

HISTORY OF
THE CONFLICT WITH CHINA, 1962

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TO ALL WHO SERVED

THE CONFLICT WITH CHINA 1962

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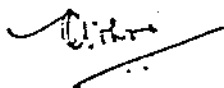
FOREWORD

India and China, both ancient civilisations, had lived as good neighbours for centuries. Ideological differences apart, the Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai syndrome held sway till about the late 50's, when signs of discord started showing up. In 1957, China linked Tibet with the mainland through the Aksai Chin road across Ladakh. She also laid claim over large areas of Indian territory in Ladakh and the erstwhile NEFA. The upsurge in Tibet and the consequent flight of the Dalai Lama to India, in Mar '59, introduced fresh complexities and misunderstandings.

The border dispute came to a head when, in the early 60's, India responded to the expanding Chinese presence in the border areas by establishing new posts on her side of the border. The presence of the two Armies at close proximity led to skirmishes which culminated in the subsequent conflict, which ended badly for India.

The present record of the Sino-India Conflict of 1962 highlights various political, strategic and tactical failures on our side. I trust that our military planners and tacticians will draw benefit from the lessons emerging from a study of this history.

For the past several years, we have been striving to finalise and publish the histories of the three major conflicts in which India has been involved since Independence. For various reasons and continuing sensitivities in certain quarters, it was felt that we should not as yet publish the history of the 1962 Conflict. After further consideration, it was agreed that this record may be circulated on restricted basis, so that the various military training institutions are able to derive benefit. I hope our senior training establishments and the College of Combat will specially gain from a critical appraisal of the account in this volume.


(N.N. VOHRA)

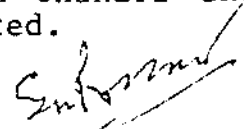
PREFACE

Together with the official History of the Indo-Pak War of 1965, this History of the Conflict with China, 1962, was prepared during the years 1986 to 1990. Thereafter it was vetted by the concerned ministries and agencies, and has now been cleared for limited circulation only.

This history is based on the voluminous records of the Army, the Air Force, and the Ministry of Defence, including the "top secret" Henderson Brooks Report made available to an author for the first time ever. Foot-notes giving the references to original sources and particular files have been deleted under instructions of Government. But they are available in the 'master copy' kept in the History Division, Ministry of Defence. Through interviews with important survivors of those momentous events, to whom we are very grateful indeed, a conscious effort has been made to ensure that even subjective versions received due consideration in arriving at the truth. Published books have also been examined, of course. The study is focussed on the military operations, and political developments are briefly mentioned only to provide the background to the conflict. Our effort has been to present a meticulously researched, balanced and objective account of these highly emotive and controversial events, without getting concerned with individual reputations.

The book is in two parts. Part I was researched and drafted by Dr. P.B. Sinha, and Part II by Col A.A. Athale, who had another assignment also. The work was discussed with me at every stage, modified as required, and then edited finally by me. I accept responsibility for the facts stated and opinions expressed, which do not necessarily reflect the views of the government of India, and do not commit it in any way.

Apart from the authors and the research team, I am grateful to Army HQ and Air HQ, and the Service officers associated with this study as technical advisers, for their cooperation and assistance. Dr. U.P. Thapliyal, Director, History Division, Ministry of Defence, has supervised the preparation of the final press copy of the book; only those familiar with this work can appreciate fully the arduous and painstaking labour involved in it. Shri R.C. Baluja and Shri T.R. Gulati, SROs, also deserve thanks for ably assisting him in this task. Shri D.C. Kashyap, Shri Girdhari Lal and Shri D. Tamil Selvan, provided competent secretarial assistance and worked tirelessly to produce a fair copy of the draft. The work was greatly facilitated and expedited by the active support and personal interest of the Defence Ministers and Secretaries (especially Shri S.K. Bhatnagar, Shri Naresh Chandra and Shri N.N. Vohra), to whom I feel deeply indebted.



S.N. PRASAD

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	-	Air Chief Marshal
Adm	-	Administration
AHQ	-	Army Headquarters
Air HQ	-	Air Headquarters
AM	-	Air Marshal
AOA	-	Air Officer Incharge Administration
AOC	-	Air Officer Commanding
AR	-	Asian Recorder/Assam Rifles
Arty	-	Artillery
AVM	-	Air Vice Marshal
AVSM	-	Ati Vishisht Seva Medal
Bde	-	Brigade
BGS	-	Brigadier General Staff
BHC	-	Battle Honour Claim/Committee
BM	-	Brigade Major
Bn	-	Battalion
Brig	-	Brigadier
Bty	-	Battery
Capt	-	Captain
Cav	-	Cavalry
CAS	-	Chief of the Air Staff
Cdr/Cmdr	-	Commander
CGS	-	Chief of the General Staff
CID	-	Central Intelligence Department
C-in-C	-	Commander-in-Chief
CO	-	Commanding Officer
COAS	-	Chief of the Army Staff
Col	-	Colonel
Coy	-	Company
DBO	-	Daulat Beg Oldi
Dets	-	Detachments
DFC	-	Distinguished Flying Cross
DG NCC	-	Director General National Cadet Corps
DIB	-	Director Intelligence Bureau

