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CHAPTER - VI

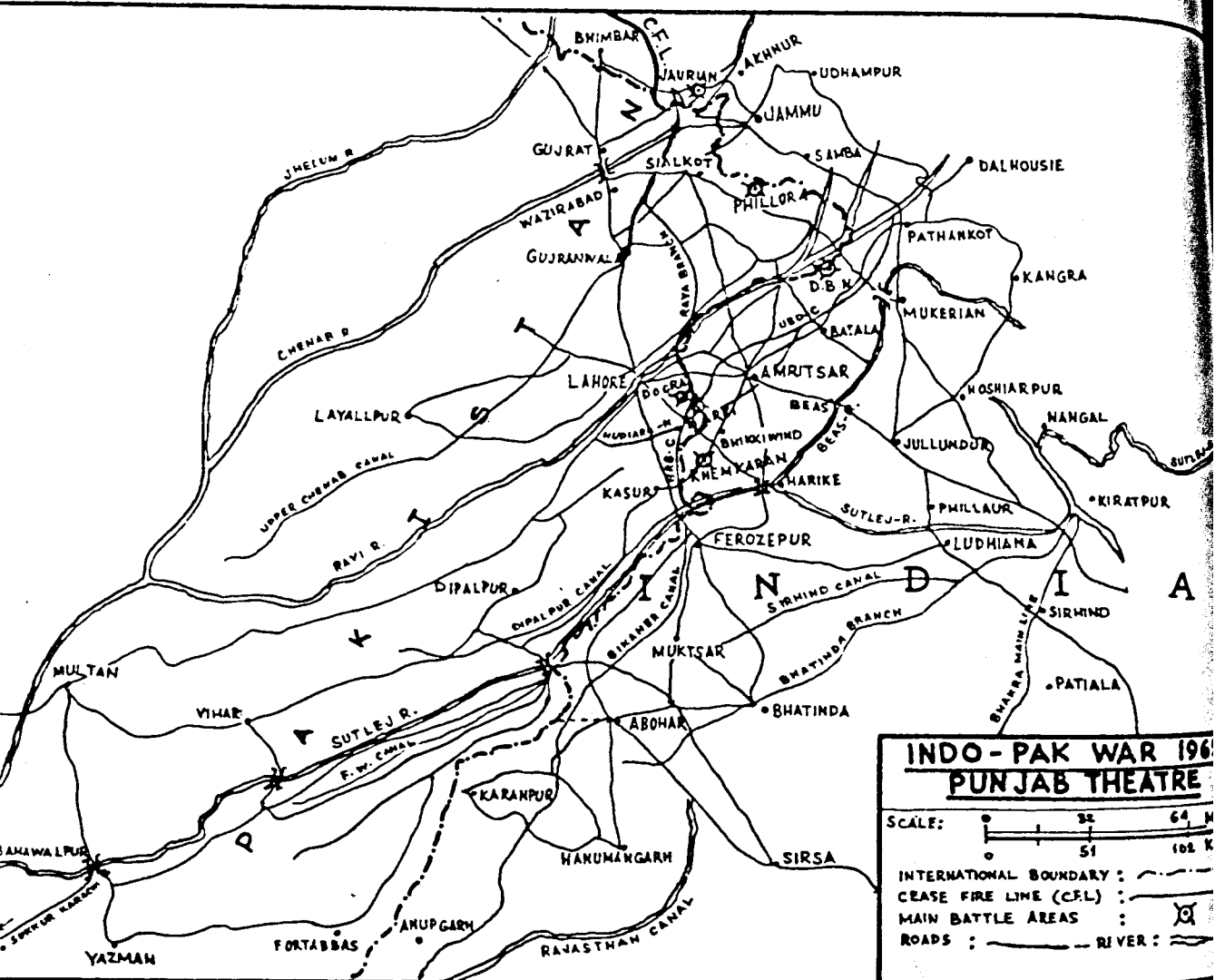
ALL-OUT WAR

As already stated, Pakistan did not call off 'Grand Slam' even when the Security Council called for an immediate cease-fire on 4 September 1965. She even carried out an air raid on Amritsar the next day. The warnings of the Indian leaders that an attack against Jammu and Kashmir would be treated as an attack against India had fallen on deaf ears. Apprehending a Pak attack, India had already formulated on 9 August her plan to meet the situation militarily(1). But before describing the plan and operations, it appears necessary to give some idea of the terrain, transport and communication of the area of operation.

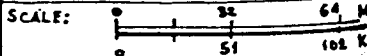
Terrain

The limited offensive action planned by India stretched from Dera Baba Nanak, about 51 km north of Amritsar, to the south right upto the Sutlej. The frontier in this stretch meandered north to south across a flat, fertile plain, thickly populated and well served by roads, railways and canals. From Amritsar the Pak border was about 28 km, and many roads led to it. One of these, running through Ram Tirth and Kohali, connected Amritsar with Ranian. Another, running north-east by way of Ajnala, led to Dera Baba Nanak (DBN) on the river Ravi, near the Indo-Pak border. The most important was the Grand Trunk Road, on which was situated Lahore, 29 km from the border. The Indian border town, Khem Karan, was about 60 km south-east of Amritsar on the road that passed through Bhikhiwind. Cutting this road diagonally at Bhikhiwind, another highway ran from Harike, on the Sutlej, to Lahore by way of Khalra and Barki (in Pakistan). Harike was connected to Amritsar by a road that passed through Tarn Taran, which, in turn, was connected to Khem Karan by a road that passed through Patti and Valtoha. Another road running due west from Tarn Taran went upto the Indo-Pak border near Rajatal. The railway line ran alongside the major roads and linked Amritsar with Lahore. Dera Baba Nanak and Khem Karan were also linked by rail to Amritsar.

As far as the rivers are concerned, the Beas flowed 43 km east of Amritsar. There were two strategic bridges on the Indian side: one on the Beas at a place, named Beas, and the other on the Sutlej at Harike, where the two rivers met. The former lay on the GT Road and the latter on the Amritsar-Harike-Ludhiana highway. Hudhara Drain ran from the north-east of Amritsar towards the south-west, cut the



**INDO - PAK WAR 1965  
PUNJAB THEATRE**



- INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY : - - - - -
- CEASE FIRE LINE (CFL) : - - - - -
- MAIN BATTLE AREAS : [Symbol]
- ROADS : [Symbol]
- RIVER : [Symbol]

GT Road about nine kilometres east of the Indo-Pak border, and then entered Pakistan, south of Rajatal. Hudiara village lay in Pakistan on the Bhikhiwind-Lahore road.

The Upper Bari Doab Canal with its headworks at Madhopur in India had several branches which crossed into Pakistan at various points. The Lahore branch crossed the Amritsar-Ranian road near Kohali and entered Pakistan near Wagah. The main branch ran south-west of Amritsar and entered Pakistan near Bedian. Further south was the Kasur branch that went past Khem Karan to Kasur.

Pakistan had constructed a multi-purpose waterway, the Bambanwala-Ravi-Bedian Link Canal, popularly known as the Ichhogil Canal, to protect Lahore. Running north to south at a distance of 5 to 14 km from the border, it connected the Ravi, in the north, with the water system of the Sutlej, in the south. About 5 metres deep, and some 45 metres wide, it had at the time partially prepared defences, manned sparsely. The canal crossed the GT road at Dograi, a village that lay east of it(2).

The retaliatory Indian plan was to threaten Lahore and drive a wedge between the Pak forces deployed around it and those based at Sialkot. The aim was not the capture of cities, but the destruction of Pakistan's war potential. Indian offensive action had the dual objective of ensuring the security of Punjab by shifting Indian defence line on to the Ichhogil canal as also to capture Pak territory to serve as a bargaining lever in the political parleys, on the conclusion of hostilities(3).

### The XI Corps

In this context the tasks assigned to XI Corps in August 1965 and troops made available to it were:

- (a) To destroy any enemy forces which might enter Punjab and Ganganagar Sector in Rajasthan.
- (b) On orders from GOC-in-C Western Command, simultaneously-
  - i. To advance to the Ichhogil Canal along the axes GT Road, Bhikhiwind - Khalra, and Bhikhiwind - Khem Karan to secure Pak territory from opposite Ranian inclusive to its junction with Dipalpur canal opposite Hussainiwala inclusive;

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- ii. To eliminate Pak bridge-head in area Dera Baba Nanak and, if possible, capture the bridge intact.
- (c) On completion of (b) above, to be prepared to continue the advance on Lahore.

Troops available to XI Corps, and their groupings for operation were:-

- i. 4 Mtn Div consisting of two Mtn Bdes; one Arty Bde; and one Med Regt.
- ii. 7 Inf Div consisting of two Inf Bdes; one Arty Bde; one Armd Regt; and one Med Bty.
- iii. 15 Inf Div consisting of two Inf Bdes; one Arty Bde; one Armd Regt less one Sqn; one Hy Regt; and one Med Bty.
- iv. 2<sup>nd</sup> Indep Armd Bde consisting of two Armd Regts; one Fd Regt (SP); and one Motorised Bn.
- v. 29 Inf Bde consisting of three Inf Bns; one Sqn Armr; one Fd Regt; and one Lt Bty.
- vi. 57 Inf Bde consisting of three Inf Bns; one Sqn Armr; one Fd Regt (TA); 61 CAV, and two RAC(4) Bns for the defence of Ganganagar Sector.
- vii. 96 Inf Bde consisting of three Inf Bns(5).

Briefly, the plan was to move all the formations from their peace location at the last moment, and advance simultaneously into Pakistan: 15 Inf Div on Amritsar - Lahore, 7 Inf Div on Khalra - Barki, and 4 Mtn Div on Khem Karan - Kasur axes, to secure the east bank of Ichhogil Canal. 'H' hour was to be 0400 hrs, and there was to be complete wireless silence upto the 'H' hour. The major part of 4 Mtn Div was to get into a brigade-defended sector in the Khem Karan area to take the onslaught of the enemy's armd div and two inf bdes. It was considered that at the worst, 15 and 7 Inf Divs might each meet one enemy bn in hastily prepared defences in their respective sectors, and 4 Mtn Div might not be able to secure the east bank of the canal.

To carry out the offensive, the following tasks were allotted to the formations:-

- (a) 15 Inf Div's task was to secure Pak territory upto east bank of Ichhogil Canal from inclusive

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canal-river Ravi junction in the north to inclusive canal-track crossing in the south. In carrying out the task, priority should be given to the capture and holding of bridges over the Ichhogil Canal on GT Road, Road Ichhogil Uttar and road bridge at Jallo. Boundary between 15 Inf Div and 7 Inf Div was the Track Canal junction - Manihala - Rajatal - Dhand - Bundala, all inclusive to 15 Inf Div.

- (b) 7 Inf Div's task was to secure Pak territory upto east bank of Ichhogil Canal from (exclusive) canal-track junction to (inclusive) canal junction. In carrying out the task, priority should be given to the capture and holding of the bridge over Ichhogil Canal and Barki, and denying ingress through Bedian. One bn should be left for the defence of Hussainiwala bridge, and this bn would come under command 67 Inf Bde after its arrival. Boundary between 7 Inf Div and 4 Mtn Div would be canal junction - Patti - Sirhali Kalan, all inclusive 7 Inf Div.
- (c) 4 Mtn Div (less 33 Mtn Bde)'s task was to secure Pak territory upto east bank of Ichhogil Canal from (exclusive) canal junction to Pt RO 798439, destroy bridge over Ichhogil Canal on Rd Khem Karan - Kasur, occupy a defended sector to contain possible enemy offensive by one armd div and two inf bdes, particularly along Kasur - Khem Karan and Gandasinghwala - Khem Karan axes. For this, support of 2 Indep Armd Bde would be available on priority. Boundary between 4 Mtn Div and 67 Inf Bde was roughly along the northern bank of the Sutlej - Harike - all inclusive 4 Mtn Div.
- (d) 29 Inf Bde Gp's task was to destroy Pak bridge-head in area Dera Baba Nanak and, if possible, capture the Dera Baba Nanak bridge intact. Boundary between 29 Inf Bde Gp and 15 Inf Div was Ranian - Chuganwan - Majitha - road junction Mahta - Sri Govindpur, all inclusive 15 Inf Div.
- (e) 67 Inf Bde Gp's task was to hold Hussainiwala bridge; prevent enemy establishing bridge-head in area Sulaimanke; deny axes Hussainiwala - Ferozpur Twin Rajasthan canals, and Sulaimanke-Fazilka - Malaut - Tehri Lambi - Sirsa; be responsible for the security of Nos. 36 and 625 SU at Ferozpur; and destroy any enemy forces that might enter Ganganagar area. Boundary between 67 Inf Bde and D and R Area was all inclusive to 67 Inf Bde Gp: Chautala - Hanumangarh - Suratgarh - Bijenagar - Chuk.

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- (f) The Corps reserve consisted of 2 Indep Armd Bde located at Bundala and 96 Inf Bde located at Tarn Taran. 2 Indep Armd Bde's tasks were to contain and destroy enemy counter-offensive from area Kasur in conjunction with 4 Mtn Div; and on orders from Corps HQ, either by itself or in conjunction with 96 Inf Bde, restore situation in 15 and 7 Inf Div sectors, if required.
- (g) 96 Inf Bde's task was, on orders from Corps HQ, either by itself or in conjunction with 2 Indep Armd Bde, to restore situation in 15 and 7 Inf Divs and 4 Mtn Div sectors, if required(6).

On 9 August 1965, it was decided that in case of escalation of conflict, XI Corps would be required to carry out Phase I of the offensive task given to it during 'OP ABLAZE'. The difference this time would be that troops would move from the then peace locations and cross the International Border without going to concentration areas or occupying any defensive positions near the border. On 12 August 1965, 'H' hr was also discussed, and it was decided to cross the International Border at about 0400 hrs on the morning of D day. It was decided to synchronise the attack of the three Divs. As 4 Mtn Div had the longest to travel and had to cross Harike after dark to achieve surprise, it could not have its 'H' hr earlier. Also, movement at night was going to be very difficult in unreconnoitred country, particularly with high crops.

Code-word 'BANGLE' - indicating, hostilities imminent - was received from Army HQ on 1 September 1965, and the Corps Comdr gave verbal orders at Jalandhar Cantt the next day. Code-word 'BANNER' which was the executive order for carrying out the offensive task was received at midnight on night 1/2 September, and issued to lower formations on 3 September 1965(7). On the same day, 'K' date (date for commencement of road movement from permanent locations) was given as 6 September 1965. It was later changed to 5 September 1965. On 5 September 1965, 4 Mtn Div and 7 Inf Div requested for change of 'H' hr from 0400 to 0500 hrs, which was agreed to.

Before the commencement of the actual operation, the Corps Comdr, Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon, impressed on all subordinate commanders that attack must be pressed home with utmost vigour and determination, irrespective of casualties. The Army Comdr, Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh, Vr C, and the Corps Comdr visited the three Div Comdrs during the night 5/6 September before 'H' hr. Various formations moved from their peace locations on 5 September according to

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a planned time-table, so that at 0400 hrs, XI Corps could advance into Pakistan from Ranian in the North to Rohiwal in the south. The move was smooth and without incident.

The initial task of XI Corps, as already explained, was to secure the east bank of the Ichhogil Canal and to establish bridgeheads across the canal at certain points. Surprise was the key-note of XI Corps plan, and it was fully achieved. The three divisions achieved early and notable successes. In the south, 4 Mtn Div, under Maj Gen Gurbakhsh Singh, launched on the Khem Karan-Kasur axis, succeeded in taking all its objectives, either wholly or partially, by 1230 hours on 6 September. Further north, 7 Inf Div, under Maj Gen H.K.Sibal, captured Hudiara by 1030 hrs. It was, however, under Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, GOC 15 Inf Div, that a battalion crossed the Ichhogil Canal at Dograi and reached Batapore on the outskirts of Lahore, and still another battalion of 15 Inf Div advanced upto the road bridge over this Canal near Bhaini Dhilwan, 9 km north of Dograi. The bridge over the river Dera Baba Nanak was captured by 29 Inf Bde. All these assaults were launched with speed and vigour which jolted Pakistan.

