

ALL-OUT WAR IN BANGLADESH

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES:

Bangladesh (East Bengal or East Pakistan before liberation), slightly larger in land size than the State of Ohio in the USA(1), lay in the eastern part of the northern Indian plains, between latitudes 20° 30' and 26° 45' north, and between longitudes 88° and 92° 56' east. It was essentially a low plain containing the combined delta of the Ganges (Padma) and the Brahmaputra (Jamuna). The fertile alluvial delta region had been created by rich silt, deposited by the many rivers criss-crossing the territory. The seaward margin of the Ganges delta, known as the Sunderbans, and inhabited by the Royal Bengal tigers, was intricately divided by tidal channels and covered with mangrove forest. The labyrinthine, deltaic channels created flood, food and famine, all the three dominant features of Bangladesh's geography. While the delta land was seldom more than 150 ft above sea-level, high ground was found at the fringes, for example, the Barind upland in the north-west, the upper Surma Valley in the north, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the extreme south-east, rising up to a height of 2,100 ft. However, the high areas were neither as productive nor as densely populated as the delta land which supported nearly 80% of Bangladesh's population(2).

Besides numerous rivers and canals, East Bengal had a number of 'bils', i.e., big marshes. Some were of enormous size and retained water permanently, though its extent varied from season to season. Leading examples were the Gopalganj and Chalan 'bils' and the Sylhet 'Haors' or marshes. During the monsoon months, many parts of East Bengal remained under water of various depths, and communication between places was possible only with the help of boats, big or small.

Monsoon in East Bengal generally covered the period from early June to early October. It extended north-westward from the Bay of Bengal and by the beginning of June it entered East Bengal. After entering the area, the Monsoon rushed north and west and its advance was marked by disturbed weather and heavy squalls. The Cox's Bazar and Chittagong areas and their adjoining hills, the Noakhali coast and the base of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills in north Sylhet received the heaviest downpour. For most of the area, July was the rainiest month, with slightly lowering figures for June and August. Often, there was a break

in August, and other minor breaks were marked by intervals of fine weather and passing clouds. All the months upto early October were marked by humidity averaging well over 80 per cent. Another significant feature was the number of October storms towards the close of the monsoon period. In general terms, the major part of Bangladesh, particularly to the east and south-east, had an excess of rainfall which often brought about unmanageable floods. With the exception of the western parts of the Rajshahi and Kushtia Districts, where the annual rainfall was about 55", no part of the province received a precipitation less than 60". In fact, only about one-third of the country, including the southern part of North Bengal, and Kushtia, Jessore and parts of Faridpur district received a rainfall of less than 70". Annual rainfall amounted to 74" in Dhaka(3). A large area in the south and south-east, comprising Khulna, Barisal, Noakhali, Tippera, Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and also areas to the north-east and north, such as Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rangpur and northern Dinajpur, received a precipitation from 80" to 100". The southern extremity, the Cox's Bazar area, got about 140", and the northern and north-eastern portions of Sylhet district received from 150" to 200" of rain.

Despite the almost complete absence of the winter rain, the ground was so moist that the landscape remained green throughout the year, with Malaria having its strongholds all over the land.

The climate of Bangladesh was characterised by moderately high temperature for about eight months in the year with considerable humidity and heavy summer rainfall. Hence, it had been described, in broad general terms, as "moderately warm, equable and humid"(4), producing enervating effect on human life and causing high incidence of sickness, especially during the monsoon months. While the maximum temperatures were attained over most of Bangladesh in April, generally varying between 91° and 96° F. The minimum summer temperatures over the plains hardly fell below 70° F. The country enjoyed a short winter which started from the last week of November and ended by mid February. In winter, the two warmest parts were the south-eastern corner (Noakhali, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar) and the south-western area (Jessore, Satkhira and Khulna)(5). The diurnal range of temperature for the south-western part of Bangladesh during the monsoon was not more than 12° F., while in the coldest month, January, it rarely exceeded 30° F. Dhaka, the capital which adequately represented the low lands of Bangladesh, had a mean temperature of 67° F. in January, and 87° F. in June. Humidity was

generally high throughout the year. While it varied between 75% and 82% in the winter months, it ranged from 84% to 90% in June and July. Not only the pre-monsoon months of March, April and May, but also October witnessed violent storms, when high wind velocities with speeds generally between 30 and 40 miles per hour, but rising up to 100 miles per hour in some cases, were attained, often causing much damage to property and loss of life. They sometimes developed into full-fledged cyclones, e.g. those of October 1960 and May 1965, resulting in untold sufferings and large-scale destruction of life and property.

Terrain

Bangladesh was divided and sub-divided into different zones by the following five river systems:

1) The Padma system

It included the mother river Padma and its distributaries, such as the Mathabhanga, Ichhamati, Bhairab, Kumar, Kabadak, Chitra, Nabaganga, Garai-Madhumati, and Arialkhan (Tetulia), together covering the districts of Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Barisal and Noakhali. The gigantic Padma-Meghna estuary, stretching from the Barisal mainland to the Chittagong coast, contained numerous flat islands and wide channels.

2) The Meghna-Surma system

It was linked with rivers Barak (Kushiyara), Dhaleshwari, the Old Brahmaputra, Buriganga and Sitalakhya, which drained the districts of Sylhet, Comilla and Noakhali.

3) The Brahmaputra system

The Brahmaputra along with its affluents and channels covered a large area, extending from the Jamuna to the Meghna.

4) The North Bengal rivers

The Mahananda, Nagar, Kulik, Tangan, Purnabhaha, Atrai, Karatoya, Tista and Dharla drained a large area stretching from the western borders of Bangladesh right up to the Brahmaputra.

5) The hill rivers of Chittagong

The various fast-flowing streams, coming from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Lushai Hills and the Tripura Hills, drained into the four main rivers - the Fenny, Karnafuli, Sangu and Matamuhuri, which ultimately fell into the sea. Of its total length of 170 miles, the Karnafuli, the most important of these rivers, was navigable to ocean-going vessels up to Chittagong, and thereafter, boats carrying cargoes weighing up to 300 maunds could go up to Rangamati, north of Chittagong, in a regular service.

The topography of the country could be divided into: (a) the plains, (b) the tracts of old alluvium, and (c) the hilly region. The Plains could again be sub-divided into:-

- (i) The Deltaic plain, which included Kushtia, Jessore, northern Faridpur and northern Khulna in the west, central and southern Faridpur and Bakerganj in the east, and the Sunderbans located in the south of Khulna and Barisal districts,
- (ii) the plain of the Padma-Jamuna-Meghna which stretched along the great rivers - the Padma, the Jamuna and Meghna - and fell in the districts of Faridpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, Rangpur, Comilla and Sylhet, and
- (iii) the North Bengal plain which included parts of the Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, and Rajshahi districts and also the Chalan Bil (140 sq. miles in area) and other marshes situated on the border between the Rajshahi and Pabna districts.

The tracts of old alluvium included the Madhopur Tract, which covered an area - 70 miles long and 35 miles wide - and extended from the central part of the Mymensingh district to the northern part of Dhaka, with an elevation ranging from 50 to 100 ft above sea-level; the Barind Tract, yellowish to red in colour and 20-40' high, which covered about 3,600 sq miles, and sprawled over the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Bogra and Rangpur; and the 20-40' high Lalmei Hills, located in the south-west of the Comilla town.

Hills were found in Bangladesh only along a part of the eastern margin of the Sylhet plains and in the

south-eastern corner of the Chittagong district and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Around the Sylhet town, there were many low hills covered with trees and turf with elevations ranging from 100 to 200 ft. Along the Sylhet-Shillong road, some of these hills had risen up to 300 ft. There were tea gardens flourishing on this elevation. South of the Kushiyara river, six hill ranges projected into the Sylhet district from the Tripura ranges, the maximum elevation of which hardly exceeded 800 ft, above sea-level. The Chittagong Hill Tracts were the only extensive hill area in Bangladesh, which was otherwise dominated by wide plains and large rivers. In this hill region, a number of hill ranges ran from north to south, thus enclosing longitudinal river valleys and generally gaining in elevation to the east. The highest peak of Bangladesh (4,034 ft high) was situated in the south-eastern extremity of this area, and there were many peaks located on these hills, which were above 3,000 ft. Most of the valleys in this region were covered with dense, virgin forest, interspersed with small watercourses and swamps of various sizes. Part of the Chittagong town lay on the outlying hillocks of the Chandranath range. In the south, near Cox's Bazar and Teknaf, hills formed precipitous cliffs along the sea and enclosed four wide valleys of great fertility and dense population.

Transportation

Separated from West Pakistan by Indian territory stretching over 1,100 miles, Bangladesh had approximately 2,474-miles long highly zig-zag land/river boundary with India (2,300 miles), and Burma (174 miles), and 445 miles of sea shore(6). The country had maximum over-land distances of 200 and 325 miles from east to west and north to south, respectively. The north-south flow of most of the rivers (with the exception of the Padma which flowed from north-west to south-east) in Bangladesh tended to emphasize the isolation of the eastern from the western part of the land, and gave the surface transport system, mainly by water, a north-south orientation. Some road and rail links did serve the interfluves, but no direct east-west link had so far been possible.

Waterways

Bangladesh had a labyrinth of waterways connecting all parts of the country. There were three types of waterways: (a) large and deep rivers, navigable throughout the year to all sizes of powered vessels, including steamers, flats and launches, (b) smaller and less deep rivers, navigable throughout

the year for country boats of fair size, but negotiable by steamers only in the rainy season, and (c) smaller streams, channels and 'khals' which were navigable in some cases for the whole year and in other cases only during the rainy season for country boats of various sizes.

While regular inland navigation was possible round the year, in the Padma (Ganges), Jamuna (Brahmaputra), Meghna, Karnafuli (lower reaches only), Kabadak, Pussur, and various river estuaries in Barisal and Khulna districts, a number of rivers in the central delta area such as the Madhumati, Arialkhan and Kumar were navigable during the rainy season. The Padma, Jamuna and Meghna were so wide that at places one could not see the other bank. There were no bridges across them except for the Hardinge bridge over the Ganges and the Ashuganj bridge over the Meghna. All crossings elsewhere had to be by ferry. Regular steamer services were run over a length of 2,600 miles of inland waterways, of which 2,260 miles were navigable throughout the year. In 1971, there were five major inland ports - Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chandpur, Barisal and Khulna, besides about 1,150 river stations and landing stages in Bangladesh, handling over 25 million passengers and 2 million tons of cargo annually(7).

Railways

The railways in Bangladesh were greatly influenced by the size and direction of its main rivers. Major lines ran in the north-south direction and there were ferry systems across the big rivers at Bahadurabad, Jagannathganj, Goalundo, Daudkandi, etc. There were only two major railway bridges - one over the Ganges and the other over the Meghna. In 1971, Bangladesh had 1,711 route mileage of railways of which the broad gauge (5' 6") amounted to 545 miles, the metre gauge (3' 8") 1,146 miles and the narrow gauge (2' 6") 20 miles(8), together carrying annually 73 million passengers and 6 million tons of goods. While the metre gauge with progressively dieselised locomotives covered all the areas east of the Jamuna-Padma system, the broad gauge covered the areas west of it, with few exceptions. The following were the main railway lines(9):-

Broad Gauge

- (a) Darsana - Sara bridge-Nator-Parbatipur-Saidpur.
- (b) Darsana - Goalundo

- (c) Bangaon - Jessore-Khulna
- (d) Jessore - Darsana, and
- (e) Ishurdi - Sirajganj

Metre Gauge

- (a) Bahadurabad-Mymensingh-Dhaka, and Jagannathganj-Mymensingh link
- (b) Dhaka-Tungi-Bhairab Bazar-Akhaura-Laksham-Chittagong
- (c) Akhaura-Kulaura-Fenchuganj-Sylhet
- (d) Kurigram-Lalmanirhat-Rangpur-Parbatipur-Dinajpur
- (e) Santahar-Bogra-Gaibanda
- (f) Mymensingh-Bhairab Bazar
- (g) Comilla-Noakhali

Road system

Bangladesh had a poor road system, because it was secondary to the water transport and railway transport systems and the cost of maintenance against the monsoon fury was staggering. Good roads ran only a few miles out of prominent towns, and rural and municipal roads were hardly paved. The country had only five all weather roads and a number of fair weather roads which crossed numerous minor rivers and streams again and again. The smaller rivers and streams could be as wide as 1000 ft and they did not have a bridge at every crossing place, linked by road. At such places road transport had to be ferried across.

The five main roads were:-

- (a) Sibalay-Dhaka-Narayanganj-Daudkandi-(Ferry)-Comilla-Feni-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar.
- (b) Tamabil-Sylhet-Maulvibazar-Comilla
- (c) Pachagarh-Thakurgaon-Saidpur-Rangpur-Bogra-Sirajganj Ferry linking with road(a).
- (d) Nawabganj-Rajshahi-Hardinge Bridge-Kushtia-Jhenida-Kaliganj-Jessore-Khulna.

- (e) Meherpur-Chuadanga-Jhenida-Magura-Ferry-Faridpur or Goalundo Ghat Ferry to road (a)(10).

Besides, there were the following motorable trunk roads:

- (a) Lalmai-Laksham-Noakhali
- (b) Hilli-Gaibanda
- (c) Kotchandpur-Kaliganj
- (d) Rajshahi-Nator-Bogra
- (e) Dhaka-Aricha-55 miles
- (f) Sherpur-Sujannagar-50 miles
- (g) Sorsha-Satkhira-Daulatpur
- (h) Rangpur-Dinajpur-35 miles
- (i) Lalmai-Chandpur
- (j) Pabna-Bogra-Rangpur, and
- (k) Goalundo-Faridpur-Barisal(11).

Any movement off the road and track was not feasible during the monsoons, when small boats were the only means of cross-country surface communication. During the dry weather, December to March, cross-country movement by 4x4 wheeled vehicles with prior reconnaissance was feasible, but a shower could bring all cross-country movement to a stop and dog down all traffic.

There was no direct road links between the Western, Central and the Eastern Sectors. However, all sectors were linked by inland water transport. The Jamuna was not bridged, but ferry points were there at Sirajganj, Chilmari and Phulchhari, with Sirajganj having better road communication and connected by rail as the most direct route to Dhaka.

The Eastern and Central sectors were connected by rail from Akhaura to Mymensingh and from Akhaura to Dhaka via Ashuganj railway bridge. Besides, ferry sites for road crossing to Dhaka were there at Chandpur, Daudkandi and Bhairab Bazar on the Meghna. Only a fair-weather road connected Jamalpur with Dhaka via Tangail which was an important communication centre. Another lateral road connected Madhopur with Mymensingh.

In 1971, Bangladesh had one sea port (Chittagong) with the cargo handling capacity of 4 million tons in 1969, one big riverine port (Chalna) with the cargo handling capacity of 2.3 million tons(12), and 7 civil airports - Dhaka, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Shamshernagar, Ishurdi, and Jessore - under operation, besides the following airports which could be used both for civilian and military purposes when needed(13):-

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| (1) Lalmanirhat, | (2) Kasba, |
| (3) Thakurgaon, | (4) Dinajpur, |
| (5) Singarbil, | (6) Bhatpara, |
| (7) Feni, | (8) Ramgarh, |
| (9) Fauzdarhat, | (10) Dohazari, |
| (11) Chiringa. | |

Although the land-based centres of population, especially Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, provided political and tactical objectives to anyone intending to capture the country, and land communications linking these centres determined the pattern of operations, nevertheless woe betide a military force which would surrender the labyrinth of waterways to the adversary. The geographical situation of Bangladesh, the shape of its border, and the orientation of its communications made the terrain very suitable for guerilla operations. Bogra in the north-west, Magura in the south-west, Chandpur, Daudkhandi and Ashuganj in the eastern and Tangail in the central sectors respectively, were the nodal points, thrusts along which could threaten Dhaka.

Administratively, the land was divided into 4 divisions and further subdivided into 17 districts and 59 sub-divisions. The names of the divisions and districts were:

 Names of Divisions

Names of Districts

Rajshahi Division:

Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra,
 Rajshahi and Pabna.

Khulna Division:

Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna and
 Barisal.

Dhaka Division:

Mymensingh, Dhaka and Faridpur

Chittagong Division: Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali,
Chittagong and Chittagong Hill
Tracts(14).

People

In 1971, there were approximately 75 million people in Bangladesh, living in an area of 55,126 square miles(15). The density of population was about 1,360 per square mile for the country as a whole, three times more than India's, but in many rural areas in the Padma-Jamuna plains it was over 2,500 per square mile, thus making Bangladesh the most densely populated country of the world(16). Over 90% of the country's population was rural and about 75% of these were engaged in agriculture and associated occupations. While agricultural output made up more than 56% of the country's Gross Domestic Product, her industrial output accounted for only 10% of the GDP. Again, over 60% of all industrial production came from agro-industries. Low per capita income and inadequate domestic investment led to a poor rate of economic growth and made the country economically one of the poorest in the world.

An ardent student of political geography of Pakistan was so much impressed by the striking differences between the two halves of Pakistan - differences in physical factors, in crops, in customs and social attitudes, economic conditions and political biases - that as early as 1964, he considered them as "of fundamental importance to the future of the State as a whole"(17).