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Div	-	Division
DMI	-	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO	-	Director of Military Operations
DSO	-	Distinguished Service Order
DZ	-	Dropping Zone
EC	-	Eastern Command
Engrs	-	Engineers
FD	-	Frontier Division
Fd	-	Field
Flt Lt	-	Flight Lieutenant
Garh Rif	-	Garhwal Rifles
GD(N)	-	General Duties(Navigator)
GD(P)	-	General Duties(Pilot)
Gen	-	General
GOC	-	General Officer Commanding
GR(FF)	-	Gorkha Rifles(Frontier Force)
GSO	-	General Staff Officer
HAL	-	Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
Hav	-	Havildar
HER	-	Henderson Brooks Report
HQ/HQrs	-	Headquarters
Hrs	-	Hours
HU	-	Helicopter Unit
HY	-	Heavy
IAF	-	Indian Air Force
IB	-	Intelligence Bureau
IGAR	-	Inspector General Assam Rifles
Inf	-	Infantry
Int	-	Intelligence
JAK Militia/Rif	-	Jammu and Kashmir Militia/Rifles
JCO	-	Junior Commissioned Officer
Jem	-	Jemadar
Km	-	Kilometre
LAD	-	Light Aid Detachment
L Hav	-	Lance Havildar
LI	-	Light Infantry

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LMG	✓	Light Machine Gun
L Nk	-	Lance Naik
L of C	-	Line or Lines of Communication
Lt/Lieut	-	Lieutenant
Lt Regt (T)	-	Light Regiment(Towed)
Maj	-	Major
Mahar(MG)	-	Mahar(Machine Guns)
MC	-	Military Cross
MEA	-	Ministry of External Affairs
MG	-	Machine Gun
NMG	-	Medium Machine Gun
M of D	-	Ministry of Defence
MO	-	Military Operations
Mor Regt	-	Mortar Regiment
MP	-	Member of Parliament/Military Police
MT	-	Mechanical Transport/Military Training
Mtn	-	Mountain
MVC	-	Maha Vir Chakra
NCsE	-	Non Combatants Enrolled
NCO	-	Non Commissioned Officer
NEFA	-	North East Frontier Agency
Nk	-	Naik
OC	-	Officer Commanding
OP	-	Operation
OR	-	Other Rank
ORBAT	-	Order of Battle
Para	-	Parachute
PLA	-	Peoples Liberation Army
PLAF	-	Peoples Liberation Air Force
PM	-	Prime Minister
Pt	-	Point
PTI	-	Press Trust of India
PVC	-	Param Vir Chakra
PVSM	-	Param Vishisht Seva Medal
QMG	-	Quarter Master General
RAF	-	Royal Air Force

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Recce	-	Reconnaissance/Reconnoitre
Regt	-	Regiment
Retd	-	Retired
Rfn	-	Rifleman
SAA	-	Small Arms Ammunition/Scales of Ammunition
2 I/C	-	Second in Command
Sep	-	Sepoy
SITREPS	-	Situation Reports
Sp & Adm Coys	-	Support and Administration Companies
Sqn Ldr	-	Squadron Leader
TAC HQ	-	Tactical Headquarters
Tp	-	Troop
Tr	-	Track
UNO	-	United Nations Organisation
UP	-	Uttar Pradesh
VIP	-	Very Important Person
Vr C	-	Vir Chakra
VSM	-	Vishisht Seva Medal
WD	-	War Diary
Wg Cdr	-	Wing Commander

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph presents a detailed account of the conflict with China in 1962. Many books have already been published on those tragic events, including several memoirs or personal accounts of important participants, though they suffer from obvious handicaps of subjective approach and incomplete data base. This brief Introduction attempts to project the entire episode in historical perspective, and to submit an objective analysis and verdict.

It will be convenient to view the conflict from the political, the strategic and the tactical levels separately, though, of course, each impinged heavily on the others.