However, Pakistan Army's field formations were already in the forward areas which enabled them to react quickly and hit back fast, recovering several positions captured by the Indians. Later, 4 Mtn Div could not withstand the Pak counter-attack and had to fall back. Similarly, 15 Inf Div had to withdraw from Batapore and the bridge near Zhaini Dhilwan. 29 Inf Bde also lost the Dera Baba Nanak bridge over the Ravi. But attacks and counter-attacks in various sectors continued till the cease-fire, and several positions were retaken by India.

### 15 DIV OPERATIONS

#### Plan

The task allotted to this Division was to "secure Pakistan territory upto east bank of Ichhogil Canal from including canal-river junction 70221 to including canal-track crossing 740043". In carrying out the above task, priority was to be given to the capture and holding of bridges over Ichhogil Canal on Grand Trunk Road, Road Ichhogil Uttar and road bridge at Jallo.

The first warning order for this "Operation Riddle" was received by the Division on 1 September, and detailed instructions were issued by XI Corps on 3 September. The Corps plan envisaged the operation

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in two phases:-

Phase I

- (a) Advance upto Ichhogil Canal and capture of grand Trunk Road bridge over Ichhogil Canal and Grand Trunk/Jallo link road bridge by 54 Infantry Bde(8).
- (b) Advance and capture of road bridge over Ichhogil Canal by 1 Jat Group.

Phase II

Capture of Dogaich - Bhasin by 38 Inf Bde and securing east bank of Ichhogil Canal.

The troops allotted to 15 Inf Division, a newly raised Division, for these tasks were 38 Inf Bde, 54 Inf Bde, 15 Artillery Bde less 5 Field Regiment, plus 60 Heavy Regiment and one Medium Battery (with effect from 8 September 1965), 14 Horse less squadron, and 96 Inf Bde, commanded by Brig V.N. Malhotra, (taken out as Corps reserve)(9). 96 Bde was deployed astride the GT Road at Hudiana drain to cover Amritsar(10).

From the very beginning, Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, GOC 15 Inf Div, had differences with his Corps Commandr and the Army Commander, so much so that the Army Commander at one stage had asked for his replacement. As XI Corps was ordered to secure the entire Ichhogil Canal, the Corps divided the canal into three parts and asked the 3 Divisions to secure one part each. For this purpose, each division was split up into battalion and brigade groups, and they were asked to advance towards the canal on widely separated axes. According to Gen Prasad, the higher Commanders did not indicate either the political objectives or the military objectives set for the armed forces. Plans for higher formations were not disclosed to the Divisional Commanders, nor was the role of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy outlined. There was no appreciation of the enemy's aims, strength and intention. For security reason, briefing of troops below battalion level was ruled out. To achieve surprise, units and formations were asked to move over long distances and go straight into the battle without detailed briefing, marrying up with various arms and services, and taking adequate rest before battle. As the operation was to be launched just before day-break, giving the enemy full facility of observed strikes by his artillery and Air Force, Gen Prasad asked for air support, air photo cover and "Going maps". But he was told that he could not



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expect air support, as the IAF would be engaged in gaining air superiority. The Air Photo Cover and "Going maps" also did not materialise. As the artillery was deployed at night, it was not available for support for at least one hour after first light, whereas the anti-aircraft element for the Division, which was to move down from Dehra Dun, took quite a while to deploy and become effective(11). Moreover, 96 Inf Bde was taken away from the Division as Corps reserve, thus un-balancing the Division from the start.

Maj Gen Prasad appreciated that the main enemy defences were based on the Ichhogil Canal, which had been specially developed as a good water obstacle, and the covering positions of the main Pak defences were in the Gosal Dial area, manned by an infantry battalion and strong elements of supporting arms. Between the International Border and Gosal Dial, there were various Pak police and para-military forces manning the Wagah Check-post and a series of border posts. He suggested that the international border should be crossed immediately after last light, and not at first light, so that his troops could dig in on the eastern bank of the Ichhogil Canal during the hours of darkness. But the Corps Commander did not agree to this to achieve surprise along the whole front simultaneously.

General Prasad made the following operational plan within the restrictions laid down by his seniors:

- a) 1 Jat (From 38 Infantry Brigade) with under command one troop of Sherman tanks of Scinde Horse to capture the bridge Bhaini-Malakapur.
- b) 54 Infantry Brigade, under the command of Brig M.S. Rikh, firstly to advance on the GT Road axis, clear Gosal Dial and establish a firm base; and secondly, capture the main road and rail bridges over the Ichhogil canal.
- c) 38 Brigade, commanded by Brig P.W. Pathak, less one battalion - 1 Jat, under immediate Divisional control, to act as reserve for 54 Brigade operations(12).

Phase I of the operation was to be carried out by 54 Inf Bde and 1 Jat Group, commanded by Lt Col Balbir Singh. 54 Inf Bde had under its command 13 Punjab, 3 Jat and 15 Dogra, commanded by Lt Col M. Chatterjee, Lt Col D.E. Hayde and Lt Col Inderjit Singh respectively. 54 Inf Bde and 1 Jat

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Group crossed the Indo-Pak border at 0400 hrs on 6 September 1965 on the Grand Trunk Road axis and on Ichhogil Uttar axis respectively. The Plan of 54 Inf Bde was an advance by 3 Jat cross-country and the capture of Gosal Dial as the first bound(13). 15 Dogra were to clear the road axis by destroying any enemy opposition at Wagah and between Wagah and Gosal Dial, and blow up the steel gates at the border check post. 13 Punjab commando platoon was detailed to advance simultaneously along Wagah Distributary in a bid to capture the Jallo bridge over the Ichhogil Canal. After the capture of Gosal Dial by 3 Jat, 15 Dogra were to pass through and secure east bank of Ichhogil canal, including Grand Trunk Road bridge, if intact(14).





### Initial Successes

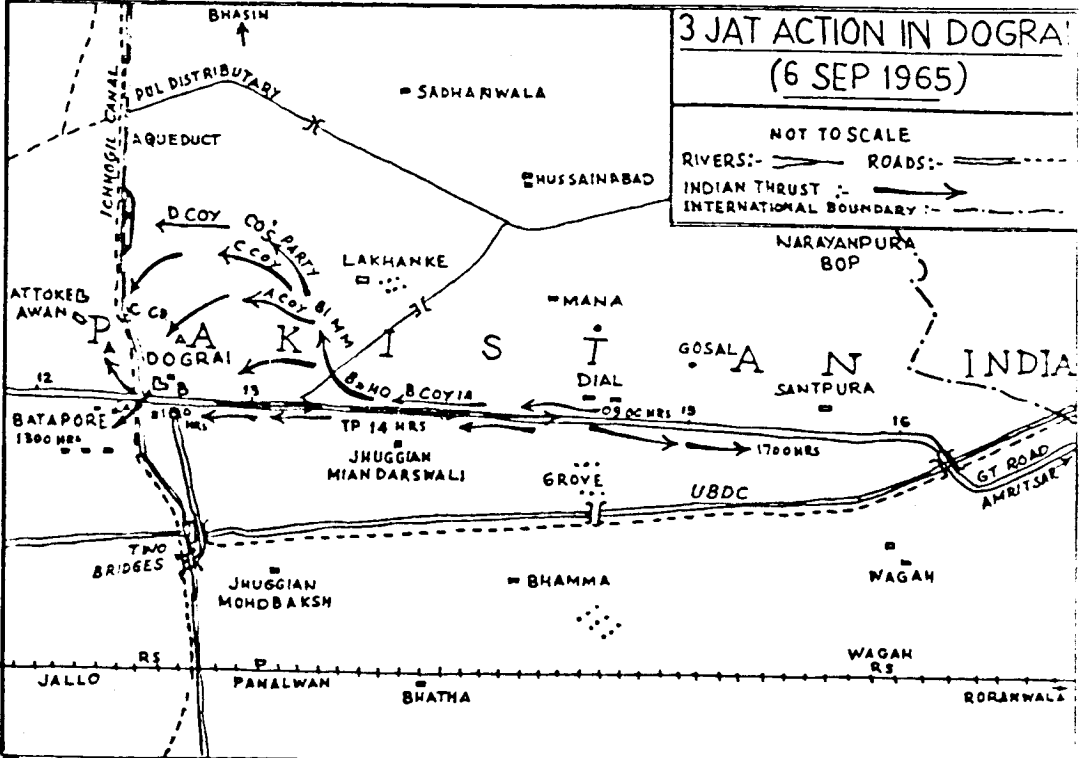
After crossing the International Border, 3 Jat attacked the objective astride mile 14 on Amritsar-Lahore road and captured it by 0630 hrs. Village Dial was also cleared at 0658 hrs.

At 0700 hrs, Pak aircraft carried out intensive rocketing and bombing on 3 Jat and 15 Dogra positions(15). Later, Pakistani Sabres attacked several places on the Grand Trunk Road, including Gharenda, where the Div Commander had his command post and the Divisional reserves. The air attacks were pressed home with determination, and they took a heavy toll of vehicles. With the skies all to themselves, the PAF had no difficulty in picking out any vehicle which moved. Several ammunition trucks were hit, and the ammunition kept exploding for hours, obstructing the road, which in turn made it necessary to make detours through slushy rice fields. Almost the entire 'F' echelon vehicles of 54 Brigade were destroyed(16). 3 Jat lost its 2nd-in-Command, besides 5 of 6 RCL guns, and 3 mortars with their carriers(17).

During capture of Gosal Dial, 3 Jat killed 35 enemies and captured 2 Officers and 12 Other Ranks, along with 2x106 RCL guns, 3 mounted Jeeps, 3 trucks and 45 weapons. The battalion was then ordered to continue its advance towards Ichhogil Canal, which commenced at 0900 hrs. The east bank of Ichhogil Canal, about 1280 metres north of GT road, was assaulted and captured. The Jats also captured vital GT road bridge over the canal at 1130 hrs and tried to consolidate their position. Although the bridge had been demolished by the enemy, the Jats could scamper over the surviving portions of macadam and masonry. The Pakistanis, however, reacted at once. They attacked 3 Jat, first with two 8-ton truck-loads of soldiers and shortly after with three tanks and about

3 JAT ACTION IN DOGRA  
(6 SEP 1965)

NOT TO SCALE  
RIVERS:-  ROADS:-   
INDIAN THRUST :-   
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY :- 



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100 infantry in support. However, both these attacks were repulsed, and the enemy withdrew. Soon, a squadron of Pak Sherman tanks advanced south along the west bank of the canal. Due to the lack of anti-tank weapons, Indian troops withdrew to east bank. It was only after the arrival of 14 Horse in support that A and B Coys and CO's party again crossed over to west bank, and a series of tank-to-tank fights took place. 'C' Coy reached Batapore complex and fought against the enemy. Requests for immediate reinforcement of anti-tank weapons were repeatedly sent, while Pakistanis continued intense shelling of the Indian positions.

By the afternoon, the gallant Jats had expended most of their ammunition. At about 1420 hrs, the unit was ordered by the Bde Commander to withdraw to the firm base of 15 Dogra (Gosal Dial). During the action, 3 Jat's losses were 9 killed and 43 wounded(18). Hayde was wounded and awarded MVC, and Subedar Khazan Singh received a Vr Chakra.

15 Dogra also crossed the International Border at 0400 hrs to clear the Ranger Posts and the bridge. They attacked a weak coy of Pak regular army on the Upper Bari Doab Canal (UBDC) bridge and occupied it. Advancing further they attacked the Ranger Posts successfully and captured 20 PsOW, including one Officer, along with arms, ammunition, vehicles and a Pak flag. In its turn, the Unit lost one Officer and 13 ORs killed, and one Officer, 2 JCOs and 16 ORs wounded in this action. According to the plan, the battalion was to move forward with C Sqn 14 Horse to clear the main axis and press on to the GT road bridge over the Ichhogil Canal. But an exaggerated account of the casualties suffered by the Unit was reported to the Bde Commander. Consequently, the original plan was modified and the task of capturing the GT road bridge was entrusted to 3 Jat, while 15 Dogra was ordered to firm in at Dial.

13 Punjab commando platoon also advanced towards Jallo bridge, and despite enemy fire from the area 550 metres west of Wagah, went forward astride the railway track upto about 450 metres of the Rail bridge. Here they were subjected to heavy shelling and air attacks, forcing them to withdraw to Wagah Railway Station. On the other hand, 1 Jat Group after crossing the Indo-Pak border at 'H' hour was fired upon from the Pak police post at Ichhogil Hithar. The resistance was, however, overcome, and the Pak Ranger Post at Ichhogil Hithar as well as the Ichhogil Uttar bridge were captured by 0700 hrs. Reserve coys and tanks had also advanced for the operation, but were halted due to intensive Pak artillery shelling and air

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strafing. As no support was forthcoming from the Indian artillery, armour or air, the battalion withdrew to Ranian Bund, and was reorganised for fresh attack. As the men of this unit had not taken their digging tools with them, they could not hold the ground(19). During this action, the unit suffered casualties of 13 ORs killed, and one Officer and 28 ORs injured.

Change of GOC

Meanwhile, the dissension between the Div Commander and the Corps Commander continued. Maj Gen Prasad wanted 54 Bde to firm in at Gosal Dial, while 38 Bde was to advance towards the Ichhogil Canal with greater speed. But the Corps Commander, Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon, reportedly gave him a fresh set of orders(20):-

- (a) 54 Brigade to attack and capture Dograi on night 6 September.
- (b) 38 Brigade to send one battalion to capture Bhaini-Malakapur on night of 6 September.
- (c) 1 Jat from Ranian to rejoin 38 Brigade.
- (d) 38 Brigade with two battalions, one of them 1 Jat, to capture Bhasin on night 6 September.

Gen Prasad vehemently, protested against this, both verbally and in writing, arguing that the diversion of 38 Bde to secure Bhasin and Bhaini-Malakapur would be a wild goose chase and it would hamper his advance. However, he was asked to follow the orders.

Meanwhile, GOC 15 Inf Div had reported to the Corps Commander that the situation in his Div Sector was desperate due to heavy casualties, and that no further offensive action was possible. The Corps Commander did not accept this, and after meeting him personally in Atari area at 1400 hours on 6 September, opined that the casualties suffered by the Division were such that they in no way impaired the fighting efficiency of that formation. Div Commander was then told that the allotted task was to be carried out with full determination, and he was ordered to secure the bridge over Ichhogil Canal by first light 7 September(21). Commander 38 Bde, who was also present in the meeting, was asked to secure the east bank of the Canal between Bhasin and GT Road axis during 6th afternoon(22), i.e., within a few hours.

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It was at 1530 hrs on 6 September that 6 Kumaon ex 96 Infantry Brigade (Corps reserve) was told about the failure of 1 Jat attack over Ichhogil Canal bridge due to heavy air strafing, and was ordered to capture this bridge by first light 7 September 1965. The battalion moved from area Jandiala and concentrated behind Ranian Bund at 2230 hrs. As soon as the battalion moved out of the Bund at 2400 hrs, the Pakistanis started shelling. The battalion continued its march and attacked Ichhogil Canal bridge at 0500 hrs on 7 September. Although it captured the objective, it had to abandon it due to heavy Pak artillery and armour fire and counter-attacks, and then withdrew to Ranian by 1500 hrs(23).

Another attempt was planned to capture the bridge by a joint attack by 1 Jat and 6 Kumaon. They were grouped under Commanding Officer 6 Kumaon and ordered to recapture Ichhogil Uttar bridge on night 7/8 September 1965. This attack also failed, mainly due to heavy Pak artillery and armour fire, and by mid-day 8 September, the troops were back to their original position at Ranian.

On the Grand Trunk axis, 38 Infantry Brigade was ordered to carry out Phase II of the operation on night 6/7 September, i.e. to capture Dograich-Bhasin and secure East bank of Ichhogil Canal. In view of the above-mentioned set-backs, the task already allotted to the Brigade was slightly modified. It was then ordered to secure east bank of Ichhogil Canal in general area of the aqueduct. The Brigade moved after last light on 6 September on man-pack basis via Wagah-Singhpura along road Pul Kanjri, but could not make much progress, in spite of no opposition. The formation advanced some distance (upto general area RJ 7514) and firmed in there.

