sela in NEFA. The Chinese were obviously working to a timetable. Chushul with its airfield and the Indian brigade was a thorn in the Chinese flesh as that provided a possible jump off point for an Indian threat to the Chinese occupied Aksai Chin and the highway running through it. In fact a cursory thought was given by the CGS to the possibility of an offensive across Spangur gap in order to relieve pressure in the Chip Chap valley. The idea did not progress any further, as the Indians did not have adequate strength for it(40).

The Chinese launched a two-pronged attack on Chushul defences. The northern prong of nearly a regiment strength, attacked Gurung hill, basically the lower half of Black Top hill which was under the Chinese. The Chinese thus had the advantage of attacking down hill, always a major consideration in mountains. The second prong of the Chinese, probably a battalion worth, attacked C Company of 13 Kumaon at Rezangla. The attack on Gurung hill posed a direct threat to Chushul airfield, while occupation of Rezangla would enable the Chinese to cut off the single road that linked Chushul to Leh via Dungti. The Chushul garrison then would be totally dependent on the mule track from Leh that passed over Changla and reached Chushul via Tangtse and Tartar camp. With their occupation of Sirijap position even this track was vulnerable.

In their co-ordinated attack on Chushul defences the Chinese appear to have used nearly two battalions in south against Rezangla and about a Regiment in the north. Rezangla is an isolated 5500 metres (18000 ft) high feature, about 11 km south of Spangur gap. The importance of Rezangla was that it dominated the life line of the Chushul garrison - the road link with Leh that went via Dungti. The nearest Indian position to the south was 5 Jat company at Tsakala. The Rezangla position, though forming part of the main defences, was thus in reality an isolated company post. Since there was only one battery of 13 Field located in Spangur gap, Rezangla position was without any artillery support. The sole fire support available was the section of 3-inch mortars located within the company position. In view of its isolated location, the company had to be prepared to face the enemy from all directions and the company was therefore deployed for all round defence. (See sketch for detailed deployment).

At about 4 a.m. in the morning of 18 November the silence was broken by a burst of LMG. The forward observation post to the south of company defences had detected nearly 400 Chinese approaching the 8 Platoon located there. The news of this was passed on to the company headquarters, and the men immediately went to their trenches waiting for the Chinese. The Indians held their fire and waited for the Chinese to come within range.

Soon, nearly a battalion of the Chinese launched their assault on Rezangla from two directions, one group coming from the south and another directly from due east. The attackers were approaching the Indian position through the nallahs that came up to the hill

top. At around 0500 hrs, all hell broke loose as the Kumaonis defending Rezangla opened up with everything they had. The Chinese caught in the deep nullahs were an easy prey to the 3-inch mortars and grenades. After nearly half an hour of intense firing the first attack petered out and the remnants took shelter behind boulders.

Once the Chinese attempt to take the position by a silent and surprise attack failed, they opened artillery and mortar fire at 0540 hrs. The fire was not very effective and did not cause much damage to the defences, though the telephone lines of the Battalion HQ got cut, and the radio set was destroyed. The 'C' Company of 13 Kumaon was now totally on its own. The post at Tsakala could see the firing and reported the news of fight to the battalion, which was otherwise completely in the dark about the happenings at Rezangla. The Chinese were not inactive elsewhere, and the defenders at Rezangla knew that timely help was impossible. The reinforcements would have taken anything upto 5 to 6 hours to reach there, and they would have to deal with the Chinese who had attacked the post from three directions.

After the failure of frontal attack, the Chinese resorted to a simultaneous attack from the rear and southern flank. Under the cover of artillery fire, the Chinese in two company strength attacked the rear platoon. The Indians jumped out of their trenches and took on the Chinese with bayonets and even bare hands. In one memorable instance, a Jawan bodily lifted a Chinese soldier and threw him on the rocks. All the men of this brave platoon died fighting. There was not a single survivor. In the meanwhile, the 3-inch mortars were incessantly firing at the advancing Chinese at point blank range. Rezangla was soon littered with Chinese dead. The Company Commander, Major Shaitan Singh, moved from trench to trench, encouraging his men and redeploing the LMGs. His brave Havildar Major was a constant shadow and with fixed bayonet warded off many an attack on the Company Commander and in the bargain sent many Chinese soldiers to their graves(41).