At the tactical level, while Tawang was lost due to the blunder of pushing up 7 Inf Bde to the Namkha Chu, the humiliating debacle on the Sela-Dirang-Bomdila front was caused entirely by the failure of the military commanders on the spot. Maj Gen A.S. Pathania and Lt Gen B.M. Kaul share the maximum blame. But Gen Thapar and Lt Gen Sen were also guilty of abdicating their responsibility, by refusing to issue orders to Pathania when Kaul was not available at the Corps HQ. For HQ 4 Div, Senge was certainly a better location than Dirang. But nobody seems to have considered locating 48 Bde at Thembang (with the troops positioned in depth along the Poshingla track) instead of Bomdila. If feasible, this would have kept the enemy far away from Bomdila or the vital road to Dirang and Sela. Where there was no major tactical mishandling, at Walong and in Ladakh, the Indian troops suffered defeat but no dishonour. Inevitably, it is the result at the tactical level which catches public attention and makes the headlines - the battle is always the pay-off.

The numerous tactical mistakes need not be elaborated here, as they are widely accepted, and discussed fully in the main text of this book.

Strategically, Walong, Tawang and the forward areas in Ladakh, were indefensible, in 1962, against a major attack. But, regarding eastern Ladakh in particular, it is difficult to think up any viable strategy to save it once the Chinese had stolen a march in logistics by quietly building the road through Aksai Chin. If those tiny outposts had not been hastily pushed up east of the upper Shyok and Chushul, the vacant areas would have been occupied all

the more easily by the Chinese, without firing a shot. The so-called 'Forward Policy', therefore, appears fully justified. But it went too far, got too reckless, and lost its balance in its later stages.

It may be recalled that, although the Chinese had already moved into Aksai Chin before 1961, a wide corridor of empty area separated the forward Chinese posts from the Indian positions in eastern Ladakh. But the Chinese were steadily pushing forward their posts, occupying more and more of the empty area. Indian posts were also, therefore, pushed forward in an effort to show that the remaining area was not empty. The basic assumption behind this forward policy was the belief, specially of the Intelligence Bureau, that the Chinese "were not likely to use force against any of our posts, even if they were in a position to do so".

At first, this conclusion appeared valid, and there were a number of cases of the Chinese patrols going back when they found some place already occupied by a few Indian troops. Encouraged by this, a large number of Indian posts were established quickly. These little posts were too small to withstand any attack and were not backed up by proper bases for supplies or reinforcements in case of need.

The Chinese also quickened the forward movement of their posts, and soon the empty area between the two armies disappeared. When some Indian posts, for example in the Galwan Valley, were established outflanking the Chinese posts, the Chinese attitude changed and became more threatening. Instead of going back when they encountered an Indian post, the Chinese started surrounding the post to cut off its land route of supply, and even opened fire at a number of places. The new development clearly showed that the basic assumption behind the forward policy decision was no longer valid, and a serious reappraisal of the new situation should have been undertaken by Army HQ and the Government of India. This reappraisal, however, never took place and the situation was allowed to drift. Whereas the earlier intention of the 'forward policy' was to prevent any further advance by the Chinese into any empty area, it was now decided to push back the Chinese from posts they had already occupied, as on the Namka Chu in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh. Whereas the Indian posts in Ladakh earlier had orders to fire only when fired upon, on 22 July 1962, Army HQ gave discretion to all post commanders to fire on the Chinese if their posts were even threatened. In the Tawang sector, 7 Inf Bde was ordered to push back the Chinese from Thag La ridge.

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To push them back was simply not possible, as the Chinese were much stronger along the line of control both in Ladakh and in Arunachal Pradesh. In 1959, the People's Liberation Army in the Ladakh sector was estimated at more than one regiment or brigade, and so the Western Command projected a requirement of one brigade of five battalions in Ladakh. The Chinese further reinforced their troops, and after Exercise Sheel, Western Command required one full division to defend Ladakh. But by August 1962, only four battalions could be positioned in Ladakh due to logistic difficulties. The Srinagar to Leh road was completed only in October 1961, and was blocked by snow during the winter months. Airlift capability of IAF was also strictly limited. Small airfields were available only at Leh, Chushul, Thojs in the Shyok Valley and at Fukche near Dungti in the Demchok area. Most of the numerous other posts had to be supplied by air drops. Even the four battalions available in Ladakh were distributed in penny packets in the numerous posts in the forward areas. These posts were bound to get over-run if the Chinese chose to attack them. But the Government of India and Army HQ continued to believe that the Chinese would not attack. Disaster was inevitable if their faith was belied.

Military strategy, however, is always, and quite rightly, the hand-maiden of politics. And the debacle of 1962, was basically a political failure. The political factors, therefore, deserve close attention.