Not knowing the whereabouts of 38 Bde due to disruption of wireless link, GOC 15 Inf Div along with a small party set off to locate the Bde HQ at night. But unfortunately, the Pakistanis ambushed the party and captured 12 men and 4 jeeps, in one of which were left the General's memo pad and a personal file containing references to his representations against his removal from the command 4 Mtn Div in 1962. Maj Gen Prasad escaped in another jeep. But the Pak radio greatly exploited the incident by broadcasting extracts from his personal file, causing embarrassment to India, and particularly to Gen Prasad(24).

On 7th morning, Brig Rikh, Commander 54 Bde, was wounded and evacuated. He was replaced by Brig S.S. Kalha, CC Arty XI Corps. On night 7/8 September, Maj Gen Mohinder Singh, MC, took over

command of the Division from Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad.

On 7 September, fresh orders were issued to 38 and 54 Inf Bdes to complete their allotted tasks by first light 8 September(25). 38 Inf Bde Commander, Brig Pathak, ordered 1/3 Gorkha Rifles to advance north of the road and attack the bridge at 0530 hrs on 8 September. But the Pak troops shelled heavily and also fired with MMG on 1/3 GR and repelled this attack. From this date till the cease-fire, 38 Inf Brigade stayed in the same area, but was unable to secure the East bank of the Ichhogil Canal. Brig Pathak was punished after the cease-fire for his incompetence, and demoted to the rank of Lt Col. However, it does appear that he was given unrealistic tasks(26).

On the 54 Infantry Bde front, the attack was planned for the night 7/8 September on the canal bridge (RJ 7310) and rail bridge (RJ 7309) with 13 Punjab on the UBDC axis and 3 Jat forming a firm base (in Sq RJ 7510) while 15 Dogra were to exploit from west of Gosal Dial village on the main GT road with the assistance of 'A' Squadron 14 Horse after first light on 8 September. A and B coys 13 Punjab reached the objective and completed digging of fire trenches by first light. The Pak troops withdrew from the canal road bridge but reinforced the railway bridge. When D Coy advanced to the railway bridge, it came under heavy army shelling. By first light, Pak armour also arrived, and 13 Punjab withdrew without orders. Fresh orders were then issued for the reorganisation of the Brigade defence sector (with 15 Dogra at Square RJ 7611, 13 Punjab at Sq RJ 7610, and 3 Jat and Bde headquarters in Square RJ 7812). Thus the attacks by 38 and 54 Inf Bdes were unsuccessful.

During 8,9 and 10 September, Pakistan maintained pressure on all the Indian positions by raids, artillery shelling and armour attacks, which were, however, repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy, except on the Ranian axis. On 10 September, in face of enemy pressure the remnants of 1 Jat and 6 Kumaon withdrew to Lopoke; and Ranian and Kakkar fell into enemy hands. The same day, 96 Inf Bde was relieved by 50 Para Bde. 96 Inf Bde was placed under command 15 Inf Div for securing the right flank of the Div sector and preventing any ingress of Pak armour from the Syphon area. It was then moved to area Kohali to restore situation on that axis and be prepared to advance upto Ichhogil Canal bridge at the earliest.

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15 Inf Div ordered Brig V.N. Malhotra, Commander 96 Inf Bde, to:-

- (a) occupy battalion defence area astride road Lopoke-Chuganwan-Amritsar, based on UDBC Lahore Branch at Kohali;
- (b) deny use of road Kakkar-Lopoke-Kohali-Amritsar to the enemy;
- (c) capture area Ichhogil Hithar - Ichhogil Uttar by first light 11 September; and
- (d) destroy any enemy pockets remaining in Indian territory East and NE of Ichhogil Hithar.

Brigade Commander, 96 Inf Bde, issued instructions for OP Slash as under:-

- (a) 16 Dogra to advance to Thata Dhilwan and establish defensive positions in area Bund 772.
- (b) 6 Kumaon to occupy defensive area in Lopoke and organise tank-hunting parties.
- (c) 7 Punjab to occupy defensive area in Kohali and establish a platoon stop there.

16 Dogra completed the allotted task by 0445 hours on 11 September without any opposition.

In the second phase of Operation Slash, 6 Kumaon was directed to advance on axis Lopoke - Kakkar - Ranian and establish firm base along the Ranian bund by first light 12 September 1965; 7 Punjab was to provide firm base at Lopoke for 6 Kumaon operation, and 16 Dogra was to liquidate enemy opposition at Thata Dhilwan by first light 12 September. 6 Kumaon secured Kakkar at 2145 hrs on 11 September and Ranian at 0245 hrs on 12 September, while 16 Dogra secured Chak Allah Baksh at 2200 hrs on 11 September and area Visvian at 1000 hrs on 12 September. Phase 2 of Operation Slash was thus completed.

Phase 3 of Operation Slash envisaged the capture of Bhaini Dilwal bridge intact, if possible, and establish bridgehead across the Ichhogil Canal. If the bridge was blown, 7 Punjab was to hold east bank of Ichhogil Canal. Although there was heavy enemy shelling and bitter fighting, 7 Punjab was able to secure east bank of Ichhogil Canal in area Ichhogil Uttar bridge by the last light of 14 September.



Bharat Force

On 11 September, when a major enemy armour and infantry threat was reported developing on Ranian axis, 2 (Indep) Armoured Bde was moved into 15 Div Sector on night 11/12 September. But, the Brigade moved back to 4 Mtn Div Sector on 13 September after the situation in this Div sector was stabilised(27). On 11 September, Lt Col Raghubir Singh, CO 14 Horse, was replaced by Col Bharat Singh, as the former expressed fear in the face of the Pattons, and the infantry lost all confidence in his armour. Some reorganisation of the armour elements in the sector was made. In addition to 14 Horse (made available to 15 Infantry Division at the start of the operation), 1 Horse, Sqn 7 Cav (PT 76), 1 Sqn of 8 Cavalry (AMX), and a troop of Centurions from 3 Cav were also operating in this sector. To coordinate the efforts of the various armour elements there was a requirement for an overall commander. Colonel Bharat Singh, who had been posted as Second-in-Command of 2 (Indep) Armoured Brigade on 12 September 1965, was nominated by General Officer Commanding XI Corps to command these elements. The armoured group, thus formed, took the name of its Commander, and was designated Bharat Force on 14 September. Henceforth, the infantry had much more confidence in armour. By proper deployment of the various units and sub-units of the Bharat Force and by dominating the no-man's land, the enemy armour was put in its proper place on the whole of the 15 Inf Div front for the rest of the operations till 23 September.

Some of the exploits of the Bharat Force deserve mention here. On 15 September, when a sqn of Pak armour tried to probe into the northern flank of 54 Inf Bde, the well-sited AMX and Centurion tanks accurately fired upon the enemy tanks, destroying 2 of them. During the battle of Dograi, 2 Sqns of 14 Horse gave close support to the attacking Indian troops. After the capture of Dograi by 3 Jat on 21/22 September night, when the enemy armour started advancing to counter-attack the Jat position next morning, a Sqn of 14 Horse under the command of Maj Sanga foiled the enemy attempt and helped in the consolidation of the Indian positions in Dograi. Also, Sqn 1 Horse under Bharat Force gave good support to 7 Punjab, thus enabling it to recover its lost prestige. When in the evening of 21 September, the enemy Infantry, mounted on APCs, and supported by a Sqn of tanks, launched an attack on the forward bn of 38 Inf Bde, a Sqn of 14 Horse knocked out two enemy tanks and 2 tracked carriers. When Col Bharat Singh arrived with some more tanks, the enemy withdrew after suffering considerable casualties. The Bharat Force

captured 6 enemy Sherman-IVs by the end of the operations, and made them fit for use after repairs. These captured Shermans came to be called Bharat Squadron(28).

### The Jallo Bridge

50 (Indep) Para Brigade, which on arrival at Hudhara Drain on 10 September was taken under command 15 Infantry Div on 11 September, was first given the task of capturing Bhasin by first light 14 September. However, after being relieved by 41 Mtn Bde on 13 September, the Para Brigade was given new tasks of securing Pak territory upto Ichhogil Canal, from including rail bridge to excluding Grand Trunk Road bridge, and capturing intact Jallo bridge by last light 16 September, later extended to last light 17 September, at the request of the Brigade Commander, Brig A.M.M. Nambiar.

54 Infantry Brigade was ordered to simulate activity towards Dograi as a diversion. At 1700 hrs on 16 September, 2 Para carried out a rehearsal for the capture of Jallo bridge. As for diversion, 15 Dogra was infiltrated from Dial at 2330 hrs on 16th night, and the village of Jhuggian was captured by A and C Coys, in which Indians suffered casualties of 7 killed and 52 wounded. This resulted in the reduction of the no-man's-land to 90 mts, enabling the Indian troops to observe the enemy defences at close quarters. HQ 15 Dogra was then moved from Dial to Mile 14.

3 Para secured the FUP for 2 Para after clearing some opposition, and 2 Para thereafter moved along the drain on both sides of the UBD canal. The enemy brought down heavy artillery concentration on the assault elements. Drains provided good protection and saved a lot of casualties. 2 Para reached the junction of Khaire Distributary and UBD canal and marched forward towards the target. Casualties were now heavy, as the enemy was bringing down every thing he had. Undeterred by the stiff opposition, 2 Para assault elements reached upto Jallo bridge. Lt B. Parab was nearing the bridge when he saw Jem Shirke falling down. While he was attending him, he was also hit by a shell and fell dead. Parab's Coy was reduced from 120 to 20 only. Maj B.P. Singh dashed to the bridge and informed his CO that the bridge was already destroyed by the enemy. Demolition party detailed for the bridge also came under heavy enemy shelling, and 2 sappers were killed and 6 wounded. The battalion was then ordered to move to occupy defences in the area allotted earlier(29).

6 Para moved from the FUP and attacked rail bridge frontally. Though a newly raised battalion, its battle drill and fighting spirit was superb. It hit the objective at about 0030 hrs on 17 September and occupied it. It raised its success signal 'GHORA', which was heard in the Brigade. The officers and men in the Brigade were overjoyed to hear it. After clearing the area the battalion occupied its allotted defended area. The casualties suffered by the Brigade in these operations were considerable: 1 Officer, 2 JCOs and 30 ORs killed, and about 72 wounded. The Pak army continued heavy shelling and small arms fire on Indian positions, which forced the Brigade to withdraw and to firm up in area Bhamma-Bhatha at night.

On 17 September, 38 Inf Bde was ordered to capture Wahgrian-Dogaich by first light 19 September. 16 Dogra ex 96 Inf Bde were ordered to establish a firm base to contain enemy in area Bhasin and support operations of 38 Inf Bde, which launched the attack on night 18/19 September with 3 Garhwal Rifles. However, the attack was repulsed by enemy artillery and small arms fire. 3 Garhwal Rif fell back to their original position in the brigade - defended sector, and 16 Dogra firm base was further reinforced with two troops of armour. On night 22/23 September, 38 Infantry Bde was again ordered to secure PUL Distributary/Ichhogil Canal junction, but it failed to accomplish it as the enemy launched an attack on one of its forward battalions, 1 Jat, on the evening of 22 September. The attack was effectively repulsed, but the plans of the Brigade for the attack on that night were upset, as no recce could be carried out by the unit and sub-unit commanders.

## SECOND BATTLE OF DOGRAI

On 12 September, Brig Niranjan Singh, MC, an able officer, had taken over command of 54 Bde from Brig Kalha. 54 Inf Bde was ordered to plan for advance upto Ichhogil Canal astride Grand Trunk road which involved the capture of Dograi. It was believed that the main Pak defences were along the Ichhogil Canal and Dograi, with a screen along the general line Jhuggian Main-Daraswali - Lakhanke, supported by armour along PUL Distributary and astride UBDC on the flanks.

The planning and preparations including domination of no-man's-land, collection of information, surprise and deception measures, development of tracks and other administrative arrangements connected with the stage management of the battle, preliminary operations, issue of orders,

and redeployment of troops for attack, were carried out between 13 and 20 September. During this period, the Brigade suffered 58 killed, including 3 Officers and 4 JCOs, and 205 wounded, including 5 Officers and 7 JCOs(30).

From this information extracted during the interrogation of two Pakistani Prisoners of War, captured on night 14/15 September, it was known that the disposition of Pak forces was:-

- (a) Two companies 16 Punjab (Pathan) astride the bridge SB 745114,
- (b) Mortar platoon West of the house at SB 743114,
- (c) Battalion Headquarters and remainder battalion at Dograi,
- (d) Company 15 Frontier Force Rifles deployed astride the Grand Trunk road, and
- (e) Squadron of tanks in Dograi.

Final orders for operation were issued on 20 September at 1700 hrs. The attack was to be launched in two phases. In Phase I, 13 Punjab was to attack on area Mile 13 at 2359 hrs on 21 September, and in Phase II, 3 Jat was to attack Dograi itself at 0130 hrs on 22 September.

#### Phase I - Attack by 13 Punjab

On 19 September, 13 Punjab had relieved 15 Dogra in area Dial and Jhuggian Mian Daraswali, and was ordered to capture area Mile 13 from the direction of Lakhanke. On 21 September, it was ordered that the area Mile 13 was to be captured in Phase I with D company on left and C company on right, astride the road, from Jhuggian. A company from Lakhanke on relief by a platoon of 15 Dogra re-joined the battalion at 2100 hrs on 21 September, and was approximately 180 metres ahead of Jhuggian. 'H' hour was at 2359 hrs 21 September, and the objective was to be captured by 0130 hrs 22 September. Artillery and brigade mortars were to shell Mile 13 position from H minus 10 to H plus 4 minutes.

At about 2200 hrs, a threat of Pak attack developed on D company, located south of Jhuggian. The enemy, approximately a platoon strength, supported by BMG and mortar fire, tried to close in. This enemy action which might have been intended as a spoiling attack, was beaten back by D company.

The Indian attack was delayed, and was launched at 0100 hrs on 22 September due to heavy enemy shelling during forming up. The attack was supported by a squadron of tanks from area south of Jhuggian, brigade mortars north of GT road, Bren guns of 15 Dogra, south of GT road, and Divisional Artillery. In spite of heavy enemy shelling which had commenced right from 2200 hrs, D and C companies formed up astride the GT road and carried out the assault. When they were approximately 180 metres from the frontline of the enemy defences, they were pinned down by intensive MMG, Mortar and arty fire from all directions. In spite of the heavy casualties suffered (1 Officer and 24 ORs killed, and 4 Officers 5 JCOs and 83 ORs wounded), both these coys did not leave the ground they had occupied. Soon after first light, the assault was resumed on either side of GT Road axis, with tanks moving alongwith both these coys, giving support to each other. As a result of this Infantry/tank advance, the enemy left their trenches and ran towards village Dograi. The objective was captured at about 0700 hrs after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy on the ground and on those fleeing towards Dograi. This operation was a great success and positive contributions were made by 13 Punjab. By containing the bulk of the enemy on the main GT Road axis, they facilitated the task of the capture of Dograi by 3 Jat. By dislodging the enemy from Mile 13 area, they also provided security to 3 Jat; made possible 3 Jat's capture of a large number of prisoners as well as a large booty of enemy arms, ammunition and equipment; and opened the maintenance of the GT Road axis upto the Ichhogil Canal.

The battalion captured a number of weapons and ammunition including recoilless guns, MGs, mortars and other small arms. It suffered 31 killed, including one Officer and 5 JCOs, and over a hundred wounded, including 5 Officers and 5 JCOs, during the attack. The enemy casualties were 15 counted killed and 3 Prisoners of War.