The fight at Rezangla was hard and bitter. The last of Indian machine guns fell silent only around 2200 hrs. The intensity of fighting can be gauged from the fact that, out of 112 all ranks at Rezangla, only 14 survived to come back and tell the story. There were no prisoners taken by the Chinese in the battle of Rezangla. In November 1963, nearly a year after the battle, the dead bodies were recovered by the Indian Red Cross. The parties that visited Rezangla saw the place littered with field dressings

and blood marks, giving an indication to the heavy losses suffered by the Chinese. Rezangla is indeed a rare battle in military history. A grateful nation bestowed the highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra on the Company Commander, Major Shaitan Singh(42).

The going for the invading Chinese was even tougher at Gurung hill. The Chinese attacked Gurung hill complex simultaneously with their attack on Rezangla. The approach chosen was from Black Hill, that gave them the advantage of attacking from high ground. At 0530 hrs on 18 November, the Chinese began intense bombardment of Gurung hill as well as the Indian posts located in the Spangur gap and Mugga hill.

Two companies of 1/8 Gorkha Rifles were defending the vast area of Gurung hill. The troops had well dug positions protected by wire and some anti-personnel mines. Attack was expected from the direction of Black Hill; the defences were therefore ready to face the Chinese. The first wave of the attackers made contact with the northern company of Gurung hill at 0630 hrs. Here the Chinese were in for a surprise. When still outside the small arms range they were engaged by accurate fire from the troops of 13 Field Regiment. 2nd Lieutenant Goswami, the young artillery observation officer, did a commendable job of directing the fire. The Chinese launched a series of attacks and finally, after two hours, a detachment managed to occupy some portions of Gurung hill. The energetic platoon commander there, Tej Bahadur Gurung got his men out from the trenches, and using the traditional Gorkha Khukri (a small curved knife) fell on the Chinese. The Chinese had to fall back under this fierce onslaught. By 1000 hrs the situation was stabilized and Gurung hill remained firmly in Indian hands. In the meanwhile Chinese were continuously shelling the Spangur gap as well as airfield. The track between Gurung hill and the battalion headquarters was no longer usable. The men on Gurung hill were asked to conserve their ammunition for the second attack by the Chinese, which was expected soon.

The second attack was preceded by even more intense shelling. The brave Gorkhas were finally overwhelmed by vastly superior numbers, and the forward platoon fell. Out of 17 men in this platoon every single one died fighting. The Chinese then turned their attention to the lower company. At this stage, they came under accurate fire from Indian tank troop of 20 Lancers. Captain A.K. Dewan led the tanks effectively and the Chinese had no answer to Indian tanks. The Chinese suffered heavily and fell back.

The Gorkhas had also suffered heavy casualties, with nearly 50 killed and several wounded. With the shelling of the airfield and village, reinforcements as well as ammunition supply was posing a problem. The news from Rezangla had posed a danger of cutting off the Leh-Dungti-Chushul road. At this crucial moment the line and radio communications link between Gurung hill defenders and battalion and brigade headquarters snapped due to the heavy shelling by the Chinese. Physical movement from the rear to the forward locations had to run the gauntlet of accurate Chinese fire on the flat and open area through which the track passed. The true situation on Gurung hill and the defenders success could not therefore be appreciated at higher headquarters. The defences at Muggar hill and in the Sangur gap were under constant Chinese shelling throughout the day. Though the Chinese did not assault these positions, moving up of reinforcements was out of question.