The Indian defence set up after Independence lacked institutionalised support for decision-making at the national level. Well established and well respected agencies providing politico-military linkages were just not there. It was personality-oriented decision making in the vital area of national security. That is how Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister, and B.N. Mullick, the Intelligence Bureau Chief, acquired near total control over the national defence policy, and even the disposition of troops in the forward areas. Krishna Menon in particular received maximum blame for the debacle, and lost his job. A brilliant intellectual, he was also selfless, hardworking and well informed. But he was arrogant, abrasive, intolerant, and politically a light weight. Above all, he was a visionary. He has been held guilty, and rightly so. But it is also necessary to understand why he acted as he did, and what he was trying to achieve.

Krishna Menon, it appears, wanted to change the basic defence posture of India. This posture had changed little after the British left in 1947. The

army still remained a close-knit professional body deliberately isolated from the citizen. Its predominant motive force remained esprit de corps and not identification with the people. Some day it may even act like the Praetorian Guards of the Roman Empire. The Indian Army trained and fought like the British Army, unimaginative, elephantine, rule-bound and road-bound. Armies of Germany, Japan, USSR or China were vastly better war machines, and patterned very differently. Again, the Indian armed forces were dependent on imported arms and equipment, which was a critical weakness, and also hampered growth of local industries. Krishna Menon wanted to change it all.

To reduce India's dependence on imported weapons and equipment, he created a separate Department of Research and Development in his Ministry under a Scientific Advisor from 1 January 1958. A Defence Production Planning Committee was set up in 1957; the Defence Minister's (Production) Committee started working in 1959. Bharat Electronics, struggling in its birth pangs since 1954, was pulled up to start production in 1960. The Mazagon Docks, the Garden Reach Workshops and the HAL were all acquired in the public sector through Krishna Menon's initiative. In May 1962, Moscow was persuaded to agree to set up in India the facilities for the manufacture of modern MiG fighter planes. This was Krishna Menon at his best.

At the same time, he tried to change drastically the operational doctrine - indeed the very ethos of the Indian army, which was the preponderant element in the armed forces of India. Perhaps he wanted to model it after the Peoples Liberation Army of China, more egalitarian, flexible, closer to the people. He wanted it to participate directly in nation building activities, just as the PLA engaged itself in raising crops and building bridges and schools in peace time.

Such basic changes required first of all a committed, or at least pliant, band of army officers in key positions. So mediocre Thapar was selected instead of the doughty Thorat as the Army Chief, and Bijji Kaul was made the CGS. Kaul soon collected a band of committed officers. They may have lacked ideological orientation, but were willing to follow him blindly. The old guard was steadily side-lined.

The required political support was amply available, for Menon and Kaul had the full backing of Prime Minister Nehru.

To carry through this transformation of the national defence set up, a decade of peace was

absolutely essential: For establishing indigenous weapons manufacture, money had to be found by cutting arms imports. The armed forces would be short of equipment and stores for several years till the new arms factories started producing. The officer cadre was a house divided within itself till the new breed fully took over. A period of transition was inevitable, during which the fighting machine would not be fully efficient and would be vulnerable.

Therein seems to lie the basic cause of the debacle of 1962. India failed to avoid a war during the transition period. It became a typical example of changing horses in mid-stream. Lulled by faulty political assessment and wrong intelligence forecasts, the country got caught in a war when least prepared.

Indeed, many, including Lt Gen Daulet Singh, GOC-in-C, Western Command, argued that the only safe course would be to leave, for the time being, the Chinese in possession of the Indian territory they had already grabbed, and to consolidate the areas still in Indian possession by pushing roads forward, building up strong bases and inducting a division of troops into Ladakh to match the Chinese strength. But this sound advice could not be accepted by Army HQ, which was being pressed by the Government of India, on the IB's advice, to push forward. The Government of India, in turn, was under tremendous pressure from the Parliament, the Press and the public. Sadly unfamiliar with military matters, these vociferous and strident opinions accused the Government of lack of will, and insisted that the Indian territory already occupied by China must be liberated at the earliest, if necessary by armed might. The debates in Parliament and the editorials in the national dailies from 1960 to 1962 make shocking reading today. In this dilemma, the Government appears to have indulged in some wishful thinking, and continued to assume, in the face of mounting evidence, that the Chinese would draw back from the brink of war if India put up a brave front.

Another serious mistake, really caused again by the people's ignorance, was the policy decision not to use the air force against the Chinese. As discussed in Chapter X, air attacks on the advancing Chinese columns and bases in Tibet would have been advantageous to India, not only militarily but also psychologically and in the politico-diplomatic field. It was not done, because even the few retaliatory Chinese air raids on Calcutta, Guwahati or Dhanbad might result in panic and large scale exodus. The decision-makers felt that the citizens in their ignorance would take such enemy air raids as proof of Indian defeat.