#### Phase II - Attack by 3 Jat

Since early morning, 21 September, all ranks of 3 Jat had gone on patrol many times to have a look at Dograi which was to be attacked that night. They found that the Pakistanis were well entrenched, "some huddled over machine guns in pill-boxes and others tucked into the buildings of Dograi behind light machine guns and rifles, with piles of ammunition and grenades to hand"(31). With two light machine guns in each infantry section, "their automatic fire was going to spew forth from every 30 to 50 yards of front while artillery and mortar shells rained down"(32). The

Jats were to run through mine-fields, jump over or cut their way through wire entanglements and penetrate that veritable thunder storm of bullets and shells and only then to contact the enemy. The FUP was just 400 metres from the nearest enemy trench, and to reach it, 3 Jat (523 men) had to pass through the mine-fields in a single file(33). Taking the Pak defences into account, the battalion prepared its plan to attack the township of Dograi, which extended for 1100 metres from north to south along the Ichhogil Canal, and 760 metres from east to west across the GT road, by infiltration from the north. The town was guarded by reinforced concrete pill-boxes around its three approaches. The built-up area had been divided into four sectors as company objectives.

'A' company less one platoon secured the north-east flank of the battalion and the forming-up-place in area Ruins (SB 7412). The battalion moved from Santpura at 2330 hrs on 21 September, and reached its firm base north of Lakhanke at 0045 hrs the next day, after a march of 3700 metres. After a short rest, the battalion left the firm base at 0110 hrs and moved from the PUL Distributary into the forming-up-place.

The leading company (D company under Major Vatsa) crossed the start line at 0150 hrs on 22 September, and after fighting through the outskirts of the town and silencing a pill-box enroute, secured the north-east projection of the town against minor opposition.

C company, under Maj Yadav, passed through D company to secure the north-west portion of Dograi. Suddenly, it was subjected to very intense fire and got engaged in a fierce battle with a company of 18 Baluch, entrenched in pill-boxes along the east bank of the Ichhogil Canal in the Akbar School area, north of Dograi. The company charged the bank undaunted by the enemy's protective mine-field. Grenade and hand-to-hand fighting took place inside the enemy company-defended-locality, during which a platoon commander, Lt Thapa of D company, was killed. The price paid by the Jats was heavy, the survivors were only one officer and 7 men, but the enemy company was wiped out. The depth platoon of C company under Capt Bali was not drawn off into this assault. It attacked and captured the north-west projection of the town, which was actually the company's objective. Thus the gate to Dograi from the north-west had been opened wide.

B company under Maj Sandhu cut through the centre of Dograi to secure the south-west portion of

the town. They silenced a pill-box on the junction of GT road and Ichhogil Canal, and fought a platoon of 3 Baluch, entrenched on the eastern bank of the Ichhogil Canal.

'A' company, under Maj Tyagi, passed along the eastern edge of Dograi, where D company was still fighting, on to the southern edge of the town. The company silenced a MG in a pill-box on the GT road, and fighting across the road, took the surrender of a troop of 23 Cavalry, and the remnants of 16 Punjab and the brigade mortars, nine of which were in perfect order and five in damaged condition. This company came under very intense automatic fire of a company of 8 Punjab, entrenched along a pill-box guarding the southern approach to Dograi. The men of 'A' company fought a very gallant action under the inspiring leadership of Maj Asha Ram Tyagi, who was mortally wounded.

The battalion secured the objective by 0530 hrs on 22 September. A number of enemy pockets in Dograi still remained to be cleared. The houses along both sides of the GT Road at the eastern edge of Dograi had developed into little enemy strong-points. A platoon was detailed to clear out these houses. It flushed out about a dozen men from a room, one of whom attempted to dive under a captured enemy tank, but was dragged out. The man was Lt Col G.F. Golewala, Commanding Officer 16 Punjab. In these 27 incredible hours of non-stop combat, the Jats never paused to count or consider. The price paid by 3 Jat for the capture of Dograi was 58 killed, including 4 Officers, and 157 wounded, including 6 Officers and 4 JCOs(34).

Thus the operation launched by 54 Inf Bde was a complete success. Considerable amount of arms and equipment and over 108 prisoners, including the enemy battalion commander, were captured, and 300 Pak dead bodies were counted. The Battle of Dograi added a glorious chapter to the history of the Indian Army. Two officers were awarded MVC, and 2 JCOs and one Sepoy won Vr Chakra(35).

After this feat, 3 Jat was looking for the logistic support to hold on to the captured position. There was an urgent need for replenishment of ammunition and reorganisation of stores to secure the ground gained. But the battalion was neither re-inforced, nor supplies were pushed. This was a serious administrative failure, which enabled a brilliant success to slip away un-exploited. Air support for such a venture was essential, but it appears that the Corps Commander did not ask for it,

although there was a demand for it from the Div. The result was that when PAF was attacking Indian troops, guns and vehicles, there was no help forthcoming from the Indian Air Force. However, the cease-fire intervened to stop further action. According to Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh, the Dograi battle "will go down in history as one of the toughest ever fought".

### 7 INF DIV OPERATIONS

7 Inf Div, commanded by Maj Gen H.K. Sibal, was tasked to advance along Khalra-Barki axis. The international boundary between India and Pakistan cut this axis just 1.6 km north-west of Khalra, which was inside India. The road from Harike to Lahore ran through Bhikhiwind, Khalra, Hudiara and Barki. From the international border, Hudiara was 4 km inside Pakistan, Barki a little over 9½ km and Lahore 33½ km. On way to Lahore, the first obstacle inside the Pak territory was the Upper Bhuchar Distributary, and the next one was the Hudiara Drain - both running at right angle to the road. The Ichhogil Canal was the next obstacle, about 500 metres to the east of which was located Barki.

The likely enemy strength as appreciated on 3 September was:-

- (a) 10 Inf Div in Lahore Cantt
- (b) Only Sutlej Rangers and Mujahids east of Ichhogil Canal.
- (c) At the worst, one Inf Bn in hastily prepared positions east of Ichhogil Canal, partly on the Hudiara Drain and partly at Barki(36).

### Plan

The Operation Plan of 7 Inf Div was to be carried out in two phases:-

#### Phase I

- i. Capture of Bridge at Barki by 48 Inf Bde Gp by last light 6 September.
- ii. Blocking enemy ingress through Bedian by 17 Rajput Gp by last light 6 September.
- iii. After capture of Hudiara Drain, 65 Inf Bde should be prepared to send one Inf Bn to secure and destroy bridge over the Ichhogil Canal near village Hir.



Phase II

Mopping up along east bank of Ichhogil Canal from including Canal Junction (763767) to excluding Tr/Canal Junction and destruction of all crossings over the Canal by 65 Inf Bde Gp(37).

Main HQ 7 Inf Div started functioning at new location Narla at 1330 hrs on 5 September. By 1800 hrs, the same day, the formation had concentrated astride road Bhikhiwind-Khalra as under:-

- |      |  |                          |
|------|--|--------------------------|
| i.   | 48 Inf Bde-  | Area Sidhwan-Mughal Chak |
| ii.  | 65 Inf Bde-<br>less 17 Rajput  | Area Mari Megha          |
| iii. | 7 Arty Bde-<br>(less elements<br>with 17 Rajputs<br>and Bty 82 Lt Regt<br>with 67 Inf Bde) | Area Bhikhiwind          |
| iv.  | CIH  | Area Rahuwind            |
| v.   | Rear HQ, Div-<br>admn units and<br>45 Fd pk coy.   | Area Patti               |

By 2000 hrs on 5 September, firm base was established by 65 Inf Bde less 9 Madras astride road Khalra-Lahore in area IB Canal Giplan. The disposition of the forces was:-

- |           |   |                                 |
|-----------|---|---------------------------------|
| 16 Punjab | - | Left of the road Khalra-Barki.  |
| 4 Sikh    | - | right of the road Khalra-Barki. |
| Bde HQ    | - | Amin Shah                       |
| 9 Madras  | - | Mari Megha                      |
| 17 Rajput | - | Mari Kamboke                    |

Advance to Hudiara

At 0445 hrs on 6 September, preliminary operations for the capture of Sutlej Rangers' Posts at Theh Sarja Marja, Rakh Hardit Singh and Ghawindi Barrier commenced. By 0515 hrs on 6 September, 4 Sikh had captured Theh Marja and Rakh Hardit Singh posts, and 6/8 GR had captured the Post at Ghawindi Barrier. 17 Rajput had commenced advance into Pak territory on axis Wan-Bedian, and 48 Inf Bde Group had advanced, with 6/8 GR leading, astride road Khalra-Barki.

The leading elements of 48 Inf Bde, commanded by Brig K.J.S. Shahaney, contacted enemy defences at Hudiara at about 0700 hrs on 6 September. They came under heavy, long-range automatic fire from enemy positions in Hudiara, Nurpur and Hudiara Drain. By this time, 17 Rajput Group under the command of Lt Col A.S. Gill had captured the enemy border post east of Bedian, achieving complete surprise. It was, however, halted about 550 metres east of Bedian bridge, when the enemy opened up with artillery, tanks and MMGs, making any further advance impossible. The Corps Commander ordered GOC 7 Inf Div to heavily mine the 17 Rajput area and prevent any enemy ingress from Bedian at all costs.

Preparations for the attack on Hudiara were in progress despite heavy artillery and automatic fire from Nurpur, Hudiara Drain and the village itself. By 1030 hrs, 6/8 GR under the command of Lt Col G.A. Nagle had secured Hudiara village, but no frontal attack was possible on Hudiara Drain, as the enemy was bringing down accurate artillery and SA automatic fire. The enemy dispositions estimated at Hudiara were: one company at village Hudiara, one company at Nurpur, and one company supported by elements of reconnaissance and support battalion on the western bank of the Hudiara Drain.

The plan was then proposed for an attack from the left, eliminating enemy resistance at Nurpur, east and west bank of Hudiara, and upto a distance of 900 metres from the west bank of Hudiara Drain. This was to enable the assaulting battalion to capture area behind village Hudiara and ensure prompt collapse of enemy resistance which had been holding up further move of 6/8 GR. The task was entrusted to 5 Guards, commanded by Lt Col F.S. Sondhi. The attack on Nurpur began on 1330 hrs on 6 September. The enemy put up stiff resistance and tried his best to beat back this attack by bringing down accurate automatic and artillery fire on the advancing troops, but the Guards remained undeterred. At 1710 hrs, they succeeded in cutting the enemy off by outflanking his position, which forced the defenders to abandon the Hudiara Drain and withdraw. However, they blew up the bridge over the Hudiara Drain before withdrawing.

48 Inf Bde then firmed in at Hudiara Drain with 5 Guards on the west of the Drain and south of Mile 18, 19 Maratha on the west of village Hudiara and north of Mile 18, 6/8 GR on the east of the Hudiara Drain astride road Khalra-Lahore, and the Bde HQ in area Dispensary (8092). 7 Inf Div Engineers started constructing a causeway and bailey bridge on the Hudiara Drain.

Capture of Barki

At 1800 hrs on 6 September, GOC 7 Inf Div ordered Brig Ferris, Commander 65 Ind Bde, to resume advance at 0700 hrs the following morning when the bailey bridge over the Hudiara Drain was expected to be ready. The GOC also appreciated the enemy strength as to be a brigade of two infantry battalions, supported by a sqn of armour and regiment of artillery, reduced, of course by the casualties the enemy had suffered at Hudiara. He placed under the Command of Brig Ferris, and in support, the following units:-

- (a) Under Command - CIH (Shermans) less one Sqn; 94 Fd Coy; and Tcl with ACT(38)
- (b) In direct support - 165 Fd Regt
- (c) In support - 7 Arty Bde less 165 Fd Regt, one bty 66 Fd Regt, and 82 Lt Regt.

As Brig Ferris had no time for reconnaissance, he managed to get a quick look at the ground from the Dispensary. From a study of maps, including one captured by 16 Punjab a few hours earlier, the Bde Commander decided to secure Barka Kalan for the following reasons:-

- (a) The distance from Hudiara Drain to the Ichhogil Canal along the road Khalra-Lahore was about 6 km. This road went through a wide open plain with no trees or any form of cover. The ground on the south of the road was under extensive paddy cultivation and the fields were flooded. On the north of the road, there were lesser cultivation and large patches of barren ground covered with saltpetre.
- (b) Barka Kalan was a large village located south of mile 16, approximately 400 metres from the road. It had many high brick buildings which dominated the surrounding mud huts. The minarets of the village mosque provided good view point upto the Hudiara Drain. The fact that this village was built on high ground and close to the main road, with visibility upto the Hudiara Drain, made it an ideal position for a screen for enemy defences in Barki(39).

# BATTLE OF BARKI (7. INFANTRY DIVISION SECTOR)

NOT TO SCALE

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY APPROXIMATE:-

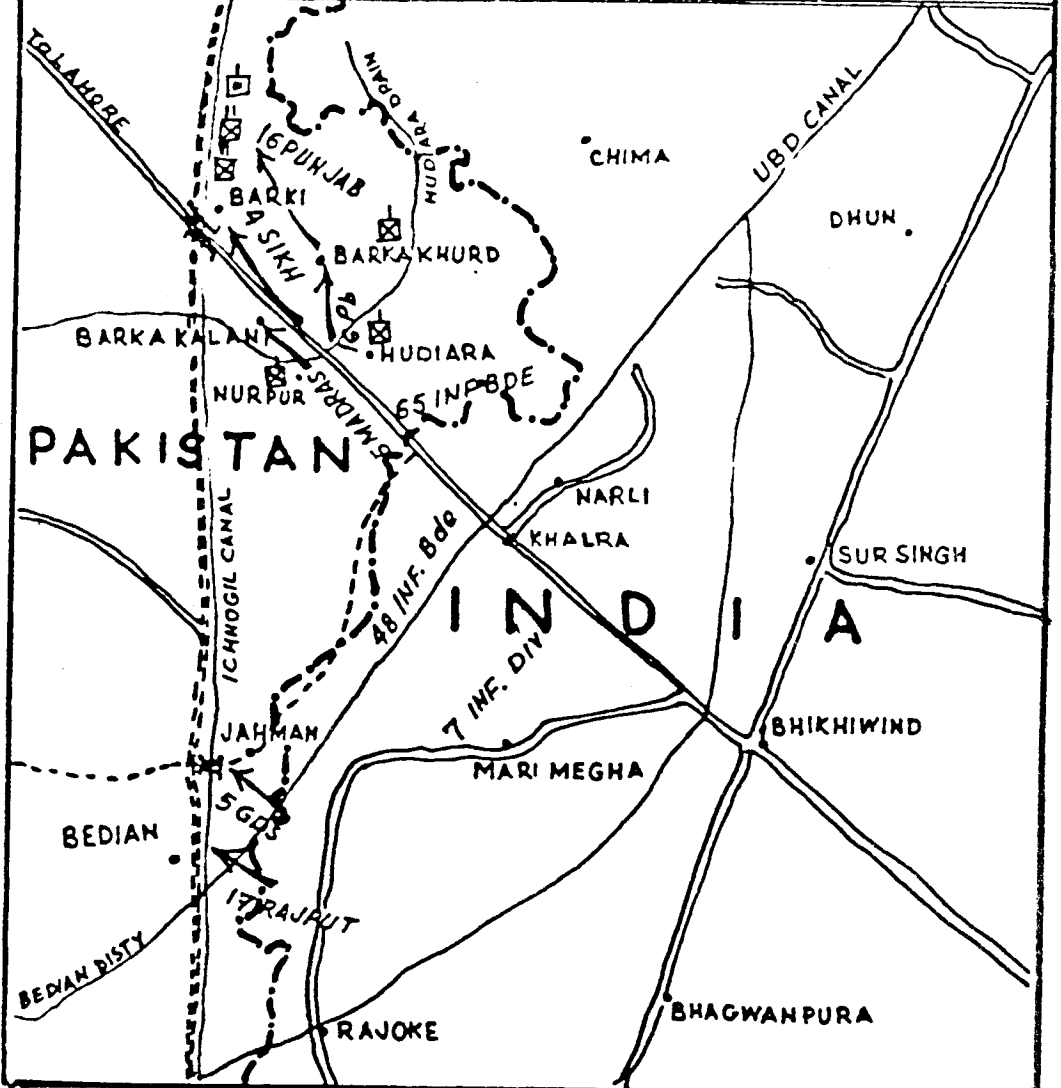
ROADS, TRACKS:-

RIVERS:-

INDIAN THRUST:-

CANAL

ENEMY POSITION:-



The causeway and a bailey bridge 200 yards west of Hudiarra were ready by 1545 hrs on 7 September(40). Shortly after, 9 Madras with B Sqn CIH advanced to capture Barka Kalan. It came under heavy fire from the village, but kept up a steady advance and secured it by 1800 hrs the same day. The enemy put in an immediate, half-hearted counter-attack, but it was beaten back.