What image Bangladesh and its people had in the eyes of the West Pakistani elite is summed up in the following passage of an official publication of Pakistan:-

"The people in this wing of Pakistan have fish and rice as their staple food, grow jute and tea for export and run supply lines on ferry-boat schedules. They produce more jute than any other country, with more than two-third of the world's total output... It is a land of rainbows and songs where the elephant and python and the Royal Bengal tiger roam about in the thick foliage of the Sunderban forests. They are essentially an artistic people, fond of music, dancing, poetry and painting... Here whispering breezes sing the song of 'Sonar Bangla' or the golden land of Bengal through rustling coconut palms"(18).

However, the Pakistani rulers, who generally looked down upon the people of East Pakistan as an indolent, unenterprising and non-martial people, underestimated their patriotism and potential strength. They hardly realized that the whispering breezes of 'Sonar Bangla' could develop into a great cyclone, snapping the political ties between the two wings of Pakistan.

PLANS AND ORBATS

Although the actual hostilities between India and Pakistan started on 3 December 1971 as a result of the pre-emptive Pak air attack on Indian airfields in the evening that day, both countries had prepared war plans and made allocations of forces for their implementation. In the summer of 1971, India made a blue-print of Operation "Cactus Lily" to raise, train and locate forces for the eventual hostilities which were likely to break out between the two countries as a result of intensification of the liberation struggle in Bangladesh. In fact, Operation "Cactus Lily" became operative with effect from 5 August 1971(19).

Pakistan had initially only one Division consisting of four Infantry brigades (fourteen Battalions) deployed in East Pakistan in the beginning of 1971. However, afterwards, this force was increased to three full and two ad hoc Infantry Divisions, comprising thirteen Brigade HQs and thirty-five regular infantry battalions, plus some 73,000 para-military personnel, such as East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCAF), Scouts, Mujahids and Razakars(20). Pakistan also built up in her Eastern Wing one regiment of M-24 Chaffee tanks, one M-24 indep armour Squadron, and one ad hoc tanks squadron of Chaffees, PT-76s, and Shermans; six field regiments of artillery with 105 mm guns, five Mortar Batteries, some independent Field Batteries, one regiment of Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery and one LAA Arty Bty; nineteen F-86-E Sabre jet fighters, three RT-33, a few light aircraft, transport aircraft and helicopters; and a large number of gun boats, including four sea-going ones(21).

To counter this build-up, Indian formations and units were assembled/raised, and concentrated from mid August to mid November 1971 under the Eastern Command of the Indian Army, based in Calcutta. Commencing from early October 1971, a large number of Formation HQ, units and sub-units were raised, the most important of which was the 2 Corps HQ, established on a reduced scale at Krishnanagar (Dt. Nadia, West

Bengal). Also 4 Corps was split into the Rear Corps HQ, based at Tezpur in Assam, and the Main Corps HQ, based at Teliamura near Agartala (Tripura). In view of the Indian Army's usual commitment to maintain adequate forces for the defence of Sikkim and NEFA and containment of insurgency in Nagaland, Manipur and the Mizo Hills, the following forces could be made available for dealing with the Pak forces in East Pakistan(22):-

Army

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|-----|--|--|
| (a) | <u>North-Western Sector</u>
(North Bengal). | 33 Corps with 20 Mtn Div; 63 CAV less Sqn; and other supporting elements. |
| (b) | <u>South-Western Sector</u>
(South of R. Padma and West of R. Meghna). | 2 Corps with 9 Inf Div and 4 Mtn Div; 45 CAV and a Sqn of 63 CAV; and other supporting elements. |
| (c) | <u>Eastern Sector</u>
(East of R. Meghna). | Main 4 Corps with 8, 23 and 57 Mtn Divs; two Sqns of tanks; and other supporting elements. |
| (d) | <u>Northern Sector</u>
(Between R. Jamuna and R. Meghna - north of R. Padma). | 101 Communication Zone area with 95 Mtn Bde; and other supporting elements. |

Additionally, the Eastern Command had under its control: 340 Mtn Bde Gp, 71 Mtn Bde, 50 Indep PARA Bde, Force HQ OP ORCHID, Bengal Area, 312 Indep AD Bde, 342 Ad Bde, 203 Army Engr Regt, Comd Reserve, etc(23). Besides the above, fourteen Assam Rifles Bns, seven T.A. Inf Bns, some T.A. AD Regts and T.A. Engr Regts; twenty-three BSF Battalions(24), four CRPF Bns and three other Armed Police Bns, three Bdes of Bangladesh regular troops, and about 100,000 MF/FF, etc, were there to help the Indian Armed Forces(25).

Indian Navy

The Eastern Fleet deployed in the Bay of Bengal during the conflict comprised Indian Naval Ships Vikrant, Khanderi (Submarine), Kamorta, Brahmaputra, Beas, Kavaratti, Rajput, Magar, Gharial, Guldar and Desh Deep, etc.,(26).

Indian Air Force

Four Hunter Squadrons, two MiG Squadrons and one Su Squadron, one Squadron of Mi-4 helicopters and some transport aircraft were made available for the Eastern Front(27). Also, Advance HQ Eastern Air Command was organised in Calcutta and Joint Army Air Operation Centre (JAAOC) established(28).

Supply and Logistics

In view of the difficult terrain of Bangladesh, criss-crossed by numerous big and small rivers, logistic and supply arrangements had to be made much in advance of the actual operations. It was, therefore, decided to position one month's stock in advance for two Army Divisions in Tripura, one Division in Tura, two Divisions in Krishnanagar, and one Division in Raiganj. Consequently, the following tonnage of supplies was moved to the following places in advance:-

- (a) Tripura 30,000
- (b) Tura 3,000
- (c) Krishnanagar 14,000
- (d) Raiganj 7,000(29)

Minimum bridging resources could be made available just before the war(30).

Major communication problem related to Tripura and Tura. Tripura was served by a single meter-gauge railway line beyond Gauhati, with a limited capacity of about 30 wagons, and the rail-head of Dharmanagar in Tripura was 100 to 150 miles from the forward administrative echelons. Moreover, the rail and road in this area ran very close to the border, and were, therefore, open to Pak sabotage. Similarly, between Gauhati and Tura there was no railway line. In Tripura a new road network was created to allow supply dumps to be stocked and combat formations to concentrate at jumping off points. Also, river Gomti had to be bridged at two places - Kakraban and Sonamura. Besides, inland water transport support columns were stationed at Dhubri, Farakka, and Hasnabad to provide necessary supplies to the Indian troops advancing along the banks of Jamuna-Brahmaputra and Padma-Madhupati. What is more, local food resources were meagre, particularly in Tripura and Meghalaya, and supplies for the Army had to be brought from outside. For example, frozen milk was obtained from far-off States like U.P. and Punjab.

Continuing efforts had to be made to make up for deficiencies in most items of weapons, equipment and certain types of ammunition. The position of spares for small arms was so bad that items like breech blocks for LMGs and firing pins had to be manufactured and new tracks and links for PT-76 Tanks had to be provided before the commencement of actual hostilities.

New Field Hospitals were created in II and 33 Corps Sectors for 200 beds each, while in Tripura 700 beds provided in three hospitals - Teliamura (400 beds), Dharmanagar (200 beds), and Silchar (100 beds)(31).

In an overall comparison of relative strengths, in the Eastern Theatre, India was superior to Pakistan in the degree of 1.5:1. Taking into account the suitability of Bangladesh terrain for defence and the defensive preparations made in East Pakistan, this could be taken almost as parity(32). Indeed, Pakistan had constructed extensive trenches, ditches and concrete pill-boxes to establish a system of fortifications along the main approaches to certain positions which the Pak Army termed as fortresses, sufficiently stocked with arms, ammunition and supplies to hold out for a period of 45 days(33).

Pak Defensive Deployment in East Pakistan

(a) North-Western Sector

The 16 Inf Div headquarters at Nator, with a reconnaissance and Support Battalion, a regiment less squadron of armour, two field regiments and one mortar battery, deployed as follows:-

- i. 23 Inf Bde of four battalions in Dinajpur-Rangpur area.
- ii. 205 Inf Bde in the Hilli-Ghoraghat area.
- iii. 34 Inf Bde in Rajshahi-Naogaon area.

(b) Western Sector

The 9 Inf Div with a Squadron of armour, two field regiments and one mortar battery deployed as follows:-

- i. Divisional Headquarters and 107 Inf Bde in Jessore area.
- ii. 57 Inf Bde in Jhenida-Meherpur-Jibannagar area.
- iii. Elements in the Satkhira-Khulna area.

(c) South-Eastern Sector

- i. 14 Inf Div with a squadron of armour, two field regiments and one mortar battery with Headquarters initially in Dhaka and later at Bhairab Bazar, 27 Inf Bde in the Akhaura-Kasba-Brahmanbaria area, 313 Inf Bde in the Maulvibazar area, and 202 Inf Bde in the Sylhet area.
- ii. 39 Inf Div headquarters at Chandpur with 117 Inf Bde in Mynamati area, 53 Inf Bde of two battalions in Feni area, 91 Inf Bde of one battalion plus and additional para-military forces in Fauzdarhat-Ramgarh area and 97 Inf Bde in Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

(d) North-Eastern Sector

- i. Headquarters 36 Inf Div, formed from the Directorate General of East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (DG EPCAF), together with 93 Inf Bde and one battery, deployed in area Jamalpur-Mymensingh were responsible for Dhaka-Mymensingh area.
- ii. There were reserves worth about one brigade located in and around Dhaka.

Indian Army's Tasks and Plans

Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No.53, issued on 16 August 1971, specified the tasks as follows:-

- (a) Defend Sikkim and NEFA against possible Chinese aggression.
- (b) Contain insurgency in Nagaland, Manipur and Mizo Hills.
- (c) Destroy the bulk of the Pakistani forces in Eastern Theatre and occupy the major portion of East Bengal including the entry ports of Chittagong and Chalna-Khulna(34).

It was appreciated that although Pak Forces were deployed in East Pakistan primarily for the defence of that country, nevertheless they could undertake one or more of the following offensives against India :-

- (a) A multi-pronged offensive with

approximately two Divisions on to the Indian lines of communication between Silchar and Agartala, destroying Indian formations in this area and thereafter occupying Tripura and part of Cachar district.

- (b) A limited offensive against Calcutta along axes Jessore-Bangaon, and Satkhira-Bashirhat in order to threaten Calcutta.
- (c) A limited offensive against the Siliguri corridor in the north, provided Chinese collaboration was expected. Out of the above-mentioned Pak threats, threat to Tripura was the most sensitive because of the proximity of its metropolis city, Agartala, alongwith its air-field, to the East Pak border(35).

Before the war started, HQ Eastern command held a series of war games, and based on the experience gained from the preliminary operations, they revised their offensive plans. Instead of following well recognised and heavily defended approaches, thrust lines were now directed at nodal points and communication centres rather than important towns, as given below(36):-

- (a) 33 Corps, in modification of the tasks previously allotted, were now only to contain Rangpur and Dinajpur. They were to capture Gaibanda and Bogra via Pirganj and exploit upto the line of the Ganga river.
- (b) 101 Communication Zone were now only to isolate and threaten Mymensingh, and the thrust line was defined as Kamalpur-Jamalpur-Dhaka.
- (c) 4 Corps were now to capture Chandpur and Daudkandi, contain Comilla and the Lalmai Heights, isolate Feni and launch subsidiary thrusts to capture Akhaura, Shamshernagar and Maulvibazar.
- (d) 2 Corps were given Jhenida and Magura as key objectives to be captured via area Kotchandpur with a view to securing the ferry sites on the Madhumati and Padma rivers at Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat. This was in addition to Jessore.

The Army Commander, whilst issuing these changed directions, reminded the formation commanders that the battle would be a fluid one and that his operational instructions should be used as a basis for general guidance(37). Though final objectives would remain unaltered, formation commanders should be prepared to constantly review thrust lines and intermediate objectives as per changed situations. These modifications involved by-passing sizeable enemy strongholds, which not only indicated a significant change in concept, but also expressed a growing confidence and realisation by Eastern Command that a swift advance into the vitals of East Pakistan would threaten Dhaka and bring about a total collapse and defeat of the Pakistani forces(38). Initial plans catered for securing the line of the Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers. Further detailed planning could only be done taking into consideration the progress of various thrusts. It was envisaged that 4 Corps would cross the Meghna between Daudkhandi and Bhairab Bazar and advance to Dhaka. 101 Communication Zone Area with 95 Mtn Bde Gp of four battalions, 2 Para Group, followed by 167 Mtn Bde, would advance to Dhaka from the North. It was felt that these forces would be supported in their advance to Dhaka by Siddiqi Force, a large group of freedom fighters which had been operating with good effect in Tangail district(39).

Contingency plans were also made for elements of 2 Corps to cross the Padma at Goalundo for which purpose suitable Inland Water Transport craft were placed at Dhubri to assist 95 Mtn Bde or move elements of 20 Mtn Div, if required. Army Headquarters Reserve of 50 Indep Para Bde was to provide one complete battalion drop and two-coy drops. It was appreciated that the most important area for the main drop was Tangail in order to ensure the early capture of Dhaka. Second priority was given for two-coy drops to assist in securing Magura if necessary. Due to the limited availability of Mi-4 helicopters, all these helicopters were allocated to 4 Corps to enable them to ferry troops as required. The air effort allotted to the Army was sufficient to cater for an average of 120 sorties per day. Naval forces were to blockade Chalna and Chittagong and Naval Air was to be used in the area Chittagong-Cox's Bazar.

Open hostilities commenced at the time of the year which was most suitable for India. Not only India got about four months to organise and train her forces and build up logistics, but also it was possible to accept some risks in thinning out Indian strength on the Northern borders and allow Indian forces to negotiate less water-logged terrain in Bangladesh during the dry season.

From the Pak angle of vision, the Pak Army, which had initially prepared to fight on the East Pakistan front alone, was compelled to fight on three fronts - West, East and guerillas of Bangladesh. In the East, the Pak forces were in disarray. Many of the Pak formations were rushed to the Eastern Wing in company and battalion groups without their supporting arms like artillery, engineers and armour, and later scattered throughout East Pakistan in penny packets either on search-and-destroy missions or to strengthen the border outposts. Similarly, adequate logistic support could not be organised for the Pak forces in East Pakistan.

As regards Lt Gen Niazi's strategy, he thought that India would not try to capture Dhaka; in its stead she would be satisfied with only capturing some territory where the East Bengal refugees could be settled and a provisional Bangladesh government would be set up. His superiors had assured him that both China and USA would intervene in case of open hostilities, also draw the Pak chestnuts out of fire in the UN, and enforce an early cease-fire. Hence, he adopted the fortress concept for his strategy under which he strengthened the defence of important border towns and communication centres such as Jessore, Jhenida, Bogra, Rangpur, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Bhairab Bazar, Comilla and Chittagong into theatre fortresses(40). He believed that these fortresses would destroy infiltrating Indian columns, and fight "Last man, last round" against the Indian invaders. The disposal of his forces throughout the area of responsibility left no reserves for him, and even the Dhaka Bowl was denuded of troops to provide for a strong forward defence. Thus he deployed his troops for defeat, as Napoleon warned: "He who remains behind his entrenchment is beaten; experience and theory are one on this".

OPERATIONS OF 2 CORPS

When the Indian forces were being restrained from advancing further into East Bengal, the pre-emptive Pak air strike of 3 December on Indian airfields eased the tense situation, and the Indian forces were at once thrown into action, with no punches pulled. At that moment, in the South-Western Sector, the Pak forces were thus deployed(41):-

9 Inf Div (Maj Gen M.H. Ansari).

HQ	Jessore (QU 1256)
Artillery:	
55 Fd Regt	Satkhira (QT 9701) - One Bty
(105 mm)	Jhingergacha area (QT 9949) - two Coys

49 Fd Regt	Meherpur-Chaudanga-Kushtia area
211 Indep Mor Bty	Chaugacha area (QT 9069)
<u>57 Inf Bde (Brig Manzoor Ahmed).</u>	
HQ	Jhenida (QP 0803)
Sqn 29 CAV	Kushtia-Bheramara area
18 Punjab	Meherpur (QO 4832) - Chuadanga (QO 7215) - Darsana (QO 6601) - Natudaha area (QO 5316)
50 Punjab	Jhenida (QP 9069) - Kotchandpur (QT 8987)
29 Baluch	Bheramara (QO 8759) - Salimpur (QO 7262) - Khaliskundi (QO 7544) - Kushtia (QP 0347)
<u>107 Inf Bde (Brig Malik Hayat Khan).</u>	
HQ	Jessore
22 FF	Jhingergacha (QT 9949) - Benapole (QT 7844)
38 FF	Afra (QT 9966) - Sajiali (QO 0266) - Asannagar (QU 0364)
6 Punjab	Jessore area (QU 1256)
21 Punjab (Recce and Sp Bn)	Satkhira - Kalaroa (QT 9320) - Jessore area.
15 FF	Jessore.
12 Punjab Less Coy	Jessore.