A study of the 1962 conflict, as also of the 1965 and 1971 wars, therefore clearly brings out the imperative necessity and urgency of educating the people about the basics of war and familiaring them with military matters, if a democratic state is to be safe and strong.

The 1962 conflict appeared to be, and was called, a debacle. It, however, involved only a small fraction of the Indian Army. The great bulk of it, holding the western front in Punjab and Kashmir, was not tested. The navy and air force remained out of it, except for air supply and transport. But its politico-military fall out was significant. Krishna Menon had to go. With him went out his vision of revamping the army. The old guard, represented by officers like J.N. Chowdhary, Harbakhsh Singh and Sam Manekshaw, was rehabilitated. Expansion and rearmament of the forces had to be started, again with imported equipment. The armed forces soon recovered their monolithic character, morale and elan. The test came soon enough in the 1965 war with Pakistan. The army and the IAF stumbled through it in typical British fashion; successfully thwarting Pakistan's big effort to change the status quo through war. The Nathu La incident of 1967 conveyed the same message to the Chinese. When the forward Chinese troops suddenly opened machine gun fire on 11 September 1967, inflicting heavy casualties on the Indian troops working in the open, the Indian troops replied with mortar fire. When Chinese mortars also opened fire, the GOC 17 Div - the redoubtable Sagat Singh - blasted the Chinese positions and bases with 5.5" medium guns, and moved up more units. The Chinese agreed to a cease-fire on 16 September. They had lost an estimated 400 troops killed or wounded, compared to Indian losses of 65 killed and 145 wounded. Finally, a clear military victory over Pakistan was achieved in 1971, though the expected transformation of the political scene proved elusive.

In the political and diplomatic fields too, significant changes came through the 1962 episode, bringing more realism. Same was the case with the civil-military equation within the government. The people's ignorance about military matters, however, continued unchanged. Each for its own reason, the concerned departments of government remained wedded to total secrecy, unmindful of the clear needs of national security.

In the long history of war, defeat has always proved a better teacher than victory. The 1962 episode proved it once again. But no nation can afford to have many such teachers.

CHAPTER - I

THE NORTHERN BORDER

SINO-INDIAN BOUNDARY

India's northern border stretches from the north-western tip of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in the West to the north-eastern point of Arunachal Pradesh (earlier called North-East Frontier-Agency or NEFA) in the East. It has been a traditional frontier, in the sense that it has remained where it now runs for nearly three thousand years. The areas along this border have always been part of India(1). India's northern border in its north-western section is contiguous with Afghanistan and Pakistan and some part of it in the central region (marking the borders of the States of U.P., Bihar and Sikkim) touches the western, southern and eastern borders of Nepal. But for the above-mentioned portions, the whole of our northern frontier touches Sinkiang and Tibet regions of China. The entire length of about 4,250 km of the Sino-Indian border, including the 482-km long Bhutan-Tibet section(2), has long been recognised by custom or defined by treaty, or both. Although this border has largely remained undemarcated, it follows the geographical principle of watershed which, in most places, is the crest of the high mountains.

This long border can be divided into three main sectors, viz., the Western, the Central and the Eastern sector.

Western Sector - The north-western, northern and eastern boundary of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir with Sinkiang and Tibet regions of China extending to about 1770 km forms the Western Sector of the India-China border. It starts from the tri-junction of the boundaries of India, China and Afghanistan and runs eastward through the Kilik Pass, Mintaka Pass, Kharchanai Pass, Parpik Pass and the Khunjerab Pass. After that, the boundary lies along a spur down to the north-western bend of Shaksgam or Muztagh river, which it crosses at that point and ascends the crest line of the Aghil mountains. It then runs along the crest of the Aghil watershed through the Aghil Pass, the Marpo Pass and then to the Karakoram Pass (Long. 77°50' E and Lat. 35°31' N)

From the Karakoram Pass, the boundary lies along the watershed between the Shyok and the Yarkand rivers and runs through the Qara Tagh Pass to cross the eastern bend of the Qara Qash river and to ascend the main Kun Lun mountains. Thereafter, the boundary runs along the main crest of the Kun Lun mountains and then descends in a south-westerly direction down to Lanak Pass.