Reports from 16 Punjab on 8th evening indicated that its patrols drew fire from the enemy-held village of Barka Khurd. Hence, it was decided to capture Barka Khurd, and the task was entrusted by 65 Inf Bde to 16 Punjab. Accordingly, the attack was launched by 16 Punjab at 2030 hrs on 9 September and Barka Khurd was captured by 2100 hrs without any casualty. 7 Inf Div continued relentless pressure on the enemy and advanced further to capture Barki and reach Ichhogil Canal. The task was entrusted to 65 Inf Bde, which decided to complete the task in two phases. In Phase I, Barki village was to be captured by 4 Sikh, and in Phase II, 16 Punjab was to capture area east bank of Ichhogil Canal and destroy Barki bridge. CIH less one sqn and 7 Arty Bde with 5 Fd Regt less one bty, 66 Fd Regt and 82 Lt Regt were to support the attack. 'H' hour was fixed at 2000 hrs on 10 September.

There were three approaches to village Barki, namely left, frontal and right. The left approach was ruled out as it lay across flooded paddy fields, with total absence of cover, and was dominated by the high canal bank south of road. The frontal approach to the village, i.e. along the road and north of it provided better going, although the ground was slightly undulating, having no cover. It was the shortest route; but movement on this was defiladed from enemy weapons on the canal banks. The right approach had better going, but involved a long detour from the Bde firm base, and was on an unprotected flank, exposed to enemy weapons on the canal bank, north of the road. As such, the frontal approach was chosen.

The accuracy and intensity of enemy artillery and mortar shelling, the absence of cover, and the fact that the enemy was in prepared defences, dictated a night attack(41).

The attack on village Barki commenced as scheduled by 4 Sikh (Commanded by Lt Col Anand Singh) which crossed the start line-Mile 16. Prior to this, the Indian guns engaged known enemy ground and mortar positions from 1930 hrs to 1955 hrs. From 1955 hrs to 2000 hrs Indian guns neutralised the enemy in Barki and along east bank of the Canal. At 2000 hrs, the

divisional artillery, including 5 Fd Regt, effectively engaged village Barki and covered the move forward of 4 Sikh. When the assaulting troops were very close to the objective, CIH less two sqns moved forward to provide fire support to them after the Indian artillery fire had lifted. It was a moon-lit night, and Indian armour was spraying the canal bank and the village with prophylectic fire. 4 Sikh captured village Barki after overcoming all resistance by 2110 hrs. Some enemy troops in pill boxes were killed or captured after the fall of the village. 4 Sikh dealt with them by lobbing grenades into the pill boxes. According to Commander, 7 Inf Div, due to the continuous Indian armour fire at night, the Pakistanis thought that India had brought in new tanks with night-firing capability, and hence abandoned Barki out of fear(42). When permission was given to the Pak troops to collect the dead bodies of their comrades from the battle-field, they took away 4 truck-loads of corpses, including the dead body of Major Aziz Bhatti, who was posthumously awarded Nishan-i-Haider, Pakistan's highest gallantry award.

Supported by the divisional artillery including 5 Fd Regt, 16 Punjab (Commanded by Lt Col J.S. Bhullar) now advanced (at 2130 hrs) to complete Phase II of the operation plan. It passed through Barki at 2230 hrs and secured east bank of Ichhogil Canal by 2340 hrs. The enemy ran in panic and demolished the bridge at Barki before withdrawing. In this battle, Commander CIH, Lt Col S.C. Joshi Vr C, who had dismounted from his tank and was trying to guide his tank forward, was killed, when the Indian tanks encountered an enemy minefield. All artillery available to the enemy both on the GT Road axis and in this sector was brought down on 16 Punjab for about half an hour after the objective was secured. The enemy also used RCL guns and guided missiles against Indian tanks.

During 10/11 September night, 621 Med Bty was moved up and it counter-bombarded enemy guns, some shells falling on Lahore also. This silenced enemy guns effectively, and was a contributory cause of the exodus from Lahore.

### Struggle on the Ichhogil

The same day, 11 September, 48 Inf Bde was given the task of capturing and demolishing the bridge on the Ichhogil Canal at Jahman. The Bde decided to carry out this task on night 11/12 September with 5 Guards, supported by 41 Fd Regt. 5 Guards attacked Jahman bridge, but the attack was unsuccessful, and the battalion was pulled back to Hudiara on the morning of 12 September.

Another attack was launched on the target by 48 Inf Bde on 12/13 night with 6/8 GR and 5 Guards, supported by two troops of CIH and whole of divisional artillery. But the enemy brought down heavy mortar and automatic fire. Also, 6 out of 8 Indian tanks, which were to support the attack, got bogged down 700 to 900 metres short of the Canal. Thus, this attack also failed. Subsequently, the enemy re-inforced his positions at Jahman bridge.

48 Inf Bde was now allotted the limited task of clearing the enemy from the Jahman village and securing the east bank of the Ichhogil Canal. The Bde used 6/8 GR and 19 Maratha for this task, supported by two troops of CIH and the whole of divisional artillery. The operation began on 18 September, and by 1500 hrs, the area south-east of village Jahman was secured by 6/8 GR. 19 Maratha less two platoons attacked area north-west of village Jahman, and by 1730 hrs the whole of the area around Jahman was in Indian hands. Ten prisoners were captured, and Indian troops dominated the area upto the Canal line opposite Jahman. Meanwhile, 65 Inf Bde captured Manhiala on 16 September.

Then on 18 September, 7 Inf Div was ordered to secure the area between Ichhogil Canal and Rajoke-Thatti-Jaimal Singh-Kalia-Shankhatra-Katlohi Kalan by first light 20 September in order to assist 4 Mtn Division in its second attempt to recover Khem Karan from Pak hands. A force composed of 19 Maratha, commanded by Lt Col S.D. Parab, with 7 Cav less one sqn and one troop, was earmarked for the task, and Brig Piara Singh, MC, Vr C, commander 48 Inf Bde, was appointed leader of this Task Force. The Task Force advanced and captured the enemy's post east of Chathanwala at 1230 hrs on 19 September, but its attempt to capture Chathanwala village itself failed due to heavy mortar fire. In this attempt the Task Force suffered heavy casualties, and four tanks of 7 Cav also got bogged down, out of which three were later recovered. However, it continued to advance despite stiff opposition, including enemy tanks, from area between Rajoke and Dholan, and captured Dholan. Advancing further, it captured Thatti Jaimal Singh by 1615 hrs on 20 September.

Pak reaction was quick. They counter-attacked five times between 1730 hrs on 20 September and 1115 hrs on 21 September, the last one being with two squadrons of armour in support. This last attempt made some headway on the outskirts of Thatti Jaimal Singh, but the Task Force restored the situation by 1330 hrs. During this operation, the Task Force lost

three PT-76 tanks due to enemy ground action and shelling, but it took a toll of six enemy Chaffees. 7 Inf Div could not secure the area any further, and on 21 September this task force was placed under 4 Mtn Div. Then came the Cease-fire on 23 September.

Immediately after the cease-fire, the Pak troops in front of India's 7 Inf Div Sector undertook a bold and unscrupulous manoeuvre. After crossing the Ichhogil Canal in force at night, they surrounded one of the isolated Indian Company positions. The Pakistanis overpowered and gagged the Indian sentries and then caught the sleeping Indian soldiers and moved them some hundreds of metres away. Thus the Pak troops occupied the Indian Company position to prove that they had been there at the time of the cease-fire. Consequently, the Indian troops took proper retaliatory action. The whole of the 7 Inf Div Arty was brought down on that company position to teach the Pakistani intruders a good lesson. Some of the Pakistanis were killed, and the remainder withdrew in disgrace(43).

### Conclusion

The main success of 7 Inf Div was the capture of Barki, which was a well-defended Pak bastion. Pakistan had deployed one company in Barki village and two companies on the east bank of Ichhogil Canal. There was also a Pak company of the Reconnaissance and Support battalion in this area, and the whole position was ringed round and swept with constantly surveyed Defensive Fire Tasks. A few tanks were also seen in the area. The defences were elaborately prepared and based on cement concrete pill boxes which were sited to cover all approaches to the village and cunningly camouflaged to resemble mud huts. Each pill box was about 4 metre square, with 30-centimetre thick concrete walls and equally thick roof. A team of three men equipped with automatic weapons manned each of these strong points. The pill boxes were well stocked for sustained operations and sited with care for mutual support. Extensive tunnelling within the village permitted speedy, uninterrupted movement inside these defence works even during spells of intense shelling. The major portion of Pak Artillery was also brought to support the battle of Barki. Thus Barki was a virtual fortress bristling with automatic weapons, armour and artillery. It presented a tough challenge, hence its reduction by 7 Inf Div was a creditable achievement.



Brig Ferris, who commanded 65 Inf Bde during these operations, has made the following observations:

- (a) Maps as supplied to the formations were out of date, and hence air photos and air recce would have been invaluable. An air OP was essential to locate enemy guns and mortars.
- (b) The unorthodox use of armour at night paid dividends, and its use in assault role demoralised the enemy.
- (c) As the radio sets used during this operation were heavy and cumbersome, radio operators got separated from their Commanders while going through enemy artillery fire and during the assaults, resulting in the break-down of signal communication for long periods(44).

#### 4 MTN DIV OPERATIONS

4 Mtn Div, being a Mountain Division, was trained and organised to fight in the mountains and its normal operational role was on the northern border. During June 1965, GOC 4 Mtn Div was sounded that in the event of conflict with Pakistan, the Division would be given offensive task. The Division was moved to the forward area in April 1965, and was ordered on 4 September to move for Operation Riddle.

In early Sixties, a huge pond existed near Kasur in which the Rohi Nala and Sutlej outflow entered. Between 1961 and 1965 the whole area was drained off and a thick jungle was created to hide Pak tanks. Being a wooded area, Indian aircraft could not detect the presence of armour. Pakistan had also constructed two big aqueducts on the Ichhogil Canal, one north and another south of Khem Karan which was used by the Pak armour to launch a two-pronged attack on 4 Mtn Div(45). Maj Gen Gurbakhsh Singh felt that these long-term preparations by Pakistan should have alerted Indian Intelligence, but this did not happen.

#### Plan

Unmindful of these Pak preparations, 4 Mtn Div set about to carry out its allotted tasks in two phases. In the first phase, Pak territory upto the east bank of Ichhogil Canal from Ballanwala to Pt RO 798489 was to be captured by one brigade group. In the second Phase, Pak territory east of Ichhogil Canal from Canal junction RO 763767 to Ballanwala was to be captured by one brigade group less battalion.

HQ XI Corps ordered at 0330 hrs on 6 September that the securing of territory east of the Ichhogil

Canal was to be carried out with utmost speed and irrespective of heavy casualties. It was also clarified that compact defended sector would be occupied covering axes Kasur-Khem Karan and Gandasinghwala-Khem Karan.

According to the intelligence made available to the Division, Pakistan had only Sutlej Rangers and Mujahid Posts east of Ichhogil Canal, and at the most, one infantry battalion in hastily prepared positions - deployed from Bedian to Pt RO 798439(46). No firm information of the location of the Pak 1 Armd Div was available. Consequently, the time as to when the enemy would launch his offensive with 1 Armd Div and an Infantry Division (two brigades) was not foreseen, and quick Pak reaction was not expected.

In view of the quantum of resistance visualised, it was thought that initial occupation of east bank of Rohi Nala would delay enemy armour thrusts, enable the Indians to cause more attrition and economise troop involvement to defend the likely axes of the enemy advance. The Divisional plan envisaged:-

Phase I

- i. Securing of Pak territory upto east bank of Rohi Nala from road-Nala junction to area Rohi Nala (RO 8050) by 62 Mountain Brigade Group.
- ii. Occupation of defended sector by 62 Mtn Bde Gp with an additional battalion under command in the area west and west-south of Khem Karan, covering axes Kasur-Khem Karan and Gandasinghwala-Khem Karan.

Phase II

- i. Capture of Ballanwala - Theh Pannun and securing of Pak territory east of Ichhogil Canal from (including) Ballanwala (excluding) Canal junction by 7 Mtn Bde Gp less one battalion.
- ii. Securing of east bank of Ichhogil Canal from (excluding) Ballanwala to Pt RO 798439 by 62 Mtn Bde and destruction of bridge over Ichhogil Canal on road Khem Karan-Kasur.

Initial Successes

Before the advance commenced, firm base in area south-west of Khem Karan was established, consisting of 1/9 GR, 18 Raj Rif and 9 Horse less two squadrons. At 0500 hrs on 6 September, 62 Mtn Bde commenced

advance to secure area Rohiwal and the road crossing over Rohi Nala. 9 J&K Rif reported capture of Rohi Nala on the main axis at about 0915 hrs. It was then directed to continue with its task to push through and destroy the bridge on the Ichhogil Canal and occupy its near bank. However, the unit came under heavy artillery and MMG fire from the enemy on the Ichhogil Canal. 13 Dogra also succeeded in securing area Rohiwal by 1030 hrs, although it was under mortar and MMG fire from the enemy and two jawans were killed, and 7 persons injured, including two Officers(47).

Two battalions of 7 Mtn Bde - 7 Grenadiers and 4 Grenadiers also advanced towards Ballanwala and Theh Pannun respectively. By 1130 hrs on 6 September, these battalions secured the line of Rohi Nala and east bank of Ichhogil Canal from Theh Pannun southwards, except Ballanwala, where 7 Grenadiers' attack had failed, because Ballanwala was a stronghold of the Pak defenders.

Pakistan reacted quickly with strong armour thrusts of Patton tanks and motorised infantry. At 1530 hrs on 6 September, 13 Dogra were subjected to heavy artillery fire prior to counter-attack by one Pak battalion-cum-armour squadron group. The Dogra battalion abandoned this objective and disintegrated as a unit. Throughout the night 6/7 September, all defended localities and gun areas were subjected to very heavy, accurate and sustained artillery fire. By the first light, the Grenadiers also left position. At about 0700 hrs, 9 J&K Rif location was encircled by Pak tanks and strafed by the enemy aircraft. CO 9 J&K and one company withdrew. The rest was later extricated by armour.

By then, the enemy's violent reaction to the Indian move in this sector foretold his major offensive designs(48). The enemy advanced with tanks and motorised infantry not along the expected axes, but from flanks through Patto Kuhna and Ballanwala and threatened to bypass the firm base. By 0800 hrs on 7 September, it was realised that strong Pak armour thrust towards axis Khem Karan-Bhikiwind from the north of road Khem Karan-Kasur was imminent and that any defended sector occupied in the area west and south-west of Khem Karan would be bypassed. Accordingly, it was decided to fall back and occupy a defended sector north of Khem Karan to cover the axes Khem Karan-Patti and Khem Karan-Bhikiwind in the general area of Asal Uttar-Bhura Kuhna-Chima, while 7 Mtn Bde, which had captured area Theh Pannun and linked up with Bedian, was ordered to fall back on the defended sector. By last light 7 September, defences were occupied as under:-

were occupied as under:-

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 18 Raj Rif                              | Area south of Asal Uttar covering the axis Khem Karan-Patti.                              |
| 1/9 GR                                  | Area road-track junction, covering the axis Khem Karan-Bhikiwind.                         |
| 4 Grenadiers                            | Area south of Chima covering axis Khem Karan-Bhikiwind to give depth to 1/9 GR positions. |
| 9 J&K Rif<br>(Approx.<br>two companies) | Area north of Asal Uttar giving depth to 18 Raj Rif location.                             |

9 Horse with a company of 1/9 GR, to cover the preparation of defences, were deployed in area south-west of Khem Karan.

#### Pattons Smashed

At 0930 hrs on 8 September, approximately two squadrons of Chaffees approached 4 Mtn Div position through Ballanwala as a reconnaissance force. Approaching on a broad front, they surrounded Indian defended localities, and from their right flank sallied upto the gun area. In the action which followed, the Pakistanis lost two Chaffees and withdrew. Meanwhile, work on the preparation of defences was progressing. By the afternoon of 8 September, three and a half battalions of Indian troops had dug the defences around Asal Uttar and laid some mines.