Keeping the overall picture in view, 114 brigade decided to withdraw the troops from Gurung hill, Muggar hill, Spangur post and Tokung, and to redeploy them on mountains West of Chushul. This decision was in conformity with the ideas of Corps headquarters, and the new positions had been decided even earlier. The emphasis was on defence of Leh and Chushul was considered mainly a screen position. Brigadier Raina also could not overlook the fact that once even a portion of Gurung hill fell to the enemy Chushul airfield could not be used by the Indian Air Force, as the Chinese could fire on the aircraft with machine guns as well as mortars and artillery. The closing down of Chushul airfield and threat to Dungti track after fall of Rezangla meant that the brigade was now dependent on the long and difficult mule track from Leh that passed over the Changla and reached Chushul via Tangtse and Tartar camp. It also appeared that while the defenders might be able to hold on for some more time, the sacrifice in men and material would not be justified. The defenders of Chushul were needed to provide defence in depth and ward off threat to Leh. Thus it came about that, despite the successful defence, a withdrawal was ordered on the night of 19/20 November(43).

The withdrawal was an orderly affair and most of the major equipment was removed. This successful action was due, in no small measure, to the accurate shelling of the Chinese positions by the lone battery of 13 Field Regiment. On 19 November under the cover of falling snow the Chinese launched another determined attack around mid-day on the lower positions of Gurung hill. Their aim appeared to be to get behind Indian positions at Spangur gap and Muggar hill. But one artillery and tank fire by the defenders was so devastating that the Chinese reeled back and made no further attempt. The thinning out from positions started after last light(44).



Second Lieutenant S.B. Goswami was the artillery observer at Gurung hill. This gallant young officer continued to direct accurate fire at the enemy and kept them at bay. The Chinese thus could not interfere with the withdrawal. After the Indian troops had withdrawn the Chinese occupied the Gurung hill. Goswami, who was badly wounded and given up for dead regained his senses around midnight of 19/20 November. The weather was intensely cold and his wounds had stopped bleeding. Showing the mettle that he was made of, Goswami crawled all the way back to the Indian positions in the area of Chushul village. The second troop of this gallant battery was supporting the Muggar hill complex and located behind the defences. On 19 November, after their capture of Rezangla, some Chinese came down from that direction to attack the gun position. The gunners fired over open sights directly into the mass of assaulting enemy. The Chinese suffered heavy casualties and thereafter decided to leave the guns alone. Even while the withdrawal was on, the Indian gunners sighted some self-propelled Chinese guns in the Spangur gap. As a parting kick the gunners engaged the Chinese guns, and then withdrew intact to the new positions West of Chushul village. The part played by 13 Field Regiment in the defence of Chushul was indeed crucial.

The Chinese did not follow up the withdrawing Indians. They also made no attempts to secure the Chushul airfield for their own use, as that would have meant tackling the Indian defences west of Chushul. It could be that the Chinese were content at having deprived the Indians of the use of the airfield, which lay in the no-mans-land now. Yet it is quite likely that Chinese were not prepared to buy any more casualties than they had already suffered at the hands of the Chushul defenders. Chushul was probably the only organised defensive battle fought by the Indian Army in 1962. The odds in numbers and fire support were heavily in favour of the Chinese. Yet the contest was a close one, and honours even. It is worth speculating that an extra battalion and an artillery regiment (the normal fire support complement of the brigade) might well have enabled the gallant defenders of Chushul to smash all the enemy assaults on Gurung hill, and Rezangla, and to turn the table on the aggressors(45).

#### CONCLUSION AND COMMENTS

The Sino-Indian border dispute had its origins in the surreptitious occupation of Aksai Chin plateau by the Chinese in 1957. The Chinese lead in infrastructural development was further compounded by

the fact that even after 1959 the pace of development of communications was slow on the Indian side. Underlying these reactions was the gut feeling in India that there would be no serious clash of arms over the border issue.

The 'Forward Policy' was possibly a necessary adjunct to the negotiations that went on between the Indian and Chinese sides from 1960 onwards. After the virtual breakdown of talks, the forward policy became full of risks. It however appears that, disregarding prudence - an essential virtue in matters concerning national security - the same policy of setting up flag posts continued.