South of the Lanak Pass, the boundary passes through the Kone Pass and Kepsang Pass which lie along the watershed between the Chang Chenmo and Chumesang in India and the streams flowing into Dyap Tso in Tibet. Thereafter, the boundary runs along the southern bank of the Chumesang and the eastern bank of the Chang-lung Lungpa, skirts the western extremity of the eastern half of Pangong Lake, cuts across the eastern part of Spanggur Lake and follows the northern and eastern watershed of the Indus River through Chang Pass upto the Jara Pass. Subsequently, it turns south-westwards, crosses the Indus about 8 km south-east of Demchok, and following the watershed between Hanle river and the tributaries of Suttlej river, it passes through the Charding Pass, Imis Pass and the Kyungzing Pass. Thereafter, it turns westward and crosses the Pare river about 8 km south of Chumar to reach Gya Peak(3), marking the limit of the Western Sector.

The boundary in the Western sector has been sanctified by custom and tradition. It was first confirmed by the Treaty of Tingmosgang of 1684(4) signed after a war between Ladakh and Tibet. This traditional boundary was recognised and reaffirmed by a treaty signed by representatives of the Dogra ruler of Kashmir on the one hand and of the Dalai Lama of Lhasa and the Emperor of China on the other. Significantly, the treaty of 1842 referred to the Ladakh's boundary "as fixed from ancient times"(5). It clearly meant that the Ladakh-Tibet boundary was well-known and it did not require any formal delimitation. After the suzerainty of the present State of Jammu and Kashmir came under the (British) Government of India under the Treaty of Amritsar (1847), Lord Harding, Governor General of India, wrote to both Tibet and China in 1847 to appoint a joint Boundary Commission to formally fix the Ladakh-Tibet border. But the Chinese felt no need for such a step and replied that "the borders of those territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed so that it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any measures for fixing them"(6). The agreement signed in 1858 between Dewan Basti Ram on behalf of the Kashmir State and Mangual Islae on behalf of Tibet(7) further confirmed the traditional border. The area was surveyed by Indian officials, and Indian maps began to show the boundary with precision. Even the official Chinese maps of 1893, 1917 and 1919 showed the boundary exactly as depicted in official Indian maps today.

Central Sector

The middle portion of the northern frontier stretches from the Gya Peak at north-eastern point of Himachal Pradesh (where it meets south-eastern tip of the Ladakh region of the State of J&K) to the tri-junction of Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet. The Indo-Tibetan section of this middle portion can be sub-divided into two parts which are separated by Nepal. They can be called the West Central and the East Central sections.

The 225-km long northern and eastern border of the Indian State of Sikkim with southern Tibet(8), and then the 482-km long Bhutan-Tibet border(9), constitute the East Central sector of the northern border. For various geo-political and strategic reasons, China has not questioned the borders of Sikkim and Bhutan. But it has created incidents along the West Central section from time to time. We would, therefore, not concern ourselves with the East Central part of the middle sector of our northern border in the context of the Sino-Indian problem.

In the West Central section of the northern border or the Central Sector of the Sino-Indian boundary as it is generally referred to, the natural boundary marks off the Indian States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh from Ari district of Tibet. Beginning from the Gya Peak the boundary in this sector follows the watershed between the Spiti and Pare rivers and crosses the Pare river about 1.6 km south of the village of Kaurik. South of the Pare river the frontier ascends one of the ranges leading to the high peak of Leo Pargial, crosses the Sutlej at its bend, and following the Zaskar range lies through the Shipki Pass, the Raniso Pass and the Shimdang Pass. Thereafter, it follows the main watershed between the Sutlej and the Ganges basins and lies through the Thaga Pass, Tsang Chok Pass, Muling Pass, Mana Pass, Niti Pass, Tun Jun Pass, Kungri Bingri Pass, Darma Pass and the Lipu Lekh Pass, to join the trijunction of the India, Nepal and Tibet boundaries(10).

The boundary with Tibet in this section of the Central sector "is also traditional and follows well-defined geographical features. Here, too, the boundary runs along well-defined watersheds between the river systems in the south and the west, on the one hand, and north and east on the other. This delineation is confirmed by old revenue records and maps and by the exercise of India administrative authority upto the boundary line for centuries"(11).

The traditional and customary boundary between India and Tibet in the Spiti area was confirmed by the treaties of 1684 and 1842 because those treaties had recognised the traditional border between Tibet and Ladakh and in those years Spiti and Lahul areas formed part of Ladakh(12). The boundary in the Barahoti area of Uttar Pradesh was also the subject of diplomatic correspondence and exchanges in 1889-1890 and in 1914, which resulted in effect in a confirmation of the traditional and customary Indian alignment in this area(13). The traditional boundary from Shipki Pass to the tri-junction of India, Nepal and Tibet was also confirmed in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet Region of China signed on 29 April 1954. Article IV of the Agreement stated:-

"Traders and pilgrims of both countries may travel by the following passes:-

Shipki La Pass(14), (2) Mana Pass, (3) Niti Pass, (4) Kungri Bingri Pass, (5) Darma pass, and (6) Lipu Lekh Pass"(15).