Again at 1445 hrs, the Pakistanis carried out a recce in force with a regiment of Pattons. They over-ran the position of 1/9 Gr. 9 Horse now played an important role in stopping the enemy in front of the Indian defended sector. A diversionary attack by Pattons fell on 4 Grenadiers and the gun area, but it was halted in area Rattoke. Pak troops again tried to by-pass the defended sector on the north, but a squadron of 3 Cav in the area Bhikiwind had anticipated this move and was ready to receive it. It moved down immediately and attacked the enemy, inflicting heavy casualties and forcing it to withdraw(49).

After this recce in force by the enemy, it became evident that a major armoured thrust was likely to take place next day. Immediately, 2 Indep Armd Bde was placed in support, and moved from concentration area. It was ordered to concentrate 3 Cav less a



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squadron from the area Chabal Kalan and Rajatal to the 4 Mtn Div sector, and 8 Cav less a squadron from the Amritsar by-pass area to 4 Mtn Div sector and place itself under the command of GOC 4 Mtn Div. All moves were completed smoothly without incident on the night of 8/9 September, and the defences were strengthened by laying more mines. At 0200 hrs, the enemy combat group 4 Armd Bde (with two Patton regiments), making use of moonlight and infra-red equipment, attacked 18 Raj Rif. The Indian artillery and infantry engaged the enemy with concentrations and recoilless guns. Although the enemy tanks had a free and uninterrupted run, they failed to dislodge the Indian defences. What appeared to be desperate Indian situation, was thus saved.

At 0430 hrs on 9 September, 2 Indep Armd Bde was placed under the command of 4 Mtn Div for the battle. Orders were issued that the Indian armour would function at night, and 9 Horse would stay in forward defended localities and gun area in anti-tank role. The deployment of 4 Mtn Div sector troops in the morning of 9 September was:-

- (a) The Brigade-defended sector consisting of three and a half battalions in the Asal Uttar area with 9 Horse less a squadron.
- (b) One squadron 9 Horse was protecting the gun areas and was deployed between the brigade-defended sector and the gun area.
- (c) 3 Cav less two troops was between Dibbipura and Chima. One squadron 8 Cav was east of Valtoha to protect the southern flank.
- (d) 8 Cav less two squadrons was in the area Warnala in depth.

Pakistan's attempt to over-run 4 Grenadiers during early hrs on 9 September had already failed. It then made another attempt during the night to over-run 18 Raj Rif positions. However, the battalion was told to hold fast, and the enemy was taken on by medium artillery and tanks, located in forward defended localities. At 0330 hrs, the enemy infantry, brought up in armoured personnel carriers, probed forward, but, on hitting the mine-field, withdrew, and a lull followed. Pakistan carried out reconnaissance in force with tanks throughout the latter part of night 9/10 September.

The final enemy attack came at 0645 hrs on 10 September. Pakistan tanks concentrated in area Manawan, with a view to by-passing the Indian defended

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sector. At 0830 hrs, one enemy combat group from 4 Armd Bde was launched against 4 Grenadiers, but the attack was foiled by artillery concentration before the enemy infantry could close on to the Indian mine-field. Indian armour then came from the flank, resulting in a tank melee. Here, a recoilless gun manned by Havildar Abdul Hamid knocked out 3 Patton tanks, and he posthumously got the first Param Vir Chakra in the Division during this war. An outflanking move towards Mahmoodpura-Dibbipura by enemy 4 Cavalry (Pattons M-47) was then noticed. This was shadowed by Indian 3 Cavalry hinging on the defended sector. Enemy tanks were finally trapped in the area Mahmoodpura. It was at 1430 hrs that GOC Pak 1 Armd Div, Maj Gen Nasir Ahmed, who had earlier witnessed the battle from a helicopter, came with his 'R' group to area mile 37 on road Khem Karan-Bhikhiwind to push the advance personally. The party was surprised by 4 Grenadiers and heavy artillery concentration, and the entire 'R' group was destroyed at about 1800 hrs. After the death of the Pak GOC and the destruction of two combat groups and the 'R' group, 1 Armd Div (Pak) offensive was effectively foiled.

However, it was confirmed only on the morning of 11 September that enemy advance had been finally held, when officers and men of Pak 4 Cavalry started surrendering. Thus the enemy's drive with a superior force of armour, i.e. five Patton regiments - 4 Cavalry, 5 Horse, 6 Lancers, 19 Lancers and 24 Cavalry, - and one Chaffee regiment (12 Cavalry), directed to capture all territory west of river Beas and cut the rear of XI Corps, was frustrated. Instead of reaching Beas, the enemy went back to Kasur to lick his wounds having lost 97 tanks, including 72 Pattons(50). 4 Mtn Div suffered casualties of 60 killed, 206 wounded, 93 missing, and lost 10 tanks. 2 Indep Armd Bde suffered one OR killed and 2 tanks lost(51).

Pakistan's plan was to establish a lodgement area with 11 Inf Div with under command 5 Armd Bde upto the general line running east to west of Bhura Kuhna village. While 1 Armd Div with under command 4 Armd Bde was to advance along road Valtaha-Patti to secure Raya and the GT road bridge on River Beas, 4 Armd Bde under the command of 1 Armd Div was to advance on road Khem Karan-Bhikiwind to secure Jandialaguru. The role assigned to 5 Armd Bde was to revert to parent formation and to advance to road Khem Karan-Bhikiwind to protect the left flank of the forward two combat groups and to cut the rear of the Indian 7 Inf Div, operating on road Bhikiwind-Khalra-Barki. The enemy plan was to occupy

Harike bridge by 8 September and to secure Beas and other objectives by 9-10 September. It avoided the crossing of any water obstacle and aimed at capturing Indian territory west of river Beas and encircling XI Corps. If it succeeded, it would have brought the Pak Army quick and spectacular success.

Sikhs caught at Khem Karan

On 11 September, at about 1100 hrs, 4 Mtn Div received instruction for advance to Khem Karan as it was then thought that the enemy was withdrawing in haste. The same day, at 1615 hrs, 2 Indep Armd Bde less one squadron 3 Cavalry was taken out of command. But 2 Mahar was placed under 7 Mtn Bde, commanded by Brig D.S. Sidhu. On the night of 11/12 September, 4 Sikh was also moved from 7 Inf Div and placed under 4 Mtn Div. These two units, 2 Mahar and 4 Sikh, were ordered to advance to the left flank to establish a road block in area Khem Karan by 0500 hrs on 12 September.

The advance involved overcoming the enemy screen position along the Khem Karan distributary by 2 Mahar and a squadron of armour, linking up with 4 Sikh later. The advance of the Mahars started well. Bhura Kuhna was secured, and a fairly large number of enemy weapons, equipment and vehicles were captured. Further progress was checked tenaciously at the distributary, and the concentrated enemy air and artillery bombardment held up the advance. The Mahar battalion suffered heavy casualties and failed to reach the objective. Therefore, two companies 9 J&K Rif were rushed to continue the attack. The assault went in at 1600 hrs, but by last light it failed to close up to the distributary. Centurion tanks were used in this advance and they had four battle casualties. It was then ordered that Centurion and AMX tanks would not be used in the advance in future.

According to the plan, 4 Sikh, about 200 men, was to be established in Khem Karan during night 11/12 September. 4 Sikh was originally under the command of 65 Inf Bde and had fiercely fought the enemy during its advance to Barki. On 10 September it, along with other units, had captured Barki at 2000 hrs, and consolidated its position by 2200 hrs. During this operation, the unit had lost 3 JCOs and 20 ORs killed, and 2 Officers, 1 JCO and 93 ORs wounded. Being constantly in contact with the enemy, it could not get any rest during the night of 10/11 September, and on 11th morning it was engaged in the evacuation of casualties and other jobs. Consequently, when Lt Col Anant Singh, CO, was told that his battalion was being given an important operational order, he objected,



pointing out that his officers and men were tired and not in a position to undertake another operation immediately in a different, unknown area. His plea was not accepted, and he was inspired and his morale raised when it was said that this operation would coincide with the Saragarhi Day (12 September) and his battalion was chosen for the task by the Corps and Army Commanders(52).

Finally, in the afternoon of 11 September, 4 Sikh received the orders to move to Khem Karan sector. The battalion was relieved at 1700 hrs, and it moved back on foot upto Hudiara, where mechanical transport was provided. It reached Valtoha, about 32 km from Hudiara, on Patti-Khem Karan-Kasur axis, where the CO joined the battalion at about 2200 hrs with the orders that the battalion was to get behind the enemy lines during the same night, and establish a road block in Khem Karan by 0500 hrs on the 12th. The Corps Commander had told the CO that no enemy armour would be encountered at Khem Karan and the enemy resistance would be small.

The battalion was quickly organised, and 200 men were selected for the task. Lt Col Anand Singh chose to manhandle two RCL guns along with him. But as the heavy RCLs, each weighing about 400 kg, had slowed down the advance, the CO sent them back under one Officer and ten ORs(53). The battalion reached near its objective but could not get into the village due to the presence of enemy tanks. Some enemy trenches were also seen, and unfortunately 1 OR of 4 Sikh fell into one of them and got captured. Pak Commanders interrogated him and came to know about the movement of 4 Sikh. Under the orders of the CO, Maj Sidhu tried to fire at the Pak tanks with the Rocket Launcher from a distance of 150 metres, but it did not fire due to some mechanical fault(54).

By then the sustained exertions of the last three days were beginning to tell, and the Sikhs could barely stagger. The deadtired battalion lay doggo in the sugarcane crops and waited for Indian tanks to link up(55). At 0900 hrs, a Pak AOP flew over them for 15 minutes, after which enemy movement was seen. At about 1030 hrs, there were noises of tanks approaching Khem Karan. The battalion raised its war cry with great fervour in the belief that Indian tanks had arrived, and then tried to rush into the village to establish a block. But it came under a heavy MMG fire from a squadron of Pak tanks, deployed all around them, which had been mistaken to be Indian tanks. Maj D.S. Sidhu then ordered his men to break out of the Pak armour cordon and managed to bring out 40 of them. Approximately 126 men, including the CO, were taken prisoner, and the remainder escaped(56).

This was a wrong move to bring in two tired Bns, unfamiliar with the terrain, to fight against the enemy, whose strength was--under-estimated(57). HQ 4 Mtn Div did not provide and guides, as promised, and the signals party had disappeared, resulting in complete break-down in wireless communication between HQ 4 Mtn Div and 4 Sikh.

On night 12/13 September, 2 Indep Armd Bde consisting of one sqn 3 Cav, 8 Cav less one sqn, and 7 Cav less one sqn, was moved back to 4 Mtn Div sector. It was reported that the enemy armour was concentrating in area Kasur, possibly for another attack. From 13 to 15 September, while awaiting the enemy offensive, vigorous patrolling was carried out, followed by mopping up operations on 16 September by 9 Horse and one company 1/9 GR. Villages of Kalanjar Uttar, Manawan, Duhai Kuhna, Bhura Karimpur, Lakhna and Dholan were re-occupied during these operations. During the period 13 to 17 September, Pakistanis also re-inforced their position at Khem Karan. They became aggressive on 17 September and started harassing Indian defended localities with armour and infantry patrols, and made two attacks on an Indian patrol base at Bhura Kuhna, which were, however, repulsed. New plans were prepared for the re-capture of Khem Karan, and on 17 September, 1/5 GR was placed under command for the purpose(58). HQ 29 Inf Bde and 2 Madras with a field Regiment joined next day. The Brigade firmed in in area Bhura Kuhna and astride mile 37 on road Valtaha-Khem Karan. On 19 September, 41 Inf Bde was also placed under command, and it completed concentration by the evening of 20 September. The attack on Khem Karan was planned to be carried out in two phases. In the first phase, 41 Inf Bde was to capture Khem Karan by 0200 hrs on 22 September by a right-flank attack, and in the second phase, 29 Inf Bde was to capture Khem Karan distributary by 0500 hrs on 22 September.

Reconnaissance was carried out during night 19/20 September, but it proved inconclusive; and the attack had to be postponed for one day. The attack went in on the night of 21/22. Fire plan went according to the timed programme. But the leading company of 1/8 GR encountered a minefield, and the attack was held up. It was directed to hold on. 15 Kumaon, the follow-up battalion, was not quick to take advantage of the night hours. Meanwhile, the enemy managed to bring his armour and air strength against the attacking troops, who failed to capture the objectives. Although, 2 Madras ex 29 Inf Bde was partially successful in capturing the screen position, it had to come back due to heavy shelling and SA fire.

Assessment

After the initial Indian reverses suffered in Khem Karan, an Indian army top brass was so panicked that he thought of withdrawing the Indian forces behind the Beas, but the Army Commander overruled it. Faced with imminent enemy onslaught, Commander 4 Mtn Div undertook useful defence preparations from the afternoon of 7 September to the forenoon of the next day. This was made possible by 2 Coys of 9 J&K Rif and a Sqn 9 Horse holding on the Rohi Nala and preventing the enemy from using the main axis till the evening of 7 September. In this, a good contribution was made by 14 Med Regiment, which, despite orders to withdraw, made a continuous bombardment of Kasur, disrupting the enemy build-up. Also the quick move of 2 Armd Brigade to this sector on night 8/9 September prevented by-passing of the Indian defences by the Pak armour(59). Besides, the high standing crops on the ground neutralised the superior range of the Patton's gun, restricting it to about 800 metres only. The gallantry of 4 Grenadiers, 18 Raj Rif and 9 J&K Rif, and good fire support provided by the artillery, jointly saved the situation.

The decisive victory at Asal Uttar aborted the ambitious Pakistani bid to penetrate deep into Indian territory. The mighty 1 Armd Div of Pakistan was humbled and the Patton's invincibility was falsified. But 4 Mtn Div's abortive attempt to recapture Khem Karan was anti-climax to the brilliant performance at Asal Uttar. The plans were generally poor in conception; the troops were fed peacemeal to tasks that required well-coordinated action in strength, and attacks were launched in a hurry with inadequate preparation. Leadership at the brigade and battalion levels also left much to be desired in a number of cases. Thus the later operations were a series of disappointing failures.

Analysing the reasons of 4 Mtn Div defensive success against Pakistan in this sector, the then GOC 4 Mtn Div says that the Pakistanis followed US method of offense without capturing firm base, while the British method was to have a firm base first and then move forward. This led to Pakistani debacle. He thinks that 4 Mtn Div had planned and executed defensive battle properly and luck also favoured the Division(60). Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon (Retd) has observed that the Pak counter-offensive in Khem Karan area with only armour but no infantry was a lucky break for him(61). 4 Mtn Div, which had suffered humiliation in Sela-Bomdila area during the Chinese aggression of 1962, regained its lost prestige in 1965.

29 Brigade in Dera Baba Nanak

This Brigade was then away from 7 Inf Div to hold the strategic Dera Baba Nanak area. Dera Baba Nanak was located on the left bank of river Ravi, about 28 km north-west of Batala. On the other side of the river, opposite Dera Baba Nanak, was the Pak town of Jassar, about 14 km east of Narowal, an important centre of Pak railway communication. There was a 150-metre long road-cum-rail bridge over the Ravi at Dera Baba Nanak, with the railway line below and the road above. This bridge, along with some area on the Indian side of the river, about 1.6 km deep, between the river and the Dhussi Bund, north of Batala-DBN (Dera Baba Nanak) road, was under the control of Pakistan since 1959 Indo-Pak agreement. The Pakistani area on the Indian side of Ravi was known as the Pak Enclave, and similarly there was a small Indian Enclave on the Pakistani side of the river. The DBN bridge gave Pakistan the facility to bring troops to her Enclave on the Indian side of the river.