Opposite the above-mentioned Pak deployment, was India's 2 Corps consisting of 4 Mtn Div and 9 Inf Div. The final grouping of 2 Corps was as follows(42):-

GOC 2 Corps : (Commander : Lt Gen T.N. Raina)
4 Mtn Div (Commander : Maj Gen M.S. Barar)

HQ 7 Mtn Bde (Commander: Brig Zail Singh)

22 Rajput
5 Jat
Naga Regt

HQ 41 Mtn Bde (Commander: Brig AHE Michigan)

5 Guards
9 Dogra
5/1 GR

HQ 62 Mtn Bde (Commander: Brig Rajender Nath)

5 Maratha LI
4 Sikh LI
2/9 GR

Armour

A Sqn 45 CAV

Artillery

HQ 4 Mtn Arty Bde (Commander: Brig Baljeet Singh)

22 Mtn Regt (76 mm)
194 Mtn Regt (76 mm)
7 FD Regt (25 Pr)
181 Lt Regt (P) (120 Tempella)
Bty 78 Med Regt (130 mm)

Engineers

63 Engr Regt

9 Inf Div (Commander: Maj Gen Dalbir Singh)
HQ 32 Inf Bde (Commander: Brig K.K. Tewari)

7 Punjab
8 Madras
13 Dogra

HQ 42 Inf Bde (Commander: Brig J.S. Gharaya)
(Brig K.L. Kochar from 8 Dec)

14 Punjab
19 Maratha LI
2 Sikh LI

HQ 350 Inf Bde (Commander: Brig H.S. Sandhu)

26 Madras
4 Sikh
1 JAK Rif

On 6 Dec 1971, 50 Indep Para Bde less a Bn Group (Commander: Brig M. Thomas) was placed in ground role by giving it an additional battalion under 9 Inf Div. But, on 10 Dec 1971, it was moved out of 9 Inf Div(43):

2 Para
7 Para

Armour(44)

45 CAV less A Sqn
Sqn 63 CAV

Artillery

HQ 9 Arty Bde:

6 Fd Regt (25 Pr)
14 Fd Regt (25 Pr)
67 Fd Regt (T) (120 Brandt)
78 Med Regt (130 mm) less one bty
88 Lt Regt
201 Div LOC Bty
264 SBRL Increment (GRAD - P)

Engineers

102 Engr Regt

The 9 Inf Div was given the task to capture Jessore (QU 1256) and be prepared to assist 4 Mtn Div in the capture of Magura (QU 3596). It was also to send a brigade to capture Khulna (QU 5015). 4 Mtn Div was to capture Jhenida (QP 0703) and Magura, securing the line of Madhumati river. After the capture of Jhenida a force was to be sent to secure Kushtia (QP 0347) and the Hardinge Bridge (QO 9166). After the capture of Magura the Division was to secure Faridpur (QP 8109) - Goalundo Ghat (QP 7325)(45).

On 3 Dec, Indian forces in the South-western Sector were well poised for the attack. With Chaugacha (QT 9169) firmly in Indian hands, 9 Inf Div had reached almost half way to Jessore (upto Arpara, (QU 0071) on Axis Chaugacha-Jessore, and was in contact with Pak defensive positions west of Jessore. A bridge had been constructed across the Bhairab river at Bayra (T 8563), and road Chaugacha-Jessore had been linked with Bayra. 4 Mtn Div had captured Jibannagar (QT 6888) and Uthali (QT 7097), and advanced eastwards upto Khalispur (QT 8384), on Axis Jibannagar-Kotchandpur (QT 8887), and upto Silinda, on Axis Darsana-Kotchandpur. As a result of the above situation, Pak defensive posture was thrown off

balance, leaving certain axes lightly guarded. Hence, the Indian Army after crossing certain initial obstacles got off to a good start.

Operations of Bengal Area.

As per the Eastern Command plan, HQ Bengal Area under Maj Gen P. Chowdhry, which was directly under the control of the Eastern Command, had the responsibility of defending the Sunderbans and preventing Pak penetration across the Satkhira (GR 9701)-Itinda axis. On 20 November 1971, the MF had driven away the Pak troops from Basantpur BOP (QY 8772), and the Indian troops from Hingalganj crossed the Ichhamati river at QY 8373 and occupied Basantpur and Kaliganj (QY 9171). On 30 Nov, a column of 1/3 GR and forty MF advancing from the south cleared the Pakistanis from village Nabatkati (GR 8597). MF suffered some five casualties in this action. Later, the Indian troops captured Dumduma (GR 8521). On 2 Dec, a BSF Platoon occupied area Kaliganj (QY 9171), and the MF were ordered to press forward towards Satkhira (QT 9701) from the south. By 7 Dec, the Pak troops had withdrawn from Jhapaghat (GR 8722), Baksha (GR 8716), Kalaroa (GR 9320), Jhikra (GR 9219), Mahmoodpur (GR 8798), and Satkhira after destroying some bridges. Tac HQ 11 Bihar moved to Jhaudanga (GR 9214). From 11 Dec the responsibility of Satkhira Sub-Division was handed over to 4 Mtn Div(46).

9 Inf Div Operations

There were several routes for approaching Jessore. From the Indian lodgement in Garibpur (QT 9465) the Jessore Cantonment was only 11 km away, as the crow flies. The Pakistani defences, west of Jessore, had by this time been strengthened by linking up various marshes, and by pulling in troops from Chaugacha area, and flying in a battalion from Rajshahi(47). Commanded by Maj Gen Dalbir Singh, the Division's options were, therefore, reduced to a series of hammering attacks in achieving a break-through at a suitable point. The topographical intelligence available with the Division was very inaccurate, and it was not possible to get correct information about the depth and width of the rivers in that area. The terrain was criss-crossed by rivers, and heavily mined. It was a close country and the soil was still very wet.

Pakistan had deployed nearly four Battalions west of Jessore, taking advantage of the marshes to restrict Indian movements. Consequently, pressure was maintained all along the fronts in order to prevent the Pakistanis from guessing the intention of the

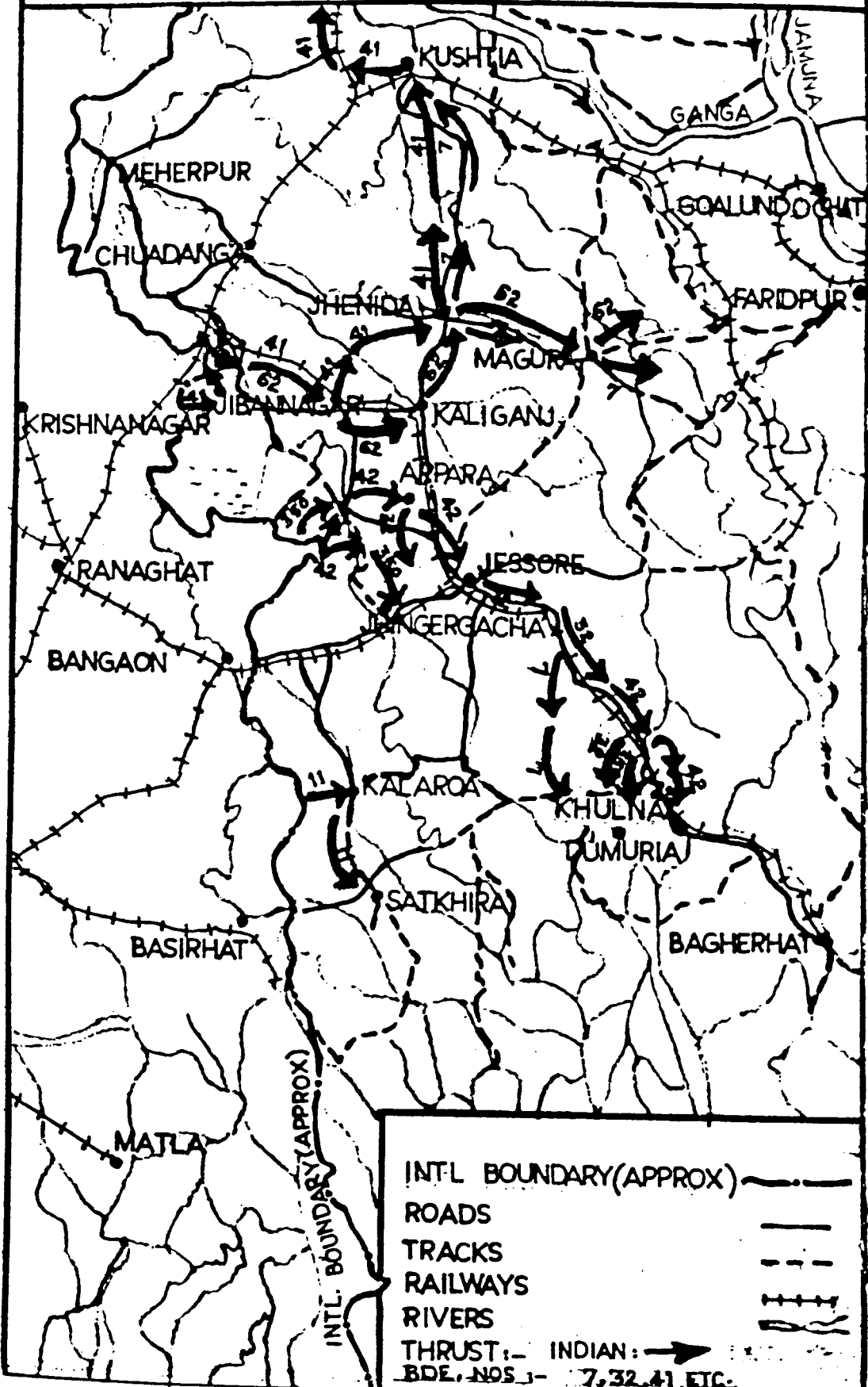
Indian troops. On the northern axis, 19 Maratha LI supported by a Squadron of PT-76 tanks proceeded from Kayarpur (QT 9368) to Jahinaikundu (QU 9570) and cut off the Pak position at Sadipur (QT 9470)-Jamira (QT 9469). As a result, the Pakistanis withdrew in disorder, after suffering heavy casualties. On 4 Dec 1971, it was decided to punch a hole on the northern approach at Durgabarkati (QU 0068). The next day, Charbari (QT 9869) was secured by 14 Punjab by infiltrating into the position and surprising the Pak troops(48).

On the Central axis, when 1 J and K Rif attacked Burinda, one Coy 12 Punjab (Pak) compelled them to fall back, and the Pakistanis occupied Matsyaranga (QT 9660) and Burinda (QT 9659). However, these were continuously counter-attacked by 4 Sikh who cleared them by 5 Dec. Pakistanis fought very courageously here and 4 Sikh suffered casualties of 2 JCOs and 12 ORs killed, and 2 JCOs, 44 ORs and 2 NCSEs wounded. Besides, 1 OR each of 45 Cav and 96 Fd Coy were killed, and 1 Officer, 1 JCO and 3 ORs of 45 Cav and 1 OR of 96 Fd Coy were wounded(49). Close air support missions by Hunters and Gnats operating from Dum Dum failed to break the Pak will to fight in this area. Also six sorties of Canberra were flown to bomb the Pak positions west of Jessore, but it "was not very effective". Hence the village Barakuli (QT 9739) - Chotakuli (QT 9859) was attacked by eight IAF Hunters with napalm bombs, forcing the Pakistanis to vacate it(50). On the other hand, 1 J and K Rif kept up constant pressure on Mohammadpur (QT 9354) position.

As both 32 and 42 Inf Bdes, commanded by Tewari and Gharaya (Kochar took over on 8th) respectively, were heavily committed, with 350 Inf Bde, commanded by H.S. Sandhu, being the Div Reserve, no troops were available for passing through the gap to secure Jessore. Hence, 1/3 GR ex Bengal Area was ordered to take over the responsibility for the defence of the southern sector, and 32 Inf Bde less one battalion were concentrated at Chaugacha (QT 9069). As by mid day on 5 Dec India had achieved complete air supremacy, it was decided to launch attack on Durgabarkati, with air support, at 0800 hrs on 6 Dec, and 32 Inf Bde less one Bn were kept poised to go through and capture Jessore. Unfortunately, due to heavy fog, the Indian aircraft could not take off, and the attack was postponed twice. However, in order to ensure surprise, it was decided to go in at 0930 hrs without air support(51). The whole Battalion of 2 Sikh LI was deployed with all the Companies placed one behind the other. The Pakistani troops were holding the location with two Coys, deployed similarly. The deployability being extremely limited, only one Coy

2 CORPS SECTOR

SCALE :- 0 10 20 30 KM



could be deployed at a time. Hence, there was no way but to launch a frontal attack. When the leading Coy captured part of the objective by 1000 hrs, the second Coy was launched, and the latter also captured the other half of the objective, thus enabling the third Coy to break through. Indian casualties in this battle were 6 ORs killed, 4 JCOs and 20 ORs wounded, as against six Pak dead bodies including that of a Captain of 6 Punjab counted on the ground(52). Mine clearance was started even before the objective was fully captured and, therefore, three safe lanes were cleared by 1230 hrs(53). Now, 32 Inf Bde was passed through the gap, with 7 Punjab and one Squadron T-55 leading. Although due to the marshy nature of the terrain, the progress was slow, Indian troops with considerable dash and determination secured road Chaugacha-Jessore between Jaghati (QU 0166) and Sajiali (QU 0363), and 13 Dogra joined the Brigade by 1830 hrs. At that stage, the leading troops were getting out of the range of the field guns, and hence it was important that guns be redeployed further forward. Consequently, 13 Dogra with a troop of T-55 tanks were ordered to clear Afra, which they did by midnight. Meanwhile, the Pakistanis had blown up the bridge at GR-998660 and heavily mined the area. The mines were cleared by the morning of 7 Dec and a bridge was constructed, thus enabling the guns to be sent across. The performance of the Engineers during the night was commendable indeed.

While the Indian troops were advancing along the main road, 7 Punjab patrolled southwards and secured Asannagar (QU 0364), and its leading elements reached Jessore airfield by 0800 hrs. On 7 Dec, 32 Inf Bde secured the Jessore cantonment by 1230 hrs on the same date. Immediately afterwards, 14 Punjab advanced to Abdulpur (QU 0465) and then to Jessore along road Churamankati (QU 0663) - Jessore. The Battalion advanced with considerable speed and occupied Jessore town in the afternoon of 7 Dec(54). As the cantonment and the airfield had been vacated by the Pak troops, the Indian forces entered there without firing a shot. Houses in Jessore cantonment and the local police armoury were found looted by civilians. The arrival of Indian troops saved much of the Jessore town from being looted and non-Bengalees from being massacred.

The following re-deployments were carried out and revised responsibilities given(55):-

- (a) HQ 9 Inf Div - Jessore Cantt. All administrative echelons were ordered to concentrate in Jessore.
- (b) 32 Inf Bde - Jessore Cantt including

airfield, and to guard against any threat along road Jessore-Khulna.

- (c) 42 Inf Bde - from Churamankati to Jessore city (inclusive), and to guard Jessore against any threat from the north and north-east.
- (d) 350 Inf Bde - to concentrate along the main road Bangaon-Jessore, south-west of the water channel at Mandalganti (QU 0855), and to guard Jessore from any threat from the south-west.

On the southern axis, the Pakistanis were reported to be withdrawing from Nabagram (QU 9054). Hence, 350 Inf Bde was ordered to pursue them. As the bulk of the Pak garrison at Jessore had reportedly withdrawn towards Magura with a view to escaping via Goalundo Ghat, and only rear parties had withdrawn towards Khulna, 32 Inf Bde Group with one Squadron of PT-76 tanks were ordered to pursue the Pakistanis. Meanwhile, on 7 December, 8 Madras with one sqn of tanks secured Nabharan (QT 8944), situated on the Bangaon-Jessore road on the eastern bank of the river Betna, in the morning. Then advancing from Krishnabati (QU 0954), situated on the Nabharan-Jessore road, on 8 December, they established a road block in area QU 1653(56). After this, 7 Punjab, advancing along the Jessore-Khulna axis, contacted the Pak delaying position in area Murali (QU 1454) - Ramnagar (QU 1554), situated on the south-east of Jessore, by 1630 hrs on 8 December. In the battle that followed, armour, artillery and engineers provided excellent support and contributed greatly to the Indian success. 7 Punjab cleared the Pakistanis from this place and compelled them to flee. The Indian troops captured or destroyed approximately sixty Pak vehicles, and also captured four heavy Mortars, some RCL guns and a large quantity of ammunition(57).

Meanwhile, on 8 December, 50 Indep Para Bde Group less bn commenced advance on axis Jessore-Magura(58) to pursue the withdrawing Pak troops. At 1130 hrs, the leading elements ex 7 Para inadvertently bumped into strong Pak opposition in area Khajura (QU 1569). About fifty Pak troops from their bunkers brought down intense small arms (including automatic weapons) fire on the Indians. When 7 Para charged the Pak position, 3 officers, including Lt Col R.P. Singh, C.o., 7 Para Bn, and 3 ORs were killed, and one officer and three ORs were wounded. The Pak position could be reduced subsequently with the help of a troop of tanks.