Eastern Sector

In the eastern sector, the Arunachal Pradesh-Tibet boundary is a natural, traditional and administrative dividing line as in other sectors. It runs east from the eastern extremity of Bhutan to the tri-junction of the China-Burma-India borders near the Diphu Pass. In 1913-1914, Captain Bailey had carried out extensive surveys in the area to determine the line separating the territorial jurisdiction of southern Tibet and of the Government of India in northern part of what was then known as North East Frontier Tract(16). The border thus determined was formalised at a Tripartite Conference of representatives of Government of India, Tibet and China held at Shimla in 1913-1914. The boundary line as agreed upon at Shimla and reaffirmed formally by the Indian and Tibetan plenipotentiaries - was incorporated in a map in the scale of roughly 1:500,000, attached to a draft convention and initialled by the Chinese representative also. The border-line as delineated is called the McMahon Line(17) after the name of the British Indian representative at the "Simla Conference". The McMahon Line, thus, did not create a new border. It merely confirmed the long-standing, ethnic, natural and administrative boundary in the area.

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It can, in fact, be argued that, at the time of the 'Simla Conference' in 1914, Tibet was an independent country, having thrown off the Chinese yoke and driven away the Chinese "Amban" or Governor from Lhasa in 1912. Tibetan independence was a reality, though China had not accepted it formally, just as Pakistan refused to accept formally the independence of Bangladesh in December 1971. Tibet remained a sovereign independent country in fact - in spite of continued Chinese claims of some sort of suzerainty - till the Chinese armies reoccupied Tibet in 1950. In the 'Simla Conference' therefore, the signature or initials of the Chinese representative on the document depicting the boundary between Tibet and India could be only in the capacity of a witness, and ratification by the Chinese Government at Beijing (Peking) was not essential to the validity of the border agreement between Tibet and India. For its own imperial reasons, mainly to avoid chances of independent Tibet falling under influence of Czarist Russia feared by the British Government, Whitehall continued the myth of Chinese overlordship over Tibet. But myths cannot change reality. The McMahon Line, therefore, has full legal validity, apart from the fact that it only depicted the existing traditional boundary.

The Indian border in this sector runs mostly along the crest of the high Himalayan range which forms the natural frontier between the Tibetan Plateau in the north and the lower hills in the south. Starting from the Indian-Bhutan Tibet tri-Junction the boundary follows on to the Mela Ridge and runs along the crest of the Thag La. The boundary then crosses the Nyamjang Chu to the east of Khinzemane, enters the Zanglung Ridge of the Great Himalayas and runs upto Bum La. From Bum La the line runs along Nakchutpa to Tsona Chu. It further proceeds eastward after crossing the Tsona Chu and follows the crest of the Great Himalayan range which is also the watershed between the Chayul Chu in Tibet and the Kameng, Kamala and Khru rivers in India. It then proceeds east and north-east, crossing the Subansiri river and then the Tsari river just south of Migyitun. Here, the line runs between Migyitun and Longju. The boundary continues in a generally north-easterly direction till it crosses Tunga Pass. The boundary then runs east, crosses the Dihang river and ascends the watershed between Chimdru Chu and Rongta Chu in Tibet and the Dibang and its tributaries in India. The line then crosses the Yonggyap Pass and the Kangri Karpo Pass in this section. It then crosses the Lohit river few kilometres south of Rima, and joins the tri-junction of the India, Burma and China boundaries at Peak 15283 ft about 8 kms north of the Diphu Pass(18).

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF BORDERING AREAS

Broadly speaking, all the areas along the vast Sino-Indian frontier are very sparsely or not at all inhabited because of the very high altitudes and inhospitable climate.

Western Sector

In the western sector of the Sino-Indian boundary lies the Ladakh region of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh comprises the region astride the Indus river including Nubra-Shyok valleys and Aksai Chin-Lingzitan Plateau in the north and the sub-division of Kargil and Zaskar in the South. Ladakh is bounded by the stupendous Kun Lun ranges in the north and the mighty wall of the Himalayan Range in the south. In the east, it is separated from the Lake district of Chang Thang, Rudok and Chumurti (all in Tibet) by high mountain ranges, and to its west lies that part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir which is presently under illegal occupation of Pakistan(19). Its north-western part Baltistan extends northward to eastern Gilgit and the frontier with Sinkiang region of China roughly along the Kun Lun range. Its north-eastern part, the high-plateau land of Aksai Chin, borders the Ngari region of Tibet and its southern part adjoins the Rudok Province of Tibet.