On 4 September, 29 Inf Bde was placed under Brig Pritam Singh, who came from 19 Inf Bde, ex-26 Inf Div. This Brigade comprised 2 Raj Rif, commanded by Lt Col Vohra, 1/5 GR, commanded by Lt Col S.N.S. Gurung, and 2 Madras, commanded by Lt Col C.V. Donoghou, and had the support of B Sqn 14 Horse, 5 Fd Regt, 35/36 Light Battery, and one Fd Coy. The Bde operated directly under the control of XI Corps. It moved from Ambala in the morning of 5 September, reaching its concentration area by 1800 hrs.

The Pakistanis were holding the DBN area with 115 Inf Bde ex-15 Inf Div, located in Sialkot area. One of its Bns, 3 Punjab, had taken defensive position in the Pak Enclave, with 30 CAV in support of the Brigade. However, according to Indian information, Pakistan had only one Inf Bn, supported by one Fd Battery and a Sqn of tanks in Narowal-Jassar area, and only two Pakistani Inf Coys could be expected in the Pak Enclave on the Indian side of the Ravi.

The Bde was given the task of destroying the enemy bridge-head at Dera Baba Nanak. Brig Pritam Singh decided to carry out the task in two phases. In Phase I, he planned to establish a firm base on the Indian Dhussi Bund with one battalion (2 Raj Rif), capture the southern end of the Ravi bridge with one battalion (1/5 Gorkha Rifles), and capture Pak Dhussi Bund with one battalion (2 Madras). In Phase II, Pak

Tower in Dera Baba Nanak was to be demolished, the area occupied, and a firm base established there by 2 Rajputana Rifles. Later, 2 Raj Rif was to provide firm base for the Bde attack on area Jassar and 2 Madras and 1/5 GR(FF) were to attack through this battalion to capture the Bund area and the Jassar bridge respectively. 'H' hour was fixed for 0400 hrs on 6 September(62).

From its concentration area the Bde had left for Dera Baba Nanak at 2330 hrs on 5 September and took up defensive position at 0045 hrs on 6 September.

2 Madras reached the Assembly area at 0100 hrs on 6 September and moved for forming up place (Dhussi Bund) at 0200 hrs, arriving there after an hour. Advancing further, B and C companies, under Maj R.C. D'Souza and Maj M.M. Khuller respectively, moved towards their objectives, i.e. Pak post and No.3 Bund. Complete surprise was achieved, till the Indian artillery fired on the enemy positions. By 0510 and 0515 hrs, C Coy and B Coy had captured their objectives. The Pak tower was also fired upon with RCLs and tanks, but not much impression could be made on its concrete structure. The Pak OP in the tower continued to direct artillery fire from there. The Indians also captured about eleven (Pak) Sutlej Rangers and 19 civilians along with arms and ammunition. Then, 'A' coy under Maj J.C. Pandey moved forward for mopping up, and apprehend four civilians and killed one Sutlej Ranger.

1/5 GR(FF) had arrived at Dera Baba Nanak at 0200 hrs on 6 September 1965, and on reaching the forming up place at 0330 hrs, started firing at 0400 hrs. Moving forward, 'A' coy captured its objective, i.e. the right side of the Bund at 0545 hrs without encountering much resistance. Overjoyous Gorkhas started dancing with 'Khukris' in their hands, but did not dig in to meet any enemy counter-attack. Now Pak forces started heavy shelling of the Indian positions. Tanks were also brought up by Pakistan and fired from the other side of the river. Two enemy aircraft also flew over the Indian territory. Unfortunately, telephone communication between the Bde HQ on the one hand, and the Corps HQ and the Bns on the other, was not functioning. At 1000 hrs, the enemy counter-attacked all the occupied positions and continued heavy and intense shelling with artillery and Mortars. Although there were tanks in the Bde HQ, they were not sent to the front(63). At 1230 hrs, Indian tanks were ordered to move forward to support 1/5 GR. Soon, information was received by the Bde HQ

that two enemy tanks had crossed the Ravi bridge, and there was rumour that two defending Gorkha Coys had been smashed. Being panicked, Brig Pritam Singh sought permission to withdraw to Kiran Nala, the rear line of defence. But this was refused(64). At 1530 hrs, the Bde Major went to 13 Punjab lines and informed the Corps HQ, by tapping the main line, about the loss of the objective, captured by 1/5 GR, and the casualties suffered by them. He requested the BGS to send more artillery and tank ammunition as well as mines, and urged for setting right the communication net.

At 1600 hrs, CO 1/5 GR came to the Bde HQ and reported that during the enemy counter-attack against 1/5 GR, 5 to 6 Pak tanks were brought over the bridge, out of which two could withdraw to the Pak side of it, and it was the arrival of one troop of 9 Horse at 1330 hrs which halted further Pak ingress. As the RCL crew was wounded and the RCL gun was destroyed by the enemy, the Pakistani tanks could not be prevented from withdrawing from the bridge. The two Gorkha Coys holding the south end of the bridge fell back to Dhussi Bund after suffering heavy casualties, he said.

At 1700 hrs, the Bde Cdr reviewed the situation and ordered CO Raj Rif to re-capture the positions lost by the Gorkhas. A plan was formulated for the purpose. Soon afterwards, Brig Bhide, Chief Engineer, and Lt Col Chhajju Ram, GSO-I(Ops) XI Corps, arrived with the order of the Corps Cdr that a counter-attack should be launched on the night of 6/7 September and further enemy advance must be checked at all costs. At 1730 hrs, some Indian aircraft attacked the enemy on the other side of the bridge. At 2200 hrs, the enemy started heavy shelling on 1/5 GR, and tank noises were heard from the bridge. Half an hour later, the enemy infantry attacked the left coy of 1/5 GR. However, the Indian tanks moved up and repulsed the Pak attack. At 0030 hrs, the enemy attacked the right coy of 1/5 GR, but this attack was also repulsed with the support of tanks. This unorthodox use of tanks at night played an important role in raising the morale of the Indian troops and scaring away the enemy tanks, which then withdrew.

Now, 2 Raj Rif launched a counter-attack and re-captured the lost positions by 0400 hrs. As one Indian tank, which went up to the bridge for blocking it had toppled over, another tank moved up and blocked the bridge. Anti-tank mines were also laid at the entrance to the bridge, and one troop of tanks was deployed in the forward coy localities of 2 Raj Rif to

prevent any more Pak counter-attack. At 0900 hrs on 7 September, the enemy blew up the Ravi bridge, and one span of the bridge near the enemy side went down. 2 Raj Rif captured two Pak tanks, a lot of arms and ammunition and 16 PsOW. At 1100 hrs, the OP in the Pak tower surrendered(65).

The destruction of the bridge by the enemy indicated his defensive intentions. As his right flank was now comparatively secure, the Corps Commander appreciated that he could:-

- (a) switch the 8 Cavalry less a squadron, which was deployed to protect the approaches to Amritsar on the North, to the 4 Mtn Div Sector, and
- (b) leave one battalion at Dera Baba Nanak and move the remainder of the brigade to Bhikhiwind to join the 7 Inf Div(66).

Accordingly, 16 PAP Battalion was put under command 2 Raj Rif to defend the DBN sector, and 29 Inf Bde HQ with 2 Madras and 1/5 GR(FF) was pulled out along with 5 Fd Regt for the Khem Karan Sector.

In the DBN Sector, both the Indian and Pakistani Bde Cdrs seem to have suffered from a lack of initiative and competence. According to Col Naresh Chandra (Retd), ex-Brigade Major, Brig Pritam Singh, who took up the command of the 29 Inf Bde on 4 September, was a weak commander and had a defensive mentality. He did not visit forward positions even when 1/5 GR captured the Pak Enclave upto the DBN bridge, and got panicky when the forward positions of 1/5 GR were overrun. Similarly, Brig Muzaffurddin, who was commanding the Pak troops in this area through remote control, ordered the blowing up of the DBN bridge on receipt of a false report from an equally jittery person, in spite of strong protests from the Bn Cdr, Lt Col Zulfiqar Ali. The picture of false Indian pressure at DBN, as painted before his superiors, caused the move of Pak 24 Bde from the threatened Chawinda Sector. Had the mistake not been rectified, and had the 24 Inf Bde not re-occupied its original position, the Pakistanis could have lost the crucial Chawinda battle(67).

With proper plan, resources and initiative, the Pakistanis could have taken advantage of the DBN bridge and the Pak Enclave on its Indian side to launch an offensive through this Pakistani bridgehead towards Gurdaspur and Pathankot. The damage to the bridge caused by the panicky Pak Bde Commander deprived Pakistan of this opportunity. Similarly, the

**67 INF BDE SECTOR**

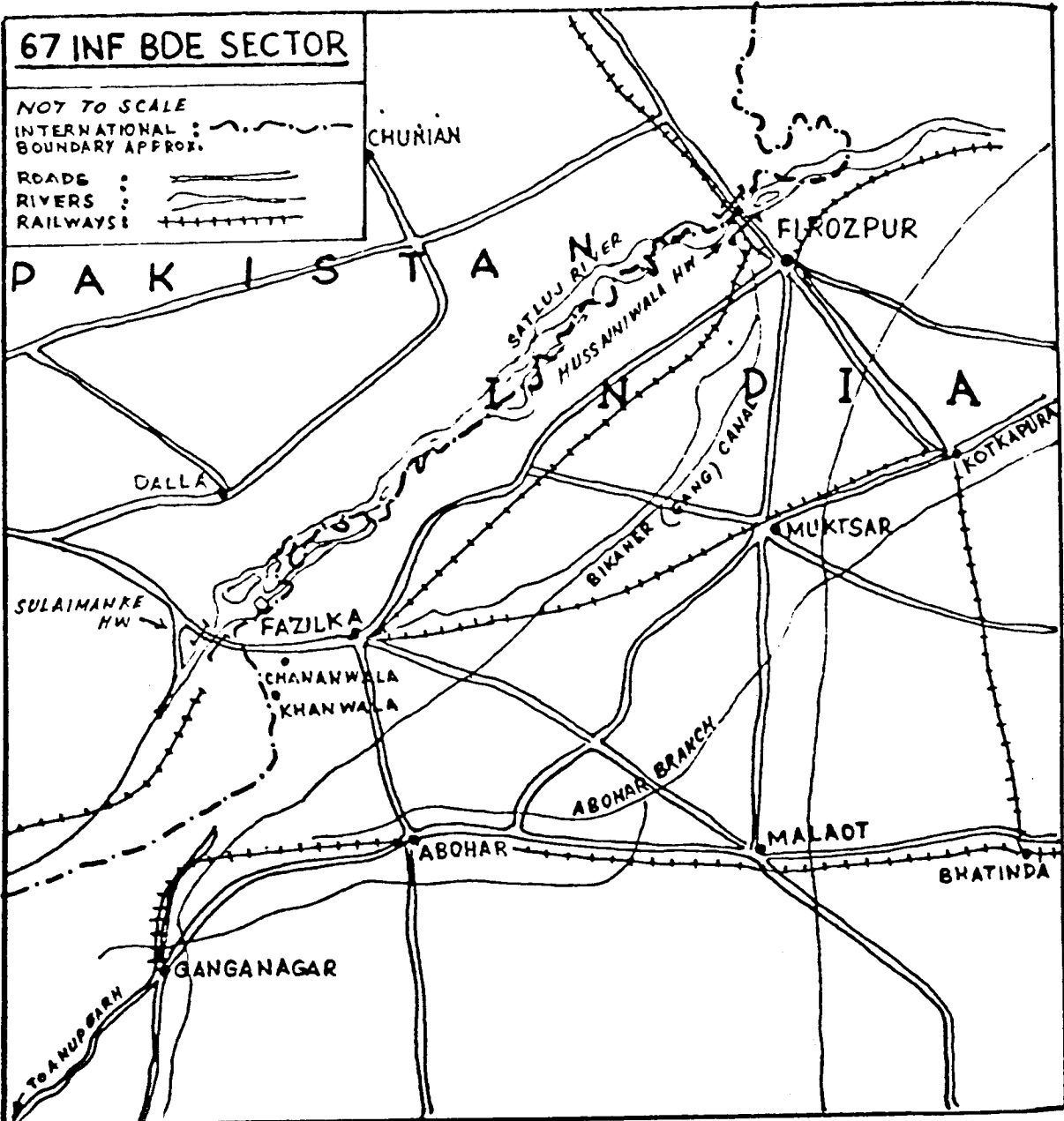
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Indian army also with imagination, foresight and adequate forces could have launched an additional offensive towards Lahore or towards Sialkot after capturing the DBN bridge. But unfortunately, there was no bold plan for that.

### 67 Brigade Operations

Commander XI Corps tasked Brig Bant Singh, Commander 67 Inf Bde Group, to defend the area from Harike Headworks (excluding) to Anupgarh in Rajasthan. The Brigadier divided the area into three main sectors - Hussainiwala, Fazilka and Ganganagar. The Indian town of Fazilka in the Punjab, about 80 km south-west of Ferozepur, was located a few km from the Indo-Pak Border. It was connected by railway with Ferozepur and Kot Kapura, and with Ferozepur, Abohar and Bhatinda by road. Opposite Fazilka, was located Sulaimanke Headworks on the Sutlej river(68).

The Bde had under command 3/9 GR, 2 MLI, 14 Punjab, 61 CAV (Horsed), Indep Sqn 14 Horse, 144 Fd Regt (TA), four PAP and two RAC Bns. 67 Inf Bde plan was to hold Hussainiwala Headworks with one battalion group, Ganganagar sector with 61 Cavalry and two RAC battalions, and Sulaimanke sector with brigade less one battalion. As the main threat was expected against Ferozepur, 2 MLI was deployed in that area, supported by 1 Light Battery (3.7" Howitzers). The brigade took up the defence posture as per plan.

Pak 105 Inf Bde was deployed in Sulaimanke under the command of Brig Mohd. Akbar, and consisted of 10 Punjab and Baluch. When the Indian troops crossed the International Border in Lahore sector on 6 September, Brig Akbar decided to take initiative to launch the offensive against India in his sector. On 6 September, Pakistanis shelled Indian positions in Sulaimanke area, but no other activity was shown by the enemy. The Indian brigade was not operationally fit due to some deficiencies in essential items including ammunition, and, so was unable to counter-attack. However, Brig Bant Singh created a mobile force of 2 Coys of 3/9 GR and the Indep Tank Sqn (14 Horse) and deployed it at Fazilka to be available for movement to any threatened area. Its main task was the defence of Fazilka, the area around which was boggy, and consequently the tanks remained road-bound(69).

It was on the night of 7/8 September that the enemy made three attempts to attack 14 Punjab position at Sulaimanke, but all these were repulsed. On 10th and 11th, Pakistanis again attacked 14 Punjab positions, but were again repulsed. Meanwhile,

2 Maratha captured and destroyed an enemy observation post on the Western side of the Sutlej on 7 September. On 8 September, Pak F-86 jets bombed 2 Maratha positions from 1500 to 1505 hrs and enemy artillery also shelled it. During the night of 9/10 September, 1 Baluch attacked 14 Punjab defensive position in Fazilka, capturing a platoon locality. However, 14 Punjab, in spite of deficiency in arms, ammunition and other equipment, counter-attacked the enemy successfully and recaptured the lost ground(70).

During the period 12-18 September, the main activity was intermittent shelling by both sides. On the night 19/20 September, 2 Maratha at Hussainiwala were attacked by an enemy infantry battalion supported by tanks. The Pakistanis also attacked the Bhagat Singh Samadhi area at Hussainiwala and destroyed the memorial. The main attack was, however, repulsed. Two Pak Sherman tanks were left behind, destroyed by Indian 3.5" Rocket Launchers. On 20 September 1965, Lt Gen Dhillon, Commander XI Corps, reinforced the Indian garrison at Hussainiwala with two infantry companies, and two troops of armour which were despatched from Fazilka.