Thirty-nine Pak troops were killed, and severn others later succumbed to their injuries.

The battalion harboured for the night at Sadipur, 5 km ahead of Khajura, on Khajura-Magura axis. In the morning of 9 December when they resumed their advance towards Magura, they were ordered to return to Jessore(59). The 50 Indep Para Bde as a whole was moved to the Western Theatre subsequently.

Advance to Khulna

On 9 December, 32 Inf Bde less 8 Madras moved on axis Ramnagar (QU 1652) - Manirampur (QU 1440)-Nawapara (QU 3132) alongwith 'C' Squadron 45 Cav, while 8 Madras with 'B' Squadron 63 Cav moved along the axis Jessore-Khulna(60). Due to extensive marshes and absence of any roads and tracks, the progress was very slow. However, 13 Dogra established a road-block on QU-530379 at 1030 hrs on 10 December, and 8 Madras cleared Pak position at Chengutia (QU 2946). The two battalions linked up with each other in area Jafarpur (QU 3537) by mid-day on 10 Dec. Continuing their advance, 8 Madras cleared Phultala (QU 3736) by last light on 11 December after an engagement with the Pak forces, suffering casualties of 2 ORs killed, and one Officer and 31 ORs wounded, as against forty Pak casualties(61). As 13 Dogra now led the advance by-passing Phultala, the Pak troops fell back to Atra (QU 4229). When the Dogras were about to attack Atra, the Pakistanis pulled out without putting up much resistance. Simultaneously, a mobile column comprising one Coy 7 Punjab (APC) and one Squadron of tanks, later reinforced by 7 Punjab less two Coys, was sent to Aranghata area for an attack on Daulatpur (QU 4621) from the west. But as the Pakistanis had demolished a large number of bridges and culverts in the area, and with the marsh all around, 7 Punjab were confined to the road and shelled by the Pakistanis. While trying to cross the marshes, 7 Punjab suffered casualties of 1 Officer and 5 ORs killed, and one Officer and 21 ORs wounded(62). The 13 Dogra, advancing further along the main axis, were also pinned down by heavy and accurate Pak artillery fire in area north-east of Chatala. Similarly, 8 Madras after clearing Gilatala came under heavy Pak fire from Siramani (QU 4427), held by three Pak battalions (about 2,500 Pak regular troops). As 8 Madras failed to evict the Pak troops during night 12/13 December, the Div Tac HQ moved to area north of Damodar (QU 419322), and 42 and 350 Bdes were moved to Gilatala. Two brigades and one Squadron of tanks were employed to capture Siramani. On 12 December, while 19 Maratha LI ex 42 Inf Bde advanced to secure the well-defended Syamganj ferry, 26 Madras attacked

the Pak position on the main road. But as the ferry could not be secured even by 13 Dec, 42 Inf Bde crossed river Bhairab during night 13/14 Dec and set-up ferries by first light. At 0700 hrs on 15 December, 1 J and K Rif ex 350 Inf Bde supported by tanks launched an attack on Syamganj (QU 4526) and secured the position at 1600 hrs after a fierce close-quarter battle in which the Pak troops suffered 53 dead and many wounded, as against Indian casualties of 2 JCOs and 15 ORs killed, and 3 Officers, 1 JCO and 68 ORs wounded(63). By 0600 hrs on 16 December, 4 Sikh established a road block south of Siramani East (QU 4527), while 13 Dogra attacked Siramani West (QU 4226), and captured it. As the attack of 13 Dogra was in progress and 14 Punjab were about to cross river Bhairab, cease-fire order was received. Apart from stray incidents, all firing stopped at 1500 hrs(64). Next day, at 1400 hrs, Brig Hayat Khan, Commander, 107 Inf Bde, along with seven Pak Lt Cols surrendered to Maj Gen Dalbir Singh, GOC, 9 Inf Div, at the Khulna Circuit House, and an instrument of surrender was signed in a brief ceremony. The following Pak troops surrendered at Khulna(65):-

Officers	-	81
JCOs	-	130
ORs	-	3,476
Others	-	207

4 Mtn Div Operations

The 4 Mtn Div (Red Eagle), Commanded by Maj Gen MS Barar was given operational responsibility in the Jhenida (QP 0703)-Kushtia (QP 0347) Sector, which was bounded in the north by the Ganga, and in the south by the Jibannagar (QT 6888)-Kaliganj (QU 0486)-Jhenida-Faridpur (QP 8209) road. The important north-south Pak highway in this sector passed from the Hardinge Bridge (QO 9166) in the north to Jessore (QU 1357) in the south-east, via Kushtia and Jhenida, running almost parallel to the international border, approximately 40 to 50 km east of it. The border area on the Indian side was well-linked with a network of roads, especially the one from Krishnanagar (QT 3286) to Karimpur, within a few km of the border, and to its west the main Krishnanagar-Berhampur (QO 0573) road, passing through historical Plassey (QO 0933). While Hardinge Bridge provided the railway link between the North-western and South-western Sectors, the ferries at Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat (QP 7425), located in this area, provided suitable approaches to Dhaka. There were two main river obstacles in this sector -

the Ganga in the north, and her branch, the Garai-Madhumati, in the east. The latter, with a span of approximately 1,200 feet, and a depth of 40 feet in December, was not bridged anywhere along its course. Although the border area from Meherpur (QO 4831) to Chaugacha (QT 9169), along the general line Chuadanga (QO 7315)-Kotchandpur (QT 8887)- Chaugacha, was dotted with 'bils' (marshes) to the extent of about 20 km, nevertheless this sector was better suited for tank operations as compared with the 9 Inf Div area, south of Jessore. Jhenida town was the most important communication centre in this sector, as it lay on the junction of Kushtia-Jessore and Meherpur-Faridpur/Goalundo Ghat highways. Hence, it was built up as a theatre fortress from which there would be no withdrawal by the Pakistani forces. Kushtia was another important nodal point, linking up Hardinge Bridge in the north-west, and Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat ferries in the east, with railways. Besides, there were two main lateral roads in this sector running east-west to the main ferries on the Ganga.

The 4 Mtn Div less one mountain brigade had been given the revised task of capturing the nodal points at Jhenida and Magura with a view to securing the ferry sites on the Madhumati river and subsequently those on the Padma at Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat. It was to capture Jibannagar by D plus 2, Kotchandpur by D plus 4, Kalinganj by D plus 6, Jhenida by D plus 8, and Magura and ferry sites on the Madhumati river by D plus 11. Subsequently, the Division was to be prepared either -

- (a) to secure Faridpur, and the main ferry site at Goalundo Ghat, or
- (b) to carry out mopping up operations in area Kushtia and Hardinge Bridge, and if required, be prepared to move to Bogra Sector under 33 Corps for mopping up operations(66).

One mountain brigade with one mountain battery was to act as Corps Reserve. Initially, one battalion each from this brigade was to be employed to guard the Shikarpur (QO 5957)-Bheramara (QO 8661) and Meherpur - Kushtia axes, and one battalion was placed under command 9 Inf Div for securing the northern flank of its thrust. The latter battalion was to be reverted to its parent brigade on the capture of Jhingergacha (QT 9653).

Prior to 3 December, 4 Mtn Div had already secured certain Pak border out-posts, east of Karimpur, which resulted in swift reaction from the

Pakistanis who reinforced their positions covering the approaches to the Hardinge Bridge. In the south, the capture of Jibannagar and a portion of the railway line, east of Darsana, isolated this strong Pak border out-post which had maintained its defensive link with Chuadanga. There were two axes of advance before Maj Gen Barar to reach the ferry sites of Faridpur and Goalundo Ghat. These were (i) Meherpur-Chuadanga-Jhenida-Faridpur, and (ii) Jibannagar-Kotchandpur-Kaliganj-Jhenida-Faridpur. But as the latter was the shorter of the two, the Divisional Commander decided to develop his main thrust along this axis. However, he could not do this as long as Darsana BOP remained a thorn in his side. Hence, he decided to capture it, and asked 41 Mtn Bde commanded by Brig Tony Michigan, supported by armour, to perform this task by last light on 4 Dec.

While the inter-brigade boundary between 57 and 107 Pak Bde was along Darsana, which itself was included in the area of responsibility of 57 Bde, commanded by Brig Manzur Ahmed, troops of 107 Bde, in the Jibannagar area, were also placed under Manzur's command.

Capture of Darsana (QT 6601)

According to 41 Mtn Bde plan, 22 Rajput broke through the Pak defences in area Rangiarpota (QT 6896) during night 2/3 Dec, and established a firm base at Akandabaria (QT 6899) for an attack on Darsana(67). Meanwhile, one Coy 5 Guards crossed river Mathabhanga in assault boats and established road block behind Darsana(68). On 4 Dec, attack on Darsana was launched in two phases. In the first phase, one coy 22 Rajput secured five Pak bunkers, while the second Coy was launched to secure the linking row of bunkers between Chandpur (QO 6701) and Darsana. However, the battalion hit a minefield and had to firm in. From this point, 5/1 GR advanced north-east and attacked along the general line Darsana-Chandpur. Now, Engineers cleared a vehicle lane through the minefield and the Indian tanks moved forward. In Phase two, 5/1 GR, supported by tank fire, cleared the Pak defences around Darsana, and subsequently 2/9 GR took over and carried out mopping operations. Darsana was captured at 1300 hrs on 4 Dec. In this operation, 22 Rajput suffered casualties of 4 ORs killed and 23 ORs wounded(69), whereas 5/1 GR casualties were 6, including 1 Officer killed, and 19 wounded(70). The Pak casualties were reportedly 29 killed(71).

After leaving 22 Rajput in the Darsana area, 41 Mtn Bde concentrated in Uthali (QT 7097) area for undertaking operations towards Jhenida via

Kotchandpur. When Brig Manzur learnt about the loss of Darsana, he ordered his troops in the area to fall back on Chuadanga, the home town of East Pak Governor, Dr. A.M. Malik, and defend it, because its fall would open the route to Jhenida or Kushtia for the advancing Indian forces. Hence, Manzur moved his tactical headquarters from Jhenida to Chuadanga to personally control the operations around Darsana and defend the approaches to Chuadanga.

Battle of Suadih (QT 8295)

While 41 Mtn Bde's action against Darsana was in progress, 62 Mtn Bde under Brig Rajinder Nath was ordered at about 2000 hrs on 3 December to secure Kotchandpur by evening on 4 December. Accordingly, one Coy ex 5 Maratha LI advanced east from Andulbaria (QT 7895) along Railway line, but met with strong opposition from well-prepared positions in the area of Railway bridge (QT 8194) over the river Bhairab at 1700 hrs(72). Hence, Maj Gen Barar switched 62 Mtn Bde to the north for capturing Kotchandpur from the north-west. Meanwhile, 5 Maratha LI patrols revealed the existence of Pak forces between the road and the railway line and also in well-prepared positions in Suadih village (QT 8295) and north of it. The Pak defences in Suadih were sited on high ground dominating completely the area in front, and covered by a marsh all along their front, from Bagmara Bil (QT 8297) in the north to Chandi Bil (QT 0392) in the south, 4 to 6 feet deep and 60 to 100 yards wide(73). The Pakistanis were holding this position with approximately three Companies supported by two 105 mm guns, two 3.7" howitzers and six 82 mm mortars, and anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. The 5 Maratha LI with a troop of tanks turned the Pak defenders' northern flank by going round Bagmara Bil and attacked the Pak defences in area 831966. After fierce fighting the position was captured by 1000 hrs on 4 December. The Marathas then attacked Suadih village from the north-east and the Pak troops fought doggedly up till 1600 hrs. Similarly, 9 Dogra, which had launched a frontal attack on the railway bridge area, met very stiff resistance and suffered heavy casualties. The Dogras firmed in, and the Marthas were ordered to continue their attack from the north up to the Railway Bridge. The Marathas first captured Suadih by 1800 hrs, despite two of their tanks being damaged by anti-tank mines, and then occupied the Railway Bridge at 2300 hrs after fighting from bunker to bunker(74). In this action 24 Pak dead bodies were counted and 2 ORs captured, as against Indian casualties of one Officer and 9 ORs killed, and 3 JCOs and 50 ORs injured(75). The Marathas also sent a Company to set up a road block south of Safdarpur

(QT 8393) to cut off the Pak route of withdrawal.

Now in Phase II, 9 Dogra attacked the Pak defences in Madarbere area and captured -Kanyanagar (QT 8292) at 0315 hrs on 5 December. At 0700 hrs, they advanced towards Kotchandpur, giving no respite to the Pak forces. Brushing off Pak resistance on the way, they contacted Kotchandpur at 1030 hrs and captured it by 1400 hrs without a fight. The Pakistanis had pulled out from Kotchandpur before the arrival of Indian troops, as after the battle of Suadih they did not have enough time to occupy the Kotchandpur defences. On Jibannagar-Kotchandpur axis, 4 Sikh LI cleared Khalispur (QT 8384) at 1630 hrs and linked up with 2/9 GR which had been sent from Kotchandpur after its fall. In the whole battle of Darsana-Suadih, the Indian troops suffered the following casualties:-

3 Officers and 16 ORs killed, 3 Officers, 6 JCOs and 65 ORs wounded(76). Maj P.K. Chatterjee and N.K. Karandle (posthumous) of 5 Maratha LI were awarded Vir Chakra for gallantry.

It was originally planned that after the capture of Kotchandpur one brigade will advance from Kotchandpur to Kaliganj (QU 0487) and another brigade from Kotchandpur to Jhenida via Talsar (QT 9197). It was also anticipated that if an Indian thrust after the fall of Darsana was not armed at Chuadanga, the Pakistanis would pull out their troops from Meherpur-Chuadanga complex to reinforce Jhenida. Hence, it was decided to establish a strong road block on the likely approach to Jhenida from the west, thus preventing the withdrawal of Pak troops from Chuadanga to Jhenida. Accordingly, 41 Mtn Bde was given the tasks:- (i) to establish road blocks in area Paschim Durgapur (QT 9098) and Uttar Narayanpur (QO 9205) with 5 Guards and a Squadron of 45 Cavalry less one troop; and (ii) to advance along axis Kotchandpur-Talsar-Jhenida, a difficult and unexpected route, with brigade less a battalion, and capture Jhenida at the earliest. 62 Mtn Bde was ordered to capture Kaliganj by 7 December.

Battle of Kaliganj (QU 0487)

5 Maratha LI advanced towards Kaliganj in hot pursuit of the Pak forces at last light, 5 December. However, the leading Coy came under Pak MMG and LMG fire from the east of a blown culvert (QT 926858). Patrolling revealed that approximately one Coy of Pak troops was holding the position on the both sides of the road covering the blown culvert, which had bridged a 6' deep marsh. Due to the marsh all around, the

position could not be by-passed. Consequently, an out-flanking move was undertaken. While 5 Maratha LI and 4 Sikh LI were employed to maintain contact with the Pak force along the road, 2/9 GR advanced north of the railway line running parallel to the road and established a road block astride the road behind the enemy in area 0085. The 5 Maratha LI attacked from the north-east by making an out-flanking move. This led to a hasty Pak withdrawal and the subsequent occupation of the Pak position by 1100 hrs on 6 December. After withdrawal, the Pak troops took up a prepared position on high ground behind a marsh in Sahapur (QT 9685) area. The Pakistanis, two companies strong, who had six 82 mm mortars, a troop of 105 mm guns, 6-8 HMGs and 12-14 LMGs, subjected the Indian troops to heavy shelling throughout the day. Now, 5 Maratha LI held the firm base and 2/9 GR established a road block in general area QU 0085 by 1500 hrs. After this, 4 Sikh LI attacked the position from the north and captured the position at 2000 hrs after fierce fighting. Twenty-three Pak dead bodies were collected and seven soldiers were taken POW. Then 2/9 GR, resuming advance at first light on 7 December, captured Kaliganj town at 1100 hrs, after brushing off minor resistance on the way and clearing a few Pak pockets in the town. The Pak troops had destroyed the main bridge over the river Chitra (QU 0486) and a similar bridge on the same river in the middle of the town before withdrawing hurriedly the previous night(77).

Battle of Jhenida

According to Plan, 5 Guards, and 'A' Squadron 45 Cavalry less one troop, advancing cross-country from Andulbaria on 5 Dec, crossed river Chitra in area Shibnagar (QT 8798) and established road blocks in Paschim Durgapur and Uttar Narayanpur areas by last light. The road blocks proved to be very effective and timely in preventing the Pak withdrawal from Chuadanga to Jhenida and also inflicting heavy casualties on the Pakistanis in men and equipment. Several Pak attempts, including one in battalion strength, to break through the road blocks were foiled with heavy losses to the Pak troops. Consequently, the Pakistanis west of the road blocks had to withdraw northwards to Kushtia area. The Pak Commander of 57 Inf Bde eventually withdrew over the Hardinge Bridge on North Bengal. These road-blocks proved to be the major turning point in the 4 Mtn Div operations, because, it was here that Pak 57 Inf Bde was split into two, and its Commander got separated from his Headquarters, with his forces becoming completely disorganised and unfit to offer any worthwhile resistance to the Indian troops at Jhenida. Meanwhile

5/1 GR passed through 9 Dogra at Kotchandpur by last light on 5 December, secured 4 bridges intact between Kotchandpur and Talsar and established a bridge-head across the Chitra next morning. Engineers had to put in hard work to improve the track between Kotchandpur and Talsar, and a class 9 Folding Boat Equipment (FBE) bridge was constructed over the Chitra at Talsar by 1800 hrs on 6 December. This helped in building up the artillery units to facilitate the advance.