In the implementation of the 'Forward Policy' the Army headquarters had a direct hand and even issues normally dealt with at battalion level (move of sections or patrols) were being dictated from Delhi, based on maps of dubious accuracy. There was a tendency to dismiss the genuine difficulties of troops in the field as 'mere belly aching'(46). The strict orders regarding control over firing, aggravated the syndrome of waiting for orders from Delhi, and had a negative impact on morale of troops when it came to actual fighting.

The jostling for establishment of posts in Ladakh, as predicted by Western Command, went largely to the advantage of the Chinese. On the other hand, the limited Indian strength was dissipated in penny packets. In the northern sector, if the strength was conserved it should have been entirely possible to hold DBO proper. In trying to defend every inch, the Indians ended up losing much more than they need have.

Intelligence or the lack of it (both in a general and particular sense) made matters worse(47). The estimates of forward troops were dismissed as exaggeration. Instead of presenting intelligence, the IB even recommended and advised the Army on military matters. Even after nearly 27 years, there is no firm estimate available about the actual Chinese force levels in the 1962 Conflict.

In the ultimate analysis, Ladakh was saved due to the prudent planning on part of Western Command and herculean efforts on part of the IAF after 22 October 1962. The timely deployment of resources in depth probably prevented the Chinese from advancing any further. The spirited resistance put up by the jawans in even hopeless circumstances had a sobering effect on the Chinese. On the other hand, the induction that took place in the lull period had strengthened the Indian position sufficiently to have tried to save

Chushul. The extra troops that were deployed in Saserla and Thoise area could well have made the difference in the battle of Chushul on 18 November by providing the Brigade with some reserves.

The Chinese aim in advancing their 1960 claim line appears to have been to push back Indians on to the edge of mountains. The Chinese thus succeeded in eliminating possible launch pads for any offensive against the Aksai Chin highway by eliminating DBO, Chushul and Demchok positions. This all the more strengthens the contention that Indians should have attempted to retain at least one jump off point: Chushul.

Nearly equal number of casualties suffered by the Indians were weather casualties. This brought home the need for a long-term perspective planning of equipment and training. It is a tribute to Indian soldier that even under such circumstances he fought and fought well.

In the end one can only quote Carl Von Clausewitz,

"Woe to the Govt, which relying on halfhearted politics & a shackled military policy meets a foe, who like the untamed mighty forces of nature, knows no law other than his own power".

\*\* \*\* \*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Over the years due to the efforts of Army and Civil authorities a large number of trees have been planted in the Ladakh region and the situation is much different than what existed in 1962. The massive tree plantation has had an excellent effect on the ecology of the region, including increased availability of oxygen and increased rainfall.
2. A road link to Leh from Srinagar was finally completed only in August 1962. The section from Kargil to Leh was still unsettled and prone to landslides. Zojila pass closed around October and only opened in June.
3. At the time of Sino Indian conflict in 1962, only Chushul and Indus Valley sub-sectors were connected with motorable road. The rest of the important places were connected by mule tracks. The following time and space chart shows the difficulties in communication.

<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Distance</u> (kms)	<u>Journey time</u> (in days)
Leh	Demchok	316	1½ by veh 17 on foot
Leh	Chushul	176	1 (by veh) 9 (on foot)
Leh	Karakoram Pass	233	12 (on foot)
Leh	Tangtse (via Changla)	97	5 (on foot)
Leh	Phohrang (via Changla)	137	7 (on foot)

The distance from Leh to Manali was 300 km over rugged mountains and it took nearly 16 days of marching to complete the trek.

4. This assessment is contrary to one given by the Army HQ. In one of its reviews, it has noted that while the Chinese were unlikely to use force to occupy areas they claim, yet they would certainly resist by force any attempt on our part to retake our lost areas. From Official Records.
5. From Official Records.