On 23 September, after the declaration of cease-fire, Pakistanis intruded towards Chananwala, thereby posing a threat to Fazilka. 3/9 GR less one Coy, supported by 4 Indep Armd Sqn less a troop and 144 Fd Regt (TA), was given the task of capturing village Chananwala, which was considered to be held by one enemy company. The objective was captured at 2030 hrs on 25 September in the face of intense artillery, MMG and SA fire. The enemy then launched three counter-attacks, which were beaten back. But the Pakistanis launched more counter-attacks. On account of Pak heavy bombardment, neither Reserve Company at Chananwala railway station, supported by two troops of tanks, nor the ammunition and re-organisation stores could be pushed through to 3/9 GR on the objective. The CO lost contact with his companies at 0130 hrs on 26 September, and made no further efforts to reinforce his troops, although a company of 8 Para was allotted on 26th morning for this purpose. Consequently, the operation was a failure mainly due to lack of detailed planning and proper execution(71).

There is no doubt that 67 Inf Bde was given too vast an area and too long a border to defend, and the resources given to the Brigade Commander to carry out his tasks were quite insufficient. The Bde was concentrated at a very late stage and even then its artillery and small arms ammunition and essential equipment were not available. Taking all this into

consideration, Brig Bant Singh deserved credit for stopping Pak aggression in Fazilka area and denying the Hussainiwala bridge to the enemy.

23 MTN DIV - A NON-STARTER

23 Mtn Div, commanded by Maj Gen D.K. Palit, Vr C, was located in Rangia (Assam) in early September 1965. After the Pak attack on Khem Karan, Gen Palit was asked to move his Division to the Western front. Accordingly, his Division, minus 30 Bde, came to Punjab by train and detrained at Ludhiana. In place of 30 Bde, he was given a new one, but 9 Gaurds were taken away to Hudiara for operations. Although earmarked as Army HQrs reserve, this Division was located within the Western Command Theatre.

Initially, during 15-18 September 1965, the formation was asked to be prepared for launching an offensive in the Kasur area with a view to drawing out Pak 1 Corps from the defences of Lahore. However, this was subsequently cancelled to give a higher priority task to the Division. Due to limited gains made by Indian I Corps and the virtual stalemate at Chawinda, it was planned to launch 23 Mtn Div across the Ravi in Dera Baba Nanak sector to hit the Pak forces from the south through the axis Dera Baba Nanak - Narowal - Pasrur. This was considered necessary to stimulate the progress of the Indian offensive in the Sialkot sector and also to open logistical life-line along the same axis to supplement the supplies coming to the Indian I Corps from the east through indifferent LOC.

On 20 September, orders were issued to Gen Palit to concentrate his formation in Dera Baba Nanak area by 26 September. 23 Mtn Div did not have any armour, so one Sqn of PT-76 tanks was provided to this formation. As the Division's task required the crossing of the river Ravi, and as the formation had no river-crossing experience, it was asked to practice the same on the Sutlej. When Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh came to watch this river-crossing exercise, Gen Palit told him that his troops would swim across the river, if necessary, to launch the attack against the enemy. But the Army Commander asked him not to hurry, but to get fully prepared before launching the attack(72). However, all these proved futile, as the cease-fire took place on 23 September 1965.

Assessment of XI Corps Operations

By the end of the war, XI Corps had captured approximately 362 sq km of Pak territory(73), and yielded a much smaller area, approximately 51 sq km, in the Khem Karan pocket(74). But more important than

this was its great success in crippling the Pak 1 Armd Div and foiling the ambitious Pak plan to achieve an armour break-through to Harike and Amritsar, via Khem Karan. After the cease-fire, the President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, visited the Bhikhiwind area where damaged and disabled Pak Pattons had been collected together. Those tanks were looking like dead elephants, and the area came to be called Patton Nagar or the Graveyard of Pattons. The President recorded an inimitable obituary for the Patton tanks in the following words: "Born in Detroit, died in Bhikhiwind".

Although, splendid successes were achieved at Dograi, Barki and Asal Uttar, war aims could not be fully achieved due to command failures at various levels. Indeed, the XI Corps plan "included the capture intact of the GT and Barki road bridges over the Ichhogil Canal to pose a threat to Lahore. To hold the bridges it was necessary to hold ground forward of them"(75). He and the Army Commander specially singled out Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, Commander 15 Inf Div, for the initial reverses and withdrawal from Dograi on 6 September. Several Commanders lost their commands in this Corps on account of incompetence and lack of initiative. In some places Indian troops broke lines and vanished. However, Commanders of Divisions, Brigades and Battalions were not wholly responsible for the nonfulfilment of the war plans.

A review of XI Corps operations reveals underestimation of enemy resistance and the consequent allotment of insufficient forces for unrealistic task; the wrong tactics of sending the troops straightaway into battles after long marches from the barracks without proper concentration or recce; and the late arrival of supporting arms. Wrong objectives were selected as in the case of Bhasin; and hasty and defective plans were made to capture enemy-held positions, such as Khem Karan, with tired and unprepared battalions like 2 Mahar and 4 Sikh. Purposeless designs and incoherent plans led to inconsequential results, e.g. in Dera Baba Nanak. Frequent changes of plans against the advice of local commanders and panic reaction to events, instead of sticking to the aims and maintaining initiatives at all times, led to crises. Costly attacks on fortified enemy positions, which had little military importance, and the lack of integration of the IAF's capabilities into the Army plans thwarted the achievement of the objectives.

Interviews of the war veterans have revealed considerable disagreement between the formation

commanders. For example, while Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon (Retd) says that Indian Intelligence on enemy strength, disposition and defence works, especially the Ichhogil Canal, was adequate, commanders of Division, Brigades and Battalions have averred that it was most inadequate and the details of the Ichhogil Canal were not given to them, nor was the existence of the Batapore town known. It appears that the Corps commander did not allow the detailed information on the Canal to percolate downwards. Similarly, in case of the selection of objectives and the allotment of forces there were serious differences of opinion, especially in the case of Maj Gen Niranjana Prasad of 15 Inf Div.

In sum, XI Corps failed to achieve its objectives as it arrived at a stalemate in various sectors, such as Dera Baba Nanak, Fazilka, etc. The loss of Khem Karan was a blot in the name of XI Corps. As Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh (Retd) has observed:-

"With more aggressive leadership and an imaginative direction of operations at divisional level and below, XI Corps might have achieved a unique distinction in the annals of Indian military history"(76).

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Official Records.
2. Praval, Maj K.C., pp.356-57.
3. From Official Records.
4. Rajasthan Armed Constabulary.
5. From Official Records.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Col Khazan Singh, (Retd) formerly GSO-I, 15 Inf Div, in Lahore Sector, in September 1965, stated in his interview on 18 September 1988, that the Army Commander had under-estimated the enemy resistance and hence employed only one Bde (54 Inf Bde) along GT Road axis to advance to Ichhogil Canal.
9. Ibid. Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh had said that the enemy would be taken by surprise and the Indian troops would have a cake-walk advance. Accordingly, 96 Inf Bde was taken out. GOC 15 Inf Div protested against this verbally and in writing.
10. Bhupinder Singh, Lt Col, p.77.
11. From Official Records.
12. Ibid. As per Official Records 1 Jat Group consisted of 2 troops Shermans and one fd platoon under command and 1 fd battery and one light battery in support.
13. Indian intelligence about the enemy terrain, defence work, etc. was most inadequate. This was also felt by Commander 15 Inf Div. Interview Report CO 3 & GOC 15 Inf Div.
14. After reaching the assembly area, 3 Jat found that the equipment for manpacking the wireless set that linked the battalion to Bde HQ had not fetched up. After some time, the contact with the battery commander was also lost. Two artillery observation officers allotted to the battalion also got separated from their own parties. All this deprived the battalion of artillery support and means of communication with Bde HQ - Praval, p.361.
15. The Corps Commander did not ask for air support, although there was demand from the Div. Possibly, IAF air support sorties were not allotted for this sector due to lack of interest shown by the Corps Commander. - Col Khazan Singh (Retd)'s interview on 18 September 1988.
16. From Official Records.
17. Hayde, D.E., pp.42-43.
18. From Official Records.  
3 Jat casualties in this battle comprised 25 killed, including 1 Officer and 1 JCO; and 78 wounded, including 3 Officers and 3 JCOs. - Hyde, D.E., p.152.

19. Bhupinder Singh, Lt Col (Dr.), p.80.
20. From Official Records.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. According to Maj Gen Prasad (Retd), this was not surprising as 6 Kumaon was launched without any plan or preparation. From Official Records.
24. Praval, Maj K.C., pp.365-366.
25. From Official Records.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon's note dated 29 February, 1988.
29. 2 Para suffered 30 per cent casualties, but no gallantry award was given to any of them. According to Lt Col Ram Singh Yadav (Retd), his battalion was given confusing orders which were changed from time to time. Although aerial photographs showed that the Pakistanis had already destroyed the Jallo Bridge, even so, order was given to 2 Para to capture and destroy it. The alignment of the Ichhogil Canal, shown in the maps supplied to the Indian forces, was wrong, and as a result the Indian artillery fire fell 500 yards short, and the covering fire fell on the Indian troops advancing towards the Canal. He further says that as the west bank of the Ichhogil Canal at Jallo Bridge was 2 to 3 feet higher than the east bank, it would have been very risky to hold the lower east bank and become target of the enemy defensive positions, situated on the west bank of the Canal. But the Corps Commander was very unhappy that 2 Para withdrew from the east bank to a defensive position at Bhama. However, Lt Col Ram Singh says that his Bde Commander gave him the order to withdraw to Bhama after destroying the Jallo Bridge. - Interview with Lt Col Ram Singh Yadav (Retd) on 28 October 1987.
30. From Official Records.
31. Hayde, D.E., p.ix.
32. Ibid. An Indian infantry section had only one LMG.
33. Ibid., p.x.
34. From Official Records. However, Hayde says that 3 Jat suffered casualties of 63 killed, including 4 Officers; and 153 wounded, including 6 Officers and 5 JCOs. Hyde, D.E., p.152.
35. Unfortunately, Lt Col D.E. Hayde, the architect of the victory, was not awarded a second MVC this time, which he amply deserved.
36. From Official Records.
37. Ibid.
38. Tentacle with Air Control Team
39. From Official Records.

40. Lt Gen Dhillon has blamed the Sappers for the delay in constructing the bridge. Interview with Lt Gen Dhillon dated 12 October 1987
41. From Official Records.
42. Bhupinder Singh, Lt Col, Dr., p.97.
43. Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon (Retd)'s note dated 29 February 1988.
44. From Official Records.
45. Report of interview with Maj Gen Gurbakhsh Singh, MVC (Retd) dated 16 March 1989.
46. There was no indication of the presence of an entire Armd Div and Inf Div in the vicinity.
47. Commander 62 Mtn Bde says that he did not expect that the Pakistani armoured Division would be opposite his position before 7 to 10 days from the start of the operation. Also, he did not know about the existence of two canals in Pak territory (the Icchogil and Rohi Nala) opposite him. He knew about one only. Consequently, he was not prepared for crossing both. Interview with Maj Gen H.C. Gahlaut (Retd) dated 22 February 1989.
48. See Appendix III for Pak HQ 4 Armd Bde OO dated 8 September 1965, as captured by India during the War.
49. According to Maj Gen Gurbakhsh Singh (Retd), ex-GOC 4 Mtn Div, the defended area on the flanks was flooded by breaching the canals. The area being heavily cultivated, Indian armour in static position could neutralise the Patton tanks' advantage in range. Interview dated 16 March 1989.
50. From Official Records.
51. Ibid.
52. Interview dated 12 September 1988 with Brig D.S. Sidhu, formerly Commander 'B' Coy 4 Sikh. On 12 September 1987, a Sikh outpost fought to the last against Pathan raiders at Saragarhi in the North-West Frontier. This has, however, been denied by Lt Gen Harbakhsh, Singh, Vr C (Retd).
53. Interview with Brig D.S. Sidhu, former Commander 'B' Coy 4 Sikh, dated 12 September 1988.
54. Ibid.
55. The group hit an enemy tank lagger about 1,500 metres east of Khem Karan. The tank crew were asleep. Lt Col Anant could have left them alone, or put in an attack. He did neither. Instead, he deployed his men in a sugar-cane field nearby. - Praval, p.385. Lt Gen D.S. Dhillon (Retd) thinks that the 4 Sikh debacle was due to the incompetence of its CO, Lt Col Anant Singh. Lt Gen Dhillon (Retd)'s interview on 12 October 1987.
56. From Official Records.
57. It is said that "Gen Harbakhsh was carrying a Scotch whisky bottle in his brief case for celebrating Saragrahi Day of his Bn in Khem Karan



- on 12 September. Such personal interest should be curbed while playing with the lives of men" - Bhupinder Singh, Lt Col (Dr.) (Retd), p.159. When on repatriation from PsOW Camp in Pakistan, Lt Col Anant Singh met Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh, he expressed regret saying: "Anant, I am very sorry, I should not have sent you for that task". Ibid, p.144. However, Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh, Vr C (Retd), during his interview on 1 August 1989, denied totally the above mentioned observations.
58. It was felt that the strength at the disposal of Commander 4 Mtn Div was inadequate for the task, and also there was no element of surprise. - Maj Gen Gurbakhsh Singh's interview dated 16 March 1989.
  59. Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon, says: "Looking back I consider that committing my armour reserve at that time and place was the greatest decision of my military career". - Lt Gen Dhillon's note dated 29 February 1988.
  60. Interview with Maj Gen Gurbakhsh Singh, MVC, (Retd), dated 16 March 1989.
  61. Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon, (Retd)'s note dated 29 February 1988.
  62. According to Col Naresh Chandra, ex-Brigade Maj 29 Inf Bde, no intelligence about Pak strength and intentions was made available to the Bde. From its observation post it was estimated that Pakistan had only one Infantry battalion and some armour and artillery in this area. - Interview with Col Naresh Chandra (Retd) dated 21 January 1989.
  63. From Official Records.
  64. Ibid.
  65. During the action on 6 and 7 September, 1/5 GR suffered casualties of 17 men killed, including one Officer, 27 wounded, and 22 missing. The casualties of 2 Raj Rif during these two days were 10 killed and 29 wounded, while 2 Madras had 5 of their men wounded. In this battle, Lt Col Chhajju Ram was awarded Vir Chakra for gallantry. Actually he was recommended for MVC. However, he neither planned the Indian counter-attack, nor participated in the attack against the enemy. He had only brought the message from the Corps Cdr for launching the Indian counter-attack against the enemy, and again personally reported the victory to the Corps Cdr next morning. However, Lady luck smiled on him. - Interview with Col Naresh Chandra (Retd) dated 21 January 1989. However, Lt Gen J.S. Dhillon (Retd) thinks that Lt Col Chhajju Ram richly deserved Vr C, and the success in DBN and Barki "was largely due to the leadership and determination of Chhajju", who, on 7 September 1965, called for and got an air

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sortie to hit enemy concentrations behind the DBN bridge. "The enemy panicked, blew up Bridge and retreated far from the Ravi". - Lt Gen Dhillon's note dated 29 February 1988.

66. From Official Records.
67. Having blown up the Jassar bridge, the Pak Bde Cdr even persuaded his Corps Cdr to counter-attack the imaginary enemy bridgehead. - Mehdi, S.G., Col (Retd), Defence Journal, Karachi, December 1977, p.24 - Our Lost Defence Cause: The Tragedy of 1971 and its Fore-Runner.
68. Bhupinder Singh, Lt Col, (Dr.) p.100.
69. Ibid, p.101.
70. Ibid.
71. According to Official Records, 3/9 GR suffered about 97 casualties, which included 60 missing, and 14 Punjab's casualties were 8 killed and 13 wounded, while 4 Indep Armd Sqn had one OR missing and one Sherman tank destroyed by enemy RCL gun. Enemy casualties were estimated at 60, plus one APC destroyed.
72. Report of interview with Maj Gen Palit, dated 11 May 1987.
73. From Official Records.
74. Bhupinder Singh, Lt Col, (Dr.), (Retd), p.249.
75. From Official Records.

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