Now 9 Dogra advanced on foot from Kotchandpur at first light on 6 December. Clearing minor resistance at Jalalpur foot bridge (QT 939937), they contacted the Jhenida defences next morning after marching for 28 hrs day and night and achieving complete surprise. Meanwhile, one troop of tanks withdrew from the road block and joined the leading elements of 9 Dogra who were subjected to heavy small arms, mortar, RCL and artillery fire from the Jhenida defences, held by approximately a Pak Company plus. At 1200 hrs, another troop of Indian tanks withdrew from the road block to join the battle. The final attack was launched from the west and south-west, leading to the capture of Jhenida at 1430 hrs on 7 December. Soon afterwards, two major bridges on the road to Kushtia were captured intact and the Indian troops firmed in across those bridges. The Pak losses in Jhenida were; 24 killed, one wounded and taken POW; 30 vehicles and 500 three-tonner loads of artillery, mortar, RCL and small arms ammunition captured along with Pak Bde HQ documents and maps(78). As the 'B' echelons of 41 Mtn Bde were unable to reach Jhenida due to the bad condition of the road, and the units were without food for over 24 hours, an air drop of essential goods was arranged at 1500 hrs on 7 Dec. Now HQ 2 Corps decided to release its reserve, i.e. 7 Mtn Bde, less the Naga Regt, for offensive tasks under 4 Mtn Div. Thereafter, 7 Mtn Bde less Naga Regt alongwith 22 Mtn Regt less one Bty joined the formation at Jhenida by 2300 hrs on 8 December.

Now it was the turn of 62 Mtn Bde to advance and capture Magura. A Squadron of 45 Cav less two troops and one Coy APCs ex 7 Punjab were allotted to them to quicken the advance. As the bridge on road Kaliganj-Jhenida was found destroyed, a diversionary route via Naldanga (QU 0790) was reconnoitred and the advance began at 0530 hrs on 8 December. Advancing at a great speed, the Indian troops contacted Magura at 1400 hrs, but found that the birds had flown away. After clearing a few stray Pak parties, they captured Magura by 1600 hrs, and 62 Mtn Bde concentrated there by the midnight of 8/9 December. The main bridge on road Magura-Faridpur over Muchakhali river was also captured intact.

Advance to Kushtia

The 7 Mtn Bde was given the task of advancing on axis Jhenida-Kushtia at first light on 9 December and capturing Kushtia at the earliest. Thereafter it was to capture Hardinge Bridge and Bheramara. To accelerate the move, it was decided to advance in motorised transport. Kushtia was only about 45 km from Jhenida. No intelligence was available about the Pak dispositions on the axis of advance. It was not known that 57 Bde under Manzur Ahmed was intact in Kushtia area. The 22 Rajput acting as the leading element with under command two troops of PT-76 tanks commenced advance in the morning of 9 Dec. While they cleared Pak opposition at road-nullah junction (QP 0133), 5 Jat were ordered to deal with Pak elements in Salikura area (QP 1520). The Jats encircled the area and captured 14 regular Pak troops and 87 Razakars. The advance was resumed, and 22 Rajput entered Kushtia at 1400 hrs. When they advanced up to the middle of the town, at 1445 hrs the Pak defenders opened fire from close range with tanks, RCLs, MMGs, artillery, and other automatic weapons. This was the last-minute Pak effort before withdrawing to Hardinge Bridge. The Indian troops were caught in the open without any defensive positions. However, they replied with infantry, artillery and tank fire. Immediate air support was also called for, which, however, could not be provided till 1645 hrs. Meanwhile, the Pakistanis left Kushtia in large numbers with tanks and RCLs and moved on the western flank(79). They knocked out 3 Indian tanks and disabled one on the road, and also captured another. One Pak tank was knocked out. The vanguard Coy of 22 Rajput suffered heavy casualties in the open. The Rajputs in contact pulled back under the cover of artillery fire. Brig Zail Singh, Commander 7 Mtn Bde, was surprised and shocked. He did not know that his opponent, Brig Manzur, being harassed by IAF bombing and strafing in Chuadanga during 5-6 December, and unable to fall back on Jhenida due to the road block at Sadhuhati (QO 8905), had moved to Kushtia on the night of 7/8 December, with the intention of joining the Pak 9 Div HQ in Faridpur by Kushtia-Faridpur railway. But as the rail bridges on this line had been destroyed by the IAF, he was compelled to wait in Kushtia for further developments in the operations.

Brig Zail Singh now tried to stabilise the situation by sending 5 Jat to occupy a firm base in area (QP 0039) based on a canal and halting any further advance by the Pak troops towards south. By 2000 hrs, the situation improved when 5 Guards reached there. Considering the Pak strength, estimated at

about two battalions plus a squadron of tanks, it was decided to thin the Indian strength on the bank of the Madhumati with a view to strengthening the Indian forces in Kushtia. Accordingly, during night 9/10 December, HQ 41 Mtn Bde with 5/1 GR, 'A' Sqdn 45 Cav less two troops, and one artillery brigade less one mountain battery were switched to Kushtia from the Magura axis. During the day on 10 December, IAF and artillery continuously pounded the Pak defences. Meanwhile, 9 Dogra came from Jhenida to join 41 Mtn Bde for the battle, and also 62 Mtn Bde, less 5 Maratha LI, plus two troops of tanks ex 9 Inf Div concentrated at Kushtia for the final round.

In spite of intermittent Pak shelling for the whole night of 10/11 December, 5 Jat and 5 Guards moved forward and occupied a firm base in area Road Junction 9943. Seeing this, the Pakistanis withdrew from this area after blowing up the canal bridge. 41 Mtn Bde moved from the west at noon on 11 December for the capture of Kushtia. By 1400 hrs, it came to be known that the major Pak force had withdrawn from the town towards Bheramara. The Div Commander ordered 7 Mtn Bde to capture Kushtia from the south, while 41 Mtn Bde was asked to prepare for advance to Bheramara. At long last, 7 Mtn Bde captured Kushtia by 1700 hrs, on 11 Dec without opposition(80). In the Battle of Kushtia Indian casualties were: 2 Officers, 4 JCOs and 33 ORs killed; and 3 Officers, 2 JCOs and 54 ORs wounded. Bodies of Indian troops recovered from Kushtia were found badly mutilated, bearing bayonet wounds and marks of brutal treatment(81).

Advance to Bheramara and Hardinge Bridge

At 0700 hrs on 12 Dec, 5/1 GR in MT with under command 'A' Squadron 45 Cav less two troops spearheaded the 41 Mtn Bde advance on axis Kushtia-Bheramara-Hardinge Bridge. The 9 Dogra and 5 Guards followed on foot. Hardinge Bridge and the Ferry Site being the only escape route open to the retreating Pak force, it was decided to dash towards Hardinge Bridge first and deal with Bheramara later. The Pak defences south of Hardinge Bridge were contacted at 1230 hrs, and after tanks were manoeuvred into fire support positions, the attack was launched at 1405 hrs. The formidable Hardinge Bridge defences were cleverly sited along a system of canals and anti-tank ditches, covering all the approaches to the bridge from the west and south-west, and along the Ganges Canal, connecting the Long Bil east of Bheramara with river Ganges, from the east and south-east. Bunkers were sited in triple lines in depth to cover all approaches up to the bridge bund which was 40' high, overlooking the whole area(82). The defences were strengthened

with extensive minefields and strongly constructed tank emplacements. The network of canals and anti-tank ditches denied all approaches to the Indian armour. After some recce, a route was found through the Power House for the Indian tanks and RCL guns to move through to launch the attack. The west end of the Hardinge Bridge was captured by 1700 hrs after putting down minor Pak opposition. Likewise, 9 Dogra along with two troops of tanks launched attack from Baradi at 1500 hrs, and secured Bheramara by 1630 hrs without any opposition. It was assessed that the Pak force had left the area and escaped to the other bank of the Padma in a great hurry, blowing up a span of the bridge and leaving behind a large number of vehicles, guns, equipment and ammunition. It could move only a part of its equipment, tanks and vehicles, and all of its personnel across the river. Although the Pak force, about 2 battalions, supported by a Squadron of tanks and artillery, could have fought a major battle at Bheramara-Hardinge Bridge area, but being demoralised, it lost the will to fight, inspite of the fact that its infantry, i.e. 29 Baluch and 18 Punjab, had not participated in any major action hitherto.

Battle of Madhumati River

After the fall of Magura on 8 December, 62 Mtn Bde commenced advance towards Faridpur, but the Pak troops had blown up the bridge on the river Kumar flowing on the east of Magura and withdrawn to the other bank of the Madhumati, flowing parallel to the river Kumar a few miles east of Magura, leaving behind a rear-guard force in area Majail (QP 4609), west of the river, for delaying the Indian advance. After removing this obstacle, the brigade concentrated on the west bank of the Madhumati by last light on 9 December and started preparations for the crossing of the river, which was approximately 500 metres wide and over 13 metres deep at places.

As has been told earlier, the heavy casualties in men and armour suffered by the Indian force in Kushtia on 9 December had panicked the Commander of 4 Mtn Div, who over-reacted to this temporary reverse and instead of continuing the thrust across the Madhumati, switched over his whole Division less a battalion to Kushtia(83). It was only after the capture of Kushtia, Bheramara and the Hardinge Bridge, that he brought back his forces to the western bank of the Madhumati. The 62 Mtn Bde was concentrated on the west bank of the Madhumati by 13 December, and 7 Mtn Bde concentrated at Magura the following day. The opposite bank of the river was held by two weak Pak battalions, supported by mortars and one battery of

105 mm guns. Although the original plan was for the 62 Mtn Bde to cross the river in the north, outflank the Pak position and then capture Kamarkhali (QP 4901) on the main road, finally it was decided to employ both 62 and 7 Mtn Bdes on the northern and the southern flanks respectively in a pincer movement to cut the road east of the ferry. Both the brigades crossed the river successfully during night 14/15 December, mostly in country boats, inspite of stiff opposition. However, the PT-76 tanks found it difficult to swim through the river at the southern ferry point. Only two tanks could cross over. 7 Mtn Bde's task was also otherwise difficult, because they did not have enough time for reconnaissance, and had to march cross-country for about 30 km to reach the river line. 62 Mtn Bde established a strong road-block about 4,000 metres north-east of Kamarkhali, and similarly 7 Mtn Bde also established some minor road-blocks, thus completely sealing off the Pak withdrawal(84). The Pakistani troops found themselves isolated and cut off. They made a few unsuccessful attempts at breaking through the Indian dragnet under HMG and artillery fire, and then surrendered with all personnel and equipment(85). Eighty-three Pak dead bodies were counted on the ground, and by 2300 hrs, 15 Officers, 10 JCOs and 334 ORs had surrendered(86). In the Battle of Madhumati River, 4 Mtn Div suffered casualties of 1 JCO and 5 ORs killed, and 2 Officers and 22 ORs wounded(87). After the clearance of the far side of the Madhumati by first light 16 December, the Indians resumed their advance towards Faridpur. But, soon after, 4 Mtn Div received orders for a cease-fire, and hence operations were stopped. The Pak GOC of 9 Inf Div along with 3,000 Officers and men from the Faridpur area surrendered to GOC 4 Mtn Div at Kamarkhali on 16 December, bringing to an end the hostilities in this Sector(88).

Assessment of 2 Corps Operations

The 2 Corps achieved substantial successes, in spite of several handicaps. For example, 4 Mtn Div found it difficult to operate in the plains with its limited transport and other resources(89). To remove these inadequacies, the Division had to undergo ad hoc reorganisation which entailed a lot of strain on various arms and services. The Light Regiment (Pack) had to be converted into towed organisation; one mountain regiment had to be replaced by a field regiment, and 106 mm RCL guns and additional vehicles had to be provided. However, in spite of these difficulties, had the 4 Mtn Div Commander not shifted his forces from the Madhumati area to the Kushtia Sector, but carried on the Madhumati battle, perhaps

his Division could have captured Goalundo Ghat earlier and crossed the Padma to attack Dhaka. On the whole it was a satisfactory, though not a brilliant performance, by 2 Corps.

The task allotted to 9 Inf Div was to capture Jessore and be prepared to assist 4 Mtn Div in the capture of Magura, besides sending a brigade to capture Khulna(90). As Jessore was captured on 7 December 1971, the Pak troops retreated towards Khulna, fighting delaying engagements en route at a number of built-up areas. They appeared to have also intended to fight a last-ditch battle from Daulatpur-Khulna fortress. But as the approach to Daulatpur was flanked by marshes on one side and the Bhairab river on the other, Indian advance became slow, and the Pakistanis fought for every bit of ground. And 9 Div could not capture Khulna before the cease-fire. Due to faulty intelligence it was thought that the main body of Pak troops had fled from Jessore to Magura, while approximately 500 Pak troops had withdrawn towards Khulna. Based on this information, the commander of 9 Inf Div initially sent one brigade towards Khulna in pursuit of the fleeing adversary. But later, when stiff resistance was met, another brigade was launched on 14 December to cross the Bhairab. As the remaining Bde was kept in reserve, no effort could be made to push towards Magura. Also, 50 Para Bde had been withdrawn from 9 Div area on 9 December.

One may think that 9 Inf Div's advance towards Khulna was futile and unnecessary, but leaving a large body of enemy troops in Khulna and then advancing towards Magura was not considered tactically sound, as the enemy could attack from the flank(91). In fact, when the Pak troops surrendered at Khulna on 17 December it was found that they comprised Pak 107 Bde with 3,894 all ranks.

OPERATION OF 33 CORPS

In the North-Western Sector, the Pak forces were reportedly deployed in the following manner at the out-break of the war(92):-

16 Inf Div (Maj Gen Nazar Hussain Shah)

HQ	Nator(93)
29 Cav less	Thakurgaon-Dinajpur-Ghoraghat-
Sqn	Hilli area
48 Fd Regt	Thakurgaon-Hathibanda-

	Nageshwari area
80 Fd Regt	Khetlal-Hilli area
117 (Indep) Mor Bty	Nageshwari-Kurigram
211 (Indep) Mor Bty	Nageshwari

23 I Bde (Brig Ansari, later Brig Iqbal Md.Shafi)

HQ, One Sqn 29 Cav	Saidpur area
25 Punjab (relieved 8 Punjab)	Hathibanda-Lalmanirhat- Nageshwari-Kurigram area
26 FF	Dinajpur-Phulbari area
48 Punjab	Thakurgaon-Pachagarh area
Coy 8 Punjab	Lalmanirhat-Rangpur area
Coy 34 Punjab (Recce and Sp. Bn)	Thakurgaon-Boda-Nilphamari area
86 Mujahid Bn	Elements at Hathibanda-Hilli area-Gaibanda and Rangpur

205 Inf Bde (Brig Tajammul Hussain Malik)

HQ	Khetlal
32 Baluch	Ghoraghat-Gobindaganj area
4 FF	Hilli area
8 Baluch	Jaipurhat-Jaipur (QJ 8992) and Mahabatpur (QJ 7696) area
Coy 34 Punjab	Panchbibi area

34 Inf Bde (Brig Mir Abdul Nayeem)

HQ	Nator
32 Punjab	Nawabganj-Sibganj Rahanpur-Rajshahi
Coy 12 Punjab	Ishurdi area

As against the above, 33 Corps was deployed in the North-Western Sector as under(94):-

HQ 33 Corps (Lt Gen M.L. Thapan) - Siliguri

71 Mtn Bde (Brig P.N. Kathpalia)

20 Mtn Div (Maj Gen Lachhman Singh Lehl)-
Balurghat.

202 Mtn Bde (Brig F. Bhatta)

165 Mtn Bde (Brig R.S. Pannu)

66 Mtn Bde (Brig G.S. Sharma)

340 Mtn Bde Gp (Brig J.S. Bakshi)

6 Mtn Div (Maj Gen P.C. Reddy) - Binaguri
(for limited use)

9 Mtn Bde (Brig T.S. Verma) with two battalions only.

The Corps had under its command the following supporting elements:-

- (a) One regiment of PT-76 tanks, one regiment of T-55 tanks less one Sqn, and an ad hoc Sqn of PT-76 tanks.
- (b) One APC Battalion (SKOT)
- (c) Seven Bns less two Coys BSF
- (d) Eleven Coys of Mukti Fauj.
- (e) One Engr Bde and one Army Engr Regt, etc.