6. Ibid.
7. Lt General B.M. Kaul, the CGS, in a note dated 7 December 1961 further elaborates that it is intended to establish certain posts in Aksai Chin and other areas of Ladakh, now held by the Chinese. It is thus clear that attempt was now being made to recover lost territory through setting up of these small flag posts. From Official Records.
8. From Official Records.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. On 4 July 1962 a patrol of platoon strength led by the Commanding Officer of 1/8 GR with 1 JCO & 35 Jawans established a post. The post was promptly surrounded by the Chinese in the vicinity. From Official Records.
14. From Official Records.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid. It has been maintained that the threat in Ladakh was of two Regts plus (Total of 7 Bns).
26. The first recce for citing of post at DEO was undertaken in July 1960. Major S.S. Randhawa was assisted by Capt (now Lt Gen) ESR, Sahni of 9

Field Company, Engineers. The recce report recommended setting up of DBO post and also development of a landing ground. The landing ground was at the height of 16,500 feet and the first Packet aircraft landed there on 27 July 1962. The landing ground was declared to be fit for emergencies only. Interview with Lt Gen D.S.R. Sahni conducted at Srinagar on 22 September 1988. Also From Official Records.

27. From Official Records.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid. This wireless message received by brigade at 2100 hrs caused some temporary confusion which was cleared subsequently.

31. From Official Records.

32. From Official Records. The original letter on 'Forward Policy' had laid down that firing incident was to be avoided at all cost. When a restriction of this nature percolates down through service channel it normally becomes even more rigid. As the tensions increased, the only concession made was that troops were permitted to fire in self defence.

33. Ibid.

34. The road to Chushul was completed by September 1962.

35. Since all communications with Sirjap Company of 1/8 GR broke down in the initial phase of the battle, the news of resistance and casualties was initially based on account given by a young soldier and a junior non-commissioned officer. From Official Records.

36. From Official Records.

37. The full details of role played by Air Force are dealt with in a separate chapter dealing with it.

38. On 27 October 1962, Commander 114 Infantry Brigade requested XV Corps to send additional troops to Chushul. The request was turned down by the Corps Commander. From Official Records.

39. The Indians lacked means to seriously interfere with the Chinese build up. The hang-over of

earlier policy of not opening fire except in self defence, was also a factor in Indian passivity. Interview with Major (later Major General) Jagjit Singh, the Brigade Major, 114 Infantry Bde, held at Shimla, 01 October 1988.

40. From Official Records. The matter of this attack, which would have certainly been a disaster, was not pursued further, probably owing to move of Lt Gen B.M. Kaul to IV Corps. It is indicative of the gap between reality on ground in Ladakh and perception of CGS.
41. From Official Records. Also, interview with Capt (now Major) D.D. Saklani.
42. Ibid.
43. As early as 30 October 1962, the Corps Commander XV Corps had informed the Western Command that he had not ordered planning for withdrawal from Chushul only because of the effect this would have on the morale of the defenders. Brig (later General) T.N. Raina, 114 Bde Commander, had however done the initial recce for re-siting the brigade at Dorbuk in Tangtse valley. From Official Records.
44. The troops on withdrawal from Forward positions occupied a line roughly in the area of Chushul Village and Re-entrant. From Official Records.
45. From Official Records.
46. From Official Records. There were frantic efforts to air lift pre-fab huts to Ladakh. Even procurement of Artic tents proved difficult. As late as 26 July 1962, Ordnance Branch wrote to Kanpur Factory to enquire from trade the availability of Artic tents. There were obvious lacunae in planning for fighting in artic conditions of Ladakh, where the men had to perforce use ordnancy canvas tents, for living and surviving.
47. From Official Records. Indicating the state of affairs is a press telegramme from P.K. Roy, correspondent of a Bombay daily 'Free Press Journal', that was marked TOP SECRET and circulated by Intelligence Bureau to Ministry of Defence and External Affairs. The despatch quoted rumours circulating in Gangtok about Chinese concentration of 2 lac men, heavy artillery (units that had taken part in bombing Quemoy and Matsu islands) specially trained Guerilla Fighters for operations in NEFA jungles.