On 3 December, when the war started, the Indian forces were already in occupation of certain Pak areas in this Sector(95). In area Hilli, Naopara (QD 9115), Morapara (QD 9114) and Basudebpur (QD 9014) (parts of main Hilli defences) had been occupied, although the Pak Army was continuing to hold on to Hilli. In Dinajpur area, Khanpurhat (QD 4941), Mukundapur (QD 4543) and Mohanpur (QD 6343)(96) had been occupied on the southern approaches to Dinajpur and both banks of Icchamati River at QD 7241 secured on axis Samjia (QD 6540)-Phulbari (QD 8540). 71 Mtn Bde advancing south on axis Mirgarh (LY 3942)-Dinajpur had captured

Thakurgaon (LY 3205) by 1200 hrs on 3 Dec(97). In the Barakhata salient, Barakhata (LZ 0304) had been captured and Hathibanda (LZ 0614) near the border, north of Ranjpur, contacted. In the Nageshwari salient, all areas north-north east of Dharla River had been cleared.

Operation Plan

The strategic concept in the 33 Corps Sector was to secure the waist line along the Hilli-Gaibanda axis in the middle of the Sector by moving through Mohanpur bridge on the Atrai in the west and then reaching Gaibanda and Bogra, thus dividing the Pak 16 Division deployed in this Sector. This would have ensured the security of the Siliguri corridor on the one hand, and the subsequent destruction of the Pak forces to the north and south of this waist line, on the other. According to this concept, 20 Mtn Div with under command 340 Mtn Bde Gp was to secure the line Hilli-Gaibanda (QE 5019) and thereafter capture Bogra and then exploit up to the Ganga(98). The main thrust line for the offensive was to be along Phulbari (QD 8540)-Nawabganj (QD 9930)-Pirganj (QE 2369)-Ghoraghat (QE 2209) and then south to Gobindaganj (QK 3396) and Bogra (LY 4325). Meanwhile, Dinajpur was to be contained by subsidiary thrusts from the south along with an advance by 71 Mountain Bde from the north threatening Dinajpur (QD 5156)-and Saidpur (QD 7976).

As during the preliminary operations it was found that the Pak forces had held on to Hilli tenaciously, it would have involved a great loss of men and material in trying again to advance through Hilli. Also as the 20 Mtn Div Commander had no reserves available for dealing with any unforeseen situation, Maj Gen Lachhman Singh was against any frontal advance along the strongly defended approach from Hilli to Ghoraghat, and also against getting involved in fighting in Dinajpur town(99). Hence, the following revised operational plan was made for the 33 Corps(100):-

- (a) The waist line Hilli-Gaibanda would be cut by advancing in strength on axis Mohanpur Bridge (north-west of Hilli)-Phulbari-Charkai-Pirganj-Palashbari (QE 2913) with two brigades, and then after securing Gaibanda, the thrust would turn south along axis Palashbari-Gobindaganj-Bogra.
- (b) The 340 Mtn Bde Gp would contain Dinajpur from the south with one battalion, making available the rest of the brigade as reserve.

- (c) The 202 Mtn Bde was to continue exerting pressure on Hilli to mislead the Pakistanis to think that the Indian intention was to advance along the Hilli-Gaibanda route. At the same time the Bde Group was warned to be ready to link up with 66 Mtn Bde in area Dangapara (QD 9019)-Charkai (QD 8927), after handing over the defence of Hilli to 165 Mtn Bde. 66 Mtn Bde was ordered to launch a cross country move, about twelve miles north of Hilli to capture Phulbari and Charkai by 4 December. Armour was allotted to 66 and 202 Mtn Bdes for their operations.
- (d) There was a Corps cover plan to assist in the furtherance of the main thrust by initially making the Pakistanis deploy as large a proportion of their forces as possible in the Rangpur-Saidpur area. It was planned to engage 6 Mtn Div and 71 Mtn Bde in clearing the northernmost parts of the Sector. The 9 Mtn Bde of 6 Mtn Div was to clear the Tista Pocket and capture Lalmanirhat (QE 4089) as early as possible. Subsequently, it was to keep itself available for employment either in 20 Mtn Div or 71 Mtn Bde area. The 71 Mtn Bde was to advance to Birganj (QD 5384) from Thakurgaon and moving further, capture Kantanagar bridge (QD 5578) intact, if possible. Thereafter, the brigade was to contain the Pakistanis in the area of Atrai br (QD 6273) - Saidpur and exert pressure on Dinajpur from the north. If there were signs of Pakistanis pulling out of Dinajpur, the brigade was to exploit the situation.
- (e) Concurrently with the above, it was also planned to contain and erode the Pak Brigade in the Hilli-Ghoraghat-Khetlal (QK 0348) complex and apply the coup de grace when the main thrust got behind the Pak forces in the general area of Gobindaganj.
- (f) After the capture of Bogra by D plus 9 and Hilli complex, i.e., after the Pak Div sector had been cut into two:-
- (i) Two Brigades with minimum armour and artillery support were to move south, secure Sirajganj (QK 6813), south-east of Bogra, and Bera (QP 6068), further

south of Sirajganj ferries, both on the river Jamuna, clear up the southern part of the Corps sector, including Nator and Naogaon (QJ 8356), to the west of Bogra, and link up with elements of 2 Corps at Hardinge Bridge.

- (ii) Two Brigades with the bulk of armour and artillery support ex 20 Mtn Div were to move north and in conjunction with 71 Mtn Bde Gp reduce Rangpur, Saidpur and Dinajpur in that order.

20 Mtn Div Operations

According to the revised plan, 6 Guards ex 66 Mtn Bde secured area Mohanpur bridge (QD 6443) on river Atrai at the western end of the main thrust line and also the bridge on river Bhalamati (GR 654452), further ahead, by 2 December. The Pak strength here consisted of 'C' Coy 26 FF, two guns and some tanks. Both sides suffered casualties. However, before withdrawing towards north and east, the Pakistanis had demolished the western part of the Mohanpur bridge, thus denying themselves the use of Phulbari (QD 8639)-Dinajpur concrete road, running within a thousand metres of the international border in some places.

Capture of Phulbari: Now the next objective on the axis of advance was Phulbari. This task was entrusted to 69 Armd Regt less two squadrons with under command 20 Maratha LI and 65 Mtn Regt less one battery. Simultaneously, 6 Guards with under command 'C' Sqn 63 Cav cleared the defenders from Icchamati river bridge (QD 7245) by 1430 hrs on 3 December. In order to sustain the line of advance of 66 Mtn Bde Group, 52 Engr Regt developed a new track linking Samjia with Narayanpur (QD 6645) and carried out improvement of track Samjia (QD 6442)-Nabogram (QD 6641)-Bejai (QD 7541) during 1-3 December. The bridge (QD 7245) on Icchamati river, captured by 6 Guards, was also quickly strengthened to take medium guns. 20 Maratha LI then moved on the axis Nabogram (QD 6641)-Bejai (QD 7541)-Phulbari (QD 8639). When at 0700 hrs on 3 December, the advance guard contacted Bejai, held by one platoon of 26 FF plus approximately one coy of Mujahids, the latter offered stiff opposition. After a gallant action, in which 14 Indian ORs got killed and two officers, two JCOs and 16 ORs were wounded, the position was captured by 1010 hrs. The Pak troops suffered 10 dead and a large number wounded. The Indian column reached Phulbari (QD 8630) by 1445 hrs and after clearing light opposition captured it by 1600 hrs the same day. The remnants of Pak troops

withdrew towards Parbatipur (QD 8159) by train. On the fall of Phulbari, 6 ORs of 26 FF, 2 JCOs of EPCAF, 43 Mujahids and Razakars as well as some arms, ammunition and equipment were captured. Before withdrawing from Phulbari, the Pak troops had hurriedly demolished a span of the bridge over river Jamuna (a local river), 260' wide. This would have affected the further advance to Charkai (QD 8927), but a Bailey bridge (class 40) was constructed soon. The Indian troops did not, however, wait for the completion of the bridge and resumed the advance at 0800 hrs on 4 December.

Capture of Charkai: For the capture of Charkai, held by Coy 8 Baluch and about 150 Razakars, the advance guard was composed of 69 Armd Regt, commanded by Lt Col Pawittar Singh, less two squadrons, with under command 'C' Sqn 63 Cav and 20 Maratha LI (Armoured Personnel Carrier)(101). The troops had first to contend against an indifferent mud track, heavily mined by the Pakistanis. Tanks had difficulty in cross-country movement, Armoured Personnel Carriers got badly stuck, and even one ton vehicles found the going difficult. Any way, the advance commenced at 0900 hrs on 4 December. After having established blocks to the rear of the Pak troops, the position was attacked from the west and captured by 1700 hrs on 4 December. Mopping up was carried out to liquidate small pockets of resistance and some Pak POWs, arms and equipment were captured.

To advance further to Nawabganj (QD 9930) a build-up had to be made at Charkai. For this, the line between Phulbari and Charkai had to be strengthened. Hence, 52 Engr Regt cleared the track of mines. Simultaneously, 13 Engr Regt less one field Coy converted the 2 km railway track between Phulbari and Charkai, south of Phulbari, into a class-40 road after blasting the railway line, and constructing four bridges along this axis by 6 December. As the Indian troops and vehicles moved east along this most unexpected road, interspersed by numerous 'bils' and canals, the Pak Commanders were surprised beyond their wits. When the news was sent to the superior Commander, he jeered at the Platoon Commander: "Don't imagine things. How can tanks come when there are so many bheels, marshes and mines there? You must have seen buffaloes". The young captain replied, 'You may be right, Sir. But I swear the buffaloes have 100 mm guns fitted on them and they are picking off our bunkers one by one'(102).

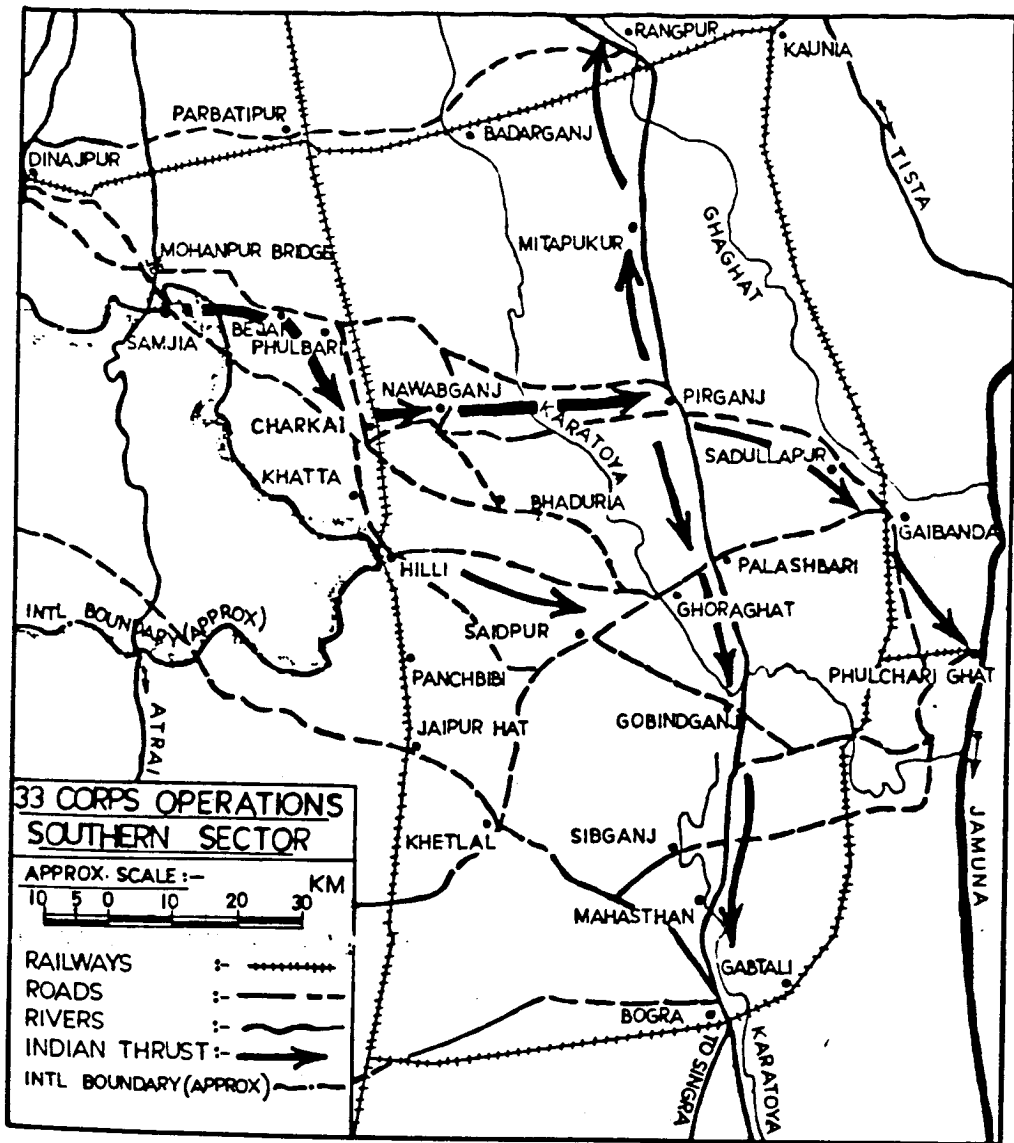
Further, in view of the build-up at Charkai, it was decided to give priority to a link-up between 202 and 66 Mtn Bdes (in area Dangapara (QD 9119)). In

pursuance of this task, 5 Garh Rif ex 202 Mtn Bde attacked and captured Debkhanda (QD 8917), halfway between Hilli and Charkai, after eliminating light opposition by the evening on 3 December. The Unit was, however, unable to advance beyond this point, because one strong Pak Coy supported by other elements was strongly holding the general area ferry (QD 8719)-Dangapara Railway Station (QD 9020). Indian armour and infantry trying to out-flank them came under RCL fire, and what is more, the IAF strafed 5 Garh Rif position of 4 December by mistake, injuring three officers, one JCO and one OR. Although due to heavy Indian pressure the Pak troops withdrew from Dangapara, leaving behind some arms, vehicles and ammunition on night 6/7 December, the Dangapara-Charkai track was found unsuitable for vehicular traffic. Hence, Hilli-Charkai link-up attempt was given up for the time being.

Meanwhile, a 6 Guards patrol reported Pak withdrawal from Nawabganj which was immediately occupied by 6 Guards at 0600 hrs on 6 December(103). Soon after, the same battalion secured the unoccupied Kanchdaha ferry site (QE 0631) on the Karatoya river and established a bridge-head across the river. The 52 Engr Regt then put up a bridge and also laid a class 9 road from Charkai to Kanchdaha Ferry via Nawabganj(104).

Advance to Pirganj: The stage was then set for the advance to Pirganj (QE 2329). For this, 340 Mtn Bde Gp, whose responsibility till then was to contain the Pak forces near Dinajpur was asked to hand over this duty to 165 Mtn Bde and then undertake the advance to Pirganj, Palashbari (QE 2913) and Gaibanda (QE 4918). Commanded by Brig J.S. Bakshi, 340 Mtn Bde Gp, composed of 2/5 GR(FF), 5/11 GR, 6 Guards, 63 Cav less two Sqns, Sqn 69 Armd Regt, two artillery regiments, one medium regiment less one battery, two light batteries and two Engr Regts, commenced advance to Pirganj on 7 Dec. Simultaneously, 66 Mtn Bde Gp, after initially guarding against any Pak advance from the direction of Parbatipur (QD 8159), on the railway line-Dinajpur-Rangpur, was to advance towards Bhaduria (QE 0618) and Nurpur (QE 1515) with the intention of capturing Ghoraghat (QE 2109) and 202 Mtn Bde was to continue exerting pressure on Hilli and outflank it from the north and finally link up with 66 Mtn Bde in area Ghoraghat(105).

On 7 December, elements of 340 Mtn Bde Gp led by 'C' Coy 2/5 GR(FF), mounted on tanks of 'A' Sqn 69 Armd Regt, after brushing aside minor opposition south of Chandipur (QE 1833), established a road block at Laldighi Bazar (QE 2332) just north-west of Pirganj.



At this stage, in the afternoon, a Pak vehicle column, with Maj Gen Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Inf Div, Brig Tajammal Hussain Malik, Commander 205 Inf Bde, and some other Pak army personnel, returning from Rangpur to Bogra, was fired upon by the Indian tank column at long range, hitting the leading two jeeps, about 2 km north of Pirganj. In the words of S. Salik, "Abandoning their vehicles, they quickly disappeared into a grove of trees. The G.O.C. later triumphantly told me that he had seen 'enemy tanks as close as 500 metres on my right'. He and his party were helped by a God-fearing (sic!) Bengalee who guided them to a safe path which took them towards Rangpur"(106).

From Rangpur Maj Gen Nazar was flown out to Nator by helicopter on the night of 9/10 December. While most of the Pak vehicles turned back to Rangpur, the Indians captured 2 ORs, and one jeep, along with two important military maps showing disposition of Pak forces and location of their MMG and RCL guns(107). Pirganj was captured by 1630 hrs, thus cutting the main Rangpur-Bogra highway in the North-Western Sector(108).

On the night of 7/8 December, two Pak task forces were sent to counter-attack Pirganj from north and south. The northern attack under Brig Nayeem with two Coys 8 Punjab and two troops of armour, and the southern one under Lt Col Sultan Mahmood with 32 Baluch less two Coys were both beaten back. Lt Col Sultan and eleven ORs of 32 Baluch were killed, while 45 ORs were wounded in this action. 2/5 GR(FF) suffered casualties of one officer and four ORs killed and 2 officers and 4 ORs injured(109).

Capture of Bhaduria: While 340 Mtn Bde Gp was consolidating in Pirganj, 66 Mtn Bde went to clear Bhaduria (QE 0618), in the south-west of Pirganj, held by approximately two Coys of Pak troops plus supporting elements, including a troop of armour. The 17 Kumaon, supported by 63 Cavalry launched the attack on 10 Dec, and got involved in hand-to-hand and bayonet fighting. Although one 17 Kumaon Coy Commander was killed in the battle, the Indians kept up a relentless pressure and succeeded in clearing a major part of the objective.

On 11 Dec, a Pak counter-attack was foiled by heavy artillery fire, and later the same day two Coys of 20 Maratha LI with two troops of 'C' Sqn 63 Cavalry cleared the remaining part of Bhaduria. Two Pakistani tanks were destroyed in this action(110). Heavy casualties were suffered by both sides; Pakistan - 82 including one Major and one Artillery officer dead, and 5 PsOW; India - 57 including three officers

killed, and 74 including 4 officers injured(111).

Capture of Hilli: In the 165 Mtn Bde area, on 6 December, when one Coy of 4 Madras was surrounded by two Coys of Pak troops supported by three tanks at Jamalpur (QD 4841), south-west of Balurghat, the Indian Air Force struck against the Pak forces at Jamalpur and Ramsagar (QD 4946) to stabilise the situation. The following day, when the Pak troops attacked Dangi BOP (QD 620304) on the western bank of the Atrai, held by BSF and Mukti Fauj, about fifteen Pak troops lost their lives and four others were wounded. Here also the IAF intervened and destroyed three Pak guns in Jotsriram (QD 7298) area on 8 December.

In the Hilli area, 202 Mtn Bde launched attack on 8 December. The Indian Air Force again played their part by strafing and rocketing Pak defences in Hilli area. By the evening of 11 December, the Pak troops were bottled up at Dangapara (QD 9313) just south-east of Hilli where they had withdrawn from different parts of the Hilli complex, and 8 Guards supported by one composite armd sqdn captured this position after fierce fighting. Twenty Pak soldiers were killed, and one Officer and two ORs were captured. Besides, two Chaffee tanks and three 105 mm Howitzers were destroyed(112). Thereafter, the link-up between 66 Mtn Bde and 202 Mtn Bde was established on 12 December.

The Indian troops' presence in the Pirganj-Palashbari area caused unsettling effect for the border defences of Pak 205 Bde. The extended Pak fingers in the north-west and north-east were expected to fold back to form a fist at Bogra, but not many troops could pull back. In the same way, the Pak posts at Phulcharighat (QE 5702), Bonarpara (QK 4898) and Gobindaganj (QK 3296) in the east were also evacuated(113). After the withdrawal of 4 Frontier Force from the Hilli defences, 16 Div was completely divided, with its 23 Bde being isolated in the Rangpur-Dinajpur area in the north, and 205 Bde cornered in Bogra in the south, with its back to the mighty Brahmaputra (Jamuna).

Capture of Palashbari and Gaibanda: A task force of 340 Mtn Bde Gp, consisting of one squadron 69 Armd Regt, one Coy 5 Garh Rif and 44 Med Bty, advanced at 0600 hrs on 9 December and contacted the Pak position at Sadullapur (QE 4126) on the road to Gaibanda by 0900 hrs. When they were engaged with RCL gun and RR(114) by the Pak troops, Indian tanks destroyed one Pak RCL and surrounded the village. This lightning action by Maj S.C. Mehra of 69 Armd

Regt had its effect and the Pak troops fled. Eighteen ORs of the Pak Army were killed, and 70 Razakars along with weapons and ammunition were captured(115).

Another task force, consisting of 69 Armd Regt less two squadrons, with one squadron 63 Cavalry and 6 Guards, advancing from Pirganj on 9 December cleared minor opposition at Dhaperhat (QE 2820) and also mines on the way, before reaching Palashbari (QE 2913). Despite intense Pak fire from south and south-west of this town, 'A' squadron 63 Cavalry over-ran the position by 1215 hrs. Approximately, 34 Pak troops were killed(116). On 9 December, the third task force, formed with 6 Guards less two coys, and two troops ex 69 Armd Regt, advanced from Palashbari and captured Gaibanda by 1600 hrs, without opposition. Indian armour destroyed the railway line north of Gaibanda railway station, and cut all telephone communication with Bogra and Rangpur, thus sealing off the Pak escape route from Rangpur. The task force then captured Phulchari Ferry (QE 5702) on the river Jamuna south of Gaibanda and demolished the jetty on 10 December(117). In the meantime, advance on the route Palashbari-Ghoraghat-Gobindaganj was continued.

Capture of Ghoraghat: The Divisional Commander ordered an attack on the Pak gun position at Maheshpur (QE 0313), situated on the Hilli-Ghoraghat track, a few km east of Hilli, in conjunction with attacks on Hilli and Bhaduria, because the Pak guns at Maheshpur were giving support to Pak defence in Hilli and Bhaduria, and a Pak Coy deployed on a bund in Maheshpur area gave depth to Hilli defences and protected those guns. Maheshpur was captured by 63 Cavalry less two Squadrons with 4 Madras commanded by Lt Col SL Malhotra, on 10 December(118), and one troop of T-55 tanks managed to ford the Tulsī Ganga nullah and destroyed one 105 mm gun and captured another intact, along with large dumps of ammunition and rations at Hariharpur (QE 0113)(119). Next, a two-pronged attack, led by 20 Maratha LI supported by sqn 63 Cavalry from north, and 4 Madras, cleared the Pak troops at Durga Dighi (QE 0711) on 11 December, and 20 Maratha LI captured Ghoraghat (QE 2008) the next morning against minor resistance. Two Pak tanks were destroyed in air action(120). Then 66 Bde linked up with 340 Mtn Bde in the Ghoraghat area on 12 December.

Capture of Gobindaganj (QK 3296): On 10 December, 340 Mtn Bde was ordered to capture Gobindaganj by 11 December and advance to Bogra (QK 3161) with maximum speed. The Bde had already secured the home bank of the Karatoya by the evening of 9 December. During further advance, when an intensive mine-field was

encountered, the Engineers lifted the mines from the road and the advance continued. In the morning of 10 December, Pak opposition was cleared on the north bank (QE 3301) of the Karatoya(121). The next day, an Indian column made a wide, out-flanking move to cut off enemy routes of withdrawal by establishing a road-block in area QE 3290 and to capture Gobindaganj from south and south-east, while 6 Guards maintained relentless pressure from the north. The task force crossed the Karatoya river at Kajla (QE 4000), north-east of Gobindaganj, approximately 8,000 metres each of the Pak defences which comprised 32 Baluch less two Coys, A Coy 32 Punjab, one Coy 13 Engr Bn, one Coy 83 Mujahid En, one troop Chaffee tanks, and five 105 mm Howitzers(122). Road-blocks were established at Kamar Road Junction (QK 3290) south of Gobindaganj by 1545 hrs. After infiltrating into Pak Commando observation posts and collecting accurate information regarding Pak positions, Indian troops hit the rear area of the Pak defences. There was heavy fighting throughout the night of 11/12 December and infra-red devices of T-55 tanks were fully utilised to destroy Pak bunkers. By the morning of 12 December the Pakistanis had vacated their position. 90 Pak soldiers were killed and 12 captured. Besides, three Chaffee tanks (one destroyed), five 105 mm Howitzers (two destroyed), fifty-five 'B' vehicles, including three ammunition vehicles bearing UN marking, two 106 mm RCL guns and fifteen 3-ton loads of all types of ammunition were captured(123). Indian casualties were one officer and two ORs killed, and three officers and five ORs wounded(124).

The Armd Bde HQ under Brig G.S. Sandhu and all the Sqns except one sqn of 63 Cavalry were withdrawn from the 20 Mtn Div area by 13 December for transfer to the Western Theatre. The disturbing impact of this and the regrouping of forces slowed down the pace of advance, because the armoured units were always in the fore-front of the assaults carried out so far by 20 Mtn Div. The unfortunate result was that neither could these armoured units reach their destination in time, nor 340 Bde could cross Jamuna en route to Dhaka.

Advance to Bogra

Under fresh orders issued by GOC 33 Corps, new thrusts were launched on 12 December. 4 Rajput, under 165 Mtn Bde, captured Jaipurhat (QD 9391), south of Hilli on 13 Dec, without opposition, and 1 Guards advancing on axis Hilli-Panchbibi (QD 9203) at night on 12/13 December, captured Panchbibi the next day after overcoming some opposition. A Pak counter-attack was foiled by the Indian troops.

Twenty Pak troops were killed, and one OR, four jeeps and one 106 mm RCL gun were captured, as against 1 Guards casualties of 3 ORs killed and two Officers and 9 ORs wounded(125).

After the Indian aircraft had rocketed Pak defences around Mitapukur (QD 2048) at 1200 hrs on 13 December, 5 Garh Rif, now under 66 Mtn Bde, supported by armour, advanced on axis Pirganj (QE 2329)-Mitapukur. After clearing minor opposition astride the axis, the unit reached area Kanchanpur (QE 2036) and linked up with 20 Maratha LI.

On the night of 14/15 December, an exchange of fire took place between the Indian and the Pakistani troops, and the Indians suffered eleven casualties. This was followed by a two-pronged Indian attack supported by 69 Armd Regt. Although the Pakistanis were forced to abandon the area, nonetheless, they hit three Indian PT-76 tanks with RCL fire, badly damaging two of them, and inflicted 15 casualties on the Indian troops. The Indians secured Mitapukur by noon on 15 December, capturing 6 ORs of 8 Punjab, 2 HMGs and one Chinese rifle.

As per original orders, 202 Mtn Bde, which was in Hilli area, got ready to advance on Bogra via Khetlal (QK 0383), south-south east of Hilli. Commencing advance on 12 December, the Bde harboured at Ghoraghat for the night. On 13 December(126), 16 Rajput with under command A Sqn 63 Cav and A sqn 69 Armd Regt advanced unopposed along axis Ghoraghat (QE 2008)-Saidpur (QE 1304)-Khetlal. Before Khetlal was contacted at 1930 hrs, the Pak troops and three tanks had already vacated the area, leaving behind bed rolls, equipment and ammunition. One of the Pak tanks was knocked out by the Indian armour(127). Now it was found that the track from Khetlal to Bogra was badly damaged by Pak demolitions and a number of bridges had been destroyed. Moreover, the squadron of 63 Cavalry was withdrawn from 202 Mtn Bde for move to the Punjab front that day. Hence, it was not found feasible for 202 Mtn Bde to maintain its advance to Bogra. The Bde was ordered to concentrate in area Gobindaganj as a divisional reserve.

The capture of Bogra, however, fell to the lot of 340 Mtn Bde Gp. With regard to the line of advance on axis Gobindaganj-Bogra, tactical reconnaissance and captured documents from Gobindaganj had revealed that the bridge on the river Ichhamati at QK 3078 as also Sibga (QK 2479) were held by one Coy each of 32 Baluch the Pakistanis were preparing defences at Mahasthan (QK 2873); and Pak troops and vehicles were withdrawing to Bogra from Hilli and Ghoraghat(128).

Some Pakistani pockets of resistance were there south of the Karatoya, which needed to be cleared(129). Further, the laying of a bridge over the Karatoya at QE 3299 was necessary(130). The clearance of the Pakistani pockets was completed by morning on 12 December and the bridge was also constructed, despite Pak firing, by 1700 hrs that day. At 1230 hrs on 12 December, 69 Armd Regt less one squadron, with under command A Squadron 63 Cavalry and 5/11 GR cut through Pak opposition and contacted the south bank of the Ichhamati river(131). 5/11 GR patrols found a gap, approximately 400 yds wide, in the Pak defences, near the bridge (QK 3078), and one Coy group infiltrated south of the bridge, during midnight, undetected, under the cover of artillery fire, tank noise and intensive patrolling on the flanks of Pak defended localities. At 0400 hrs, on 13 December, the infiltrated Coy silently attacked the battalion HQ of 32 Baluch and captured four officers, including the officiating Commanding Officer, and 2 ORs(132). The Pak forward coys were then attacked and the bridge was captured intact. Of the Pakistani force holding the area, a total of four officers, one JCO and 12 ORs were captured, and 97 killed(133).

Next, the Battalion captured the bridge over the Karatoya at QK 2873, near Mahasthan, on the way to Bogra(134). Now the road to Bogra was open. The Pakistani force holding Bogra reportedly consisted of 8 Baluch, some tanks and artillery; HQ 205 Bde and possibly Tac HQ 16 Div (Pak) were also located there(135). According to plan, on 13/14 December night, 69 Armd Regt less one sqn with under command 6 Guards less one coy carried out an outflanking move from the east and established road-blocks on roads Bogra-Sirajganj (QK 6813) and Bogra-Singra (QK 0519)(136). Bogra was now attacked in the morning of 14 December from two directions. The 69 Armd Regt moved north and 2/5 GR(FF) with under command A sqn 63 Cavalry advanced south on to the northern section of the town. Stiff Pak resistance was met when the Indian troops entered the built-up area. The Pakistani troops started firing from house tops, and a running fight raged in the streets. By 1300 hrs, all areas north of the railway line had been cleared, and the Tactical HQ of 16 Div had also been captured(137). But, though the main objective had been achieved Pakistani resistance continued even upto 16 December.

By the evening of 15 December, 5/11 GR was able to clear all areas of enemy pockets upto the railway line and capture the Bogra Railway Station after a stiff fight. However, the Pak troops in the Police Station held on and put up stiff resistance(138). Similarly, on 15 December 2/5 GR(FF) met with tough

resistance at cross-roads and the market place where due to heavy Pak fire the unit suffered some casualties(139). These Pak troops began surrendering only after the Indian artillery heavily shelled the Market area from 0400 hrs to 0500 hrs on 16 December(140). From the early hours of 16 December, mopping up operations were conducted from north to south and south to north. House-to-house and street-to-street battles still raged, with extensive use of close-quarter-battle weapons and grenades. From 0530 hrs of 16 December more and more of the Pak personnel kept surrendering. It was only then that HQ 205 Inf Bde (Pak) was surrounded by 5/11 GR who captured the commanding officer 80 Field Regt, Brigade Major, two other officers and 50 ORs(141). The time limit for complete surrender was set at 0800 hrs on 16 December, by the Commander of 340 Mtn Bde(142). Though, in response, surrenders en masse began, some resistance still continued which led to Indian artillery firing again. However, surrendered officers of the Pak army requested the Indians to stop the fire, volunteering to go back and return with their colleagues for surrender. By 0930 hrs, the contest seems to have ended. However, Commander 205 Inf Bde, Brig Tajammul Hussain Malik alongwith one OR tried to escape. Caught and badly beaten by civilians, he was rescued by Indian troops and sent to Field Hospital(143). Curfew in Bogra was imposed to check loot, arson and ransacking by undesirable elements. It was only at 1300 hrs on 18 Dec that Maj Gen Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Pak Inf Div, was flown from Nator by Indian helicopter to sign the instrument of surrender before Maj Gen Lachhman Singh Lehl, Vr.C., GOC 20 Mtn Div, at Bogra.

The following Pak personnel were taken PsOW by 340 Mtn Bde Gp:- Officers - 61; JCOs -57; ORs - 1,701; NCsE - 33(144). In the battle of Bogra, the total number of Pak casualties were approximately 2 Officers and 63 ORs killed, and 1 Officer and 30 ORs, including 1 JCO wounded(145), as against 1 Officer and 16 ORs killed and 49 ORs, including 3 JCOs, wounded on the Indian side(146).

Advance to Rangpur: On 15 Dec, 20 Mtn Div ordered 66 Mtn Bde to capture Rangpur town after advancing along axis Mitapukur (QE 2049) - Rangpur (QE 1870), while 202 Mtn Bde was ordered to advance along the axis Mitapukur-Nasirabad (QE 1357)-Fatehpur (QE 1463)-Rangpur. On 16 December, 5 Garh Rif ex 66 Mtn Bde established road block in area QE 2058 and contacted Pak defences along Ghaghat nullah area (QE 1463), south of Rangpur where three Pak Coys held defensive positions. When the Indian troops surrounded these positions, the CO of 8 Punjab surrendered with 14

Officers, 8 JCOs and 322 ORs, along with their arms and equipment(147). Similarly, 202 Mtn Bde advanced about 24 kms on the night of 15/16 December and contacted the Pak troops at Fatehpur (QE 1463) near the bridge, south-west of Rangpur. It was now planned to send a battalion north-west on the Saidpur-Rangpur axis to enter Rangpur town from the north-west. But unfortunately, Indian Armour elements made some delay in grouping with 22 Maratha LI, and hence this move was postponed for 16/17 night(148). Meanwhile, at 1500 hrs on 16 December, the Pak troops, deployed at the bridge, waved a white flag, signalling surrender. Soon afterwards Brig Nayeem, Commander 34 Inf Bde, offered the surrender of the Rangpur garrison(149). Brig Sharma of 66 Mtn Bde, Brig Bhatta of 202 Mtn Bde, Brig Pannu of 165 Mtn Bde, and Brig Bakshi of 340 Mtn Bde - all under 20 Mtn Div - took the surrender of the Pak troops at Rangpur, Nowgong (south of Balurghat), Isurdi (QO 9676) near Pabna, and Bogra, respectively(159).

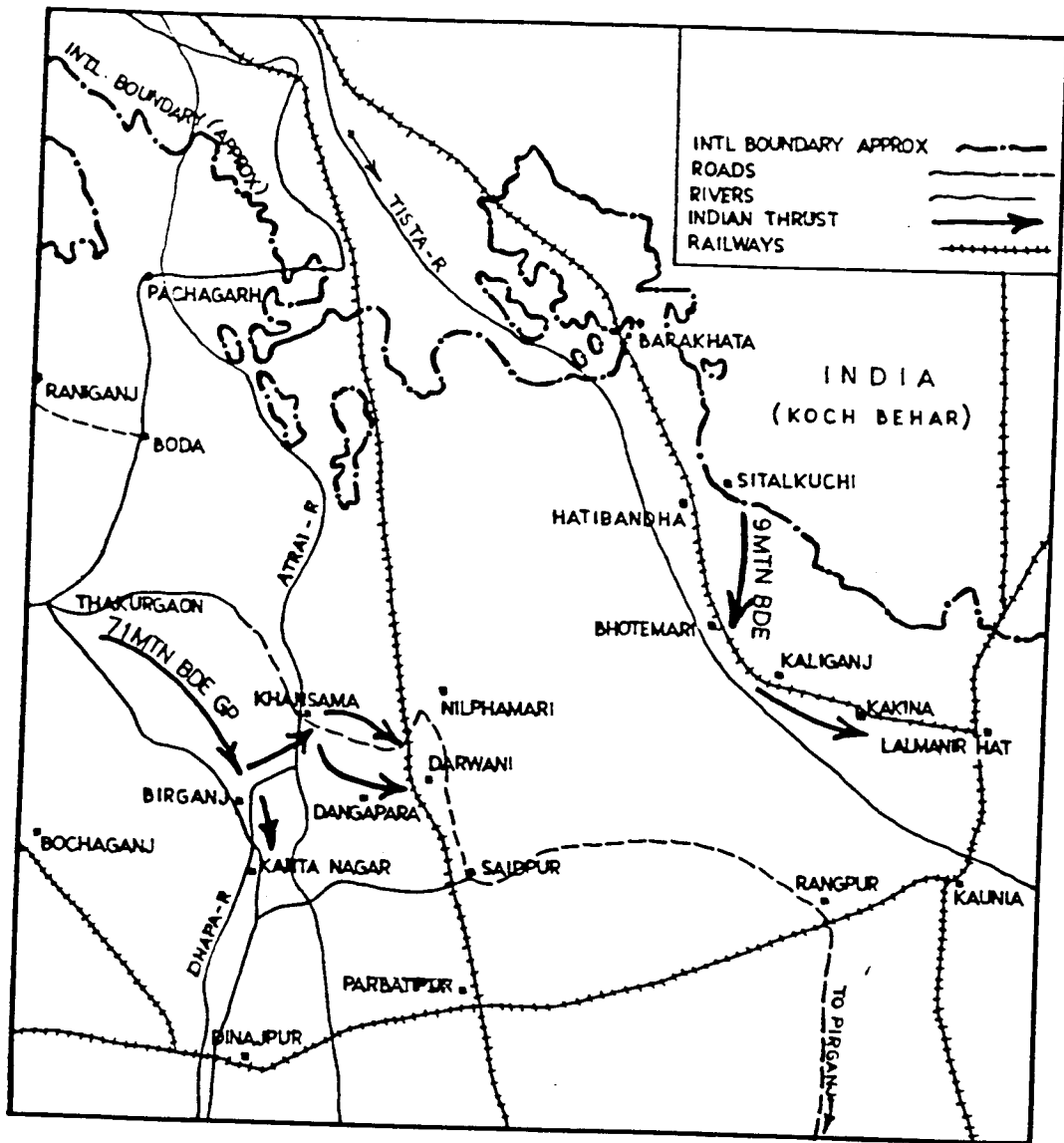
A total of 304 Officers, 371 JCOs and 11,218 ORs of the Pak Army, besides (approximately) 6,000 para-military personnel, surrendered to 20 Mtn Div(151). In the whole operation (3 to 16 Dec 1971), 20 Mtn Div suffered casualties of 148 including 9 Officers killed, and 449 including 27 Officers wounded(152).

71 Mtn Bde Operation

The 71 Mtn Bde, which operated initially under the direct control of 33 Corps(153), was given the task to advance on axis Thakurgaon-Birganj (QD 5384 - Kantanagar bridge (QD 5578) on Dhap river towards Dinajpur. Commencing advance on 3 December, 7 Maratha along with D Sqn 69 Armd Regt captured Birganj by 1730 hrs on 5 December, after brushing off minor resistance on the way. The next day, while advancing towards Kantanagar Bridge, they cleared a Pak defensive position QD 5379 after suffering seven casualties (ORs)(154). On night 6/7 Dec, they crossed the Dhap to capture the Kantanagar bridge area on the east bank. Two attacks launched by 7 Maratha and two coys of 21 Rajput, supported by tanks, were foiled by heavy Pak artillery, mortar and automatic fire. In this battle, 7 Maratha suffered 9 killed, 60 wounded and one PT-76 tank destroyed(155).

At this stage, the Pakistanis were seen reinforcing Dinajpur. Hence, on 11 December, the Bde Commander ordered 21 Rajput to capture Khansama (QD 6191) on the Atrai river midway between Thakurgaon and Saidpur by 13 December. Actually, operation against Khansama was the first step towards the

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capture of Saidpur (QD 7973) from the north. It was appreciated that the Pakistanis were occupying area Khansama (QD 6191) opposite ferry, with approximately one coy plus some irregulars, supported by one section 82 mm Mortars and that they had laid some mines in area QD 6091 on the west bank of Atrai river(156). The 21 Rajput captured Khansama on 13 December inspite of determined Pak resistance, suffering casualties of 9 ORs killed and 32, including one Officer and one JCO injured. They killed 25 Pak regulars in the battle and took one Major and 18 ORs of 48 Punjab (Pak) POW. Now, 12 Raj Rif with D Sqn 69 Armd Regt advanced from Khansama to Darwani (QD 7386) to outflank Saidpur in the evening of 13 December. The next day at 0900 hrs, Indian Air OP helicopters detected Pak troops and tank movement on the way, south of Khansama, towards Dangapara (QD 6286), probably to counter Indian threat to Saidpur(157). Indian Medium Guns dispersed the Pakistanis. At this stage, 5 Grenadiers, which had come under the command of 71 Mtn Bde on 14 December, occupied Dangapara in the evening that day. Next day, 12 Raj Rif cleared Pak troops, approximately Coy plus, supported by two troops of tanks, in Khakharia river area, while 5 Grenadiers reached Darwani Railway Station by 1600 hrs. On 16 December, one platoon patrol from 12 Raj Rif proceeded to Nilphamari (QD 7493) and found it vacant(158). Being surrounded from all sides, the Pak force now offered to surrender. At 1545 hrs on 17 December, Brig Shafi, Commander 23 Inf Bde, surrendered to Brig Kathpalia, at Zam Zam Airport in Saidpur. A total of 4,941 (111 Officers + 155 JCOs + 4,432 ORs + 79 NCsE + 164 civilians) surrendered at Saidpur with all their arms and equipment(159).

During the whole operation from 10 November to 17 December 1971, 71 Mtn Bde suffered a total of 59 dead, 277 wounded and 14 missing(160), as against Pak casualties of 134 killed, 60 wounded and 39(161) captured at the hands of 71 Mtn Bde.

9 Mtn Bde Operation

The 9 Mtn Bde, under the command of 6 Mtn Div, was employed in the north-eastern corner of the 33 Corps Sector, i.e., in Bhurungamari salient. It had under command three battalions - 5 Grenadiers, 4 Rajput, and 12 Garh Rif (from 24 November 1971). As already described, under Operation Ranjit the Brigade had cleared all Pak troops from the area north of Dharla river by 2 Dec 1971(162). Now, 9 Mtn Bde was asked to clear the Tista pocket and capture Lalmanirhat (QE 4089). The 8 Punjab (Pak) and two platoons EPCAF were holding Hatibandha (LZ 0715), on the northern border. It was expected that the Pak,

troops would fight delaying actions with maximum one company, assisted by irregulars at Bhotemari (LZ 0803), Kaliganj (QE 1397), Kakina (QE 1895) and Lalmanirhat (QE 3989)(163).

On 4 December, the Indian Air Force put Lalmanirhat airfield and Tista bridge out of commission. This facilitated rapid advance of the Indian troops with practically no opposition. The 12 Garh Rif with two coys of 103 BSF and five coys Mukti Fauj, already deployed 1000 yards north of Hatibandha (LZ 0715) occupied the objective (Hatibandha) on 5 December, after it had been vacated by the Pakistanis. But the Indian troops had already made arrangements to trap the Pakistanis withdrawing from Hatibandha(164). Two coys of 5 Grenadiers had established a road block in this area (LZ 063120) by 2100 hrs on 4 December and a Mukti Fauj Coy under the command of two instructors from the Commando Wing of Infantry School was ordered to go 12 km behind the Pakistani positions, and destroy the railway track north of Bhotemari (LZ 0803). The latter not only carried out demolitions of the railway track near Botemari, but also trapped a train carrying the Pakistanis pulling out of Hatibandha on night 4/5 December(165). On 5 December, 4 Rajput advanced to Bhotemari from Amtala (LZ 1716) and captured it along with a large quantity of arms and ammunition, after clearing the garrison there(166). Next day, 4 Rajput captured Kaliganj, and 5 Grenadiers advanced to Kakina and reached the outskirts of Lalmanirhat, after traversing a distance of approximately 35 km. Lalmanirhat, already vacated by the Pakistanis, had been occupied by Mukti Bahini, who unaware of 5 Grenadiers' advance, were firing in all directions, thus holding up 5 Grenadiers. The Grenadiers cleared the Pakistanis north of Tista river by 8 December(167).

On 6 December evening orders were issued placing 9 Mtn Bde less 5 Grenadiers under the command of 20 Mtn Div(168). On 11 December, one Coy group 12 Garh Rif ex 9 Mtn Bde with two demolition parties of 1 Fd Coy established a road block on the east bank of Kakra Nallah (QD 6457), east of Dinajpur, to dominate road and rail communications leading to Dinajpur (QD 5256). While clearing some opposition, the Coy group incurred a few casualties. In this action, two dead bodies of Pakistanis were recovered and 4 Razakars captured(169).

During the period 10 November to 17 December 1971, 9 Mtn Bde suffered casualties of 23 killed and 102 wounded, as against Pak casualties of 53 killed, 20 wounded, and 10 captured, inflicted by 9 Mtn Bde(170). Pak casualties upto 16 December 1971,

excluding the general surrender, in the 33 Corps Sector, were 6 Officers, 527 ORs, 5 EPCAF and 82 Razakars killed, 14 ORs wounded, and 25 Officers, 5 JCOs and 484 ORs captured(171). Besides the above, 22,573 all ranks and civilians surrendered to 33 Corps after the cease-fire(172). The Corps suffered 1,310 casualties - 15 Officers killed and 51 Officers wounded; 335 ORs killed, 876 ORs wounded; 31 ORs missing, and 2 NsCE wounded(173).

Assessment

The 33 Corps conducted its operations ably and accomplished its tasks within the given time-frame. They were not asked to cross the Jamuna (Brahmaputra) for advancing towards Dhaka, and as the ferries on this river were destroyed by IAF bombing, it was not possible to do so even if they wanted to. Although, it was planned to link up with elements of 2 Corps on the Hardinge Bridge after the capture of Bogra and Hilli, this could not be accomplished, as the Hardinge Bridge was partly destroyed. As the higher Commanders could not detach themselves from the El Alamein Syndrome of set-piece attacks in favour of manoeuvre tactics, unproductive attacks on un-important Pak strong-holds like Hilli were undertaken, inspite of some hesitation on the part of the Corps Commander and his Divisional Commander. The planning of the operations, it is claimed, was over-centralised at the Command level. Over-centralisation in planning created some lack of confidence in subordinate formations and inhibited local initiative. "Quite apart from the more tangible drawbacks of over-centralisation, this mutual loss of confidence reduces the ability of the system to maximise the combat power applied to the enemy at the pt of impact in the fd"(174).

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Franda, M., p.3.
2. Tayyeb, A., p.11.
3. Cressey, G.B., p.462.
4. Ahmad, N., (II), p.41.
5. Ibid., p.42.
6. Ibid., p.4
7. Ahmad, N., (I), p.154.
8. Ahmad, N., (II), pp.254-255.
9. Ibid., pp.255-256.
10. Gen Vas's Report.
11. Ahmad, N., (I), pp.157-158.
12. Ibid., (II), p.170.
13. The Times of India, 25 April 1971.
14. Ahmad, N., (II), pp.355-366.
15. According to the 1961 Census, the population was 50.85 millions.
16. Franda, M., p.3.
17. Tayyeb, A., p.15.
18. Pakistan - Basic Facts, Pakistan Publications, pp.9-10.
19. From Official Records.
20. Salik, S., p.123; Khan, F.M., pp.276-271. Also From Official Records.
21. From Official Records.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid; Krishnan, N., p.26.
27. According to Official Records, the numbers of Fighter Aircraft were: Gnat-36, Hunters-57, MiG-21 - 54 and Sukhoi-12. Details of the air and naval elements and their operations, are given in Chapters XIV and XV respectively.
28. From Official Records.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Maj Gen Lachhman Singh (Retd), (I), p.39.
41. From Official Records.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid. However another Official source gives 4 Sikh casualties 2 JCOs and 15 OR killed, and 52 OR wounded.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
According to Maj Gen L. Singh (Retd), Indian troops suffered 93 casualties in the Darsana battle. Singh, L., (Maj Gen Retd), (I), p.107.
72. From Official Records.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid. Maj Zahid of 18 Punjab and Maj Sherur Rehman, the tank commander, were awarded Sitara-i-Jurat for gallantry by Pakistan - Salik, S., p.145.
82. From Official Records.
83. It is not clear whether this move was made by the Div Cdr on his own, or in consultation with the Corps Cdr.
84. From Official Records.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.

91. Lt Gen J.S. Aurora's interview.
 92. From Official Records, & captured Pak Map.
 93. On 11 December, 57 Bde after withdrawing from Kushtia over the Hardinge Bridge joined up with 16 Div at Nator. Khan, F.M., p.178
 94. From Official Records.
 95. Ibid.
 96. Ibid.
 97. Ibid.
 98. Ibid.
 99. Lachhman Singh (Maj Gen Retd), (II), p.51.
 100. From Official Records.
 101. Ibid. However, another Official report says that 20 Maratha LI with Armour Gp supported by 64 Mtn Regt and a battery each from 38 Medium and 33 Lt Regts advanced towards Charkai at 0900 hrs on 5 December.
 102. Salik, S., p.153.
 103. From Official Records.
 104. Ibid.
 105. Ibid.
 106. Salik, S., p.154.
 107. From Official Records.
 108. Ibid.
 109. Ibid.
 110. Ibid.
 111. Ibid.
- The Indian casualties included men of 17 Kumaon and of 100 Mtn Regt.
112. From Official Records.
 113. Salik, S., p,155.
 114. Recoilless Rifle, a U.S. weapon supplied to Pakistan.
 115. From Official Records.
 116. Ibid.
 117. Ibid. According to Lt Gen Thapan, Commander 33 Corps, IAF attacks destroyed many ferry boats, as a result of which his troops could not cross the Jamuna. - Interview with Lt Gen Thapan on 26 April 1984.
 118. From Official Records.
 119. Ibid.
 120. Ibid.
 121. Ibid.
 122. Ibid.
 123. Ibid.
 124. Ibid.
 125. Ibid.
 126. Ibid.
 127. Ibid.
 128. Ibid.
 129. Ibid.
 130. Ibid.
 131. Ibid.
 132. Ibid.

133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. As 63 Cavalry had already departed for the Western Theatre, and most of the tanks of 69 Armd Regt were south of Bogra an ad hoc sqn was raised by repairing tanks, left behind by 63 Cav, and regrouped them with 66, 202 and 340 Mtn Bdes for the operation of 16 December - Lachhman Singh (Maj Gen, Retd) (I), pp.92-93.
149. Ibid.
150. Lachhman Singh (Maj Gen, Retd), (II), p.149.
151. From Official Records. According to another Official report the number of surrendered Pak ORs was 10,261, NCSE 282, and civilians 119.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid. This Bde operated under the command of 6 Mtn Div from 1st to 17th December 1971.
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid.
157. Ibid.
158. Ibid.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid.
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid.
163. Ibid.
164. Ibid.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid.
169. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid. Lt Gen Thapan's observation.

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