Ladakh is a land of high mountains with a total area of approx. 97,872 sq km. The average height of mountains is about 5,100 metres(20). No other part of the Himalayas is traversed by so many high ranges running diagonally and flanking trough-like, longitudinal basins. The Nanga Parbat (8,126 metres), K-2 (8,611 metres), Hidden Peak (8,068 metres), Broad Peak (8,047 metres), Gasherbrum II (8,035 metres), Rakaposhi (7,788 metres), Saser Kangri (7672 metres) Haramosh (7,397 metres) - all are situated in this area(21).

The Indus is the principal river of the region which flows in a general north-west direction through the whole length of the region in a deep through between the trans-Himalayan range on its left bank and the Kailash and Karakoram ranges on the right bank. Its chief tributaries on the left bank are Hanle, Zaskar, Dras and Aster rivers, while on the right bank it receives the Shyok, the Shigar and the Gilgit rivers(22). While the Shigar is formed by the junction of the Basha and Bralda rivers, the Shyok receives the waters of Chip Chap, Galwan and Chang Chenmo rivers in its upper reaches and of the Nubra in the lower reaches. The Ladakh Range separates the Indus valley from the valley of the Shyok.

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The natural features of Ladakh can best be described by two native terms, under one or other of which every part is included, viz., Changtang, i.e., "northern" or "high plain", where the amount of level ground is considerable, and rong, i.e., "deep valley" where totally different conditions prevail(23). The former predominates in the east gradually diminishing westward.

In the north-east corner of Ladakh are located the Aksai Plain and the Lingzitung Plain. The desert plain of Lingzitung is, in effect, a southern extension of the Aksai Chin. The two are separated only by the Logzung Mountains of low height and narrow breadth. Hence, the northern and southern plains are generally called by a combined name of Aksai Chin - Lingzitung Plateau. In the geological past this plateau was a lake. In course of time, it dried up or silted up leaving a group of small and big lakes having no outlet, with the result that whatever precipitation takes place it is either soaked up by the parched land or drained into these lakes. The area is almost flat with average height between 4,880 metres and 5,180 metres above the sea level(24).

Aksai Chin (which literally means 'desert of white stones') is a vast desert of salt. Whatever rain or snow falls here dries up on the plateau itself. Absence of fresh water and a dried up land full of salt lakes and marshes scares away people from going there. Obviously, Aksai Chin is a soda mine. That is why it is also called the Soda Plain. The statement: "not a single blade of grass grows there" is almost true of the whole of the plateau. The lakes are devoid of fish and worms and the sky is clear of birds. Little animal life exists in the Aksai Chin - Lingzitung Plain(25). The Kun Lun Range, the Ladakh-Sinkiang boundary range is the northern boundary of the plateau. The Kun Lun is the highest and best defined range of all the ranges surrounding the Aksai Chin-Lingzitung Plateau.

In the south of the Aksai Chin - Lingzitung Plateau are situated the Nischu mountains, a continuation of Karakoram Mountains. Their southern edge forms a mountainous chain dividing the waters of Lingzitung from those of the Chang Chenmo river.

In the west of Aksai Chin there is a tract of high ground running along the right bank of the Qara Qash river which keeps the plateau separated from the river. The Qara Qash river originates at a place a few kilometres on the south-west of Sumdo. It follows the north-east direction. Along the left bank of the Qara Qash river there is a mountain structure pierced

by one of its tributaries to the south-west of Qizil Jilga. At the cutting, a bifurcation branches off from the structure making a fork the western tongue of which forms the eastern boundary of what is called the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) sector. The Chip Chap Pass is its main depression. The main mountain chain, after the cutting, resumes its course and runs along the left bank of the Qara Qash river. The average height of this mountain system is nearly 5,500 metres(26). The Qara Qash river after having completed its course for about 130 km cuts its way through the southern Kun Lun Range and enters Sinkiang. The Qara Qash valley in its upper reaches is broad and shallow. Hence, the river is fordable at many places(27). In the Qara Qash valley the dryness of the adjacent Aksai Chin - Lingzitan Plateau is not found. There is plenty of grass and water for the animals. But this phenomenon is confined to summer months only. In the winter the upper valley is deserted and quiet, while in the lower part, with the availability of ordinary means for keeping warm, man can manage to live more easily(28).

The Chip Chap river valley, the Despang basin and the surrounding areas west of the Qara Qash river form the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) sector. The DBO area is a depression of the Karakoram system. The tract is surrounded by the bifurcations of the Karakoram Mountains in the north, east and west and by the main Karakoram Range in the south. It is drained by the Chip Chap river emanating from the northern slope of one of the bifurcations of the Karakoram Mountains, which separate the waters of the Chip Chap and the Murgo rivers from those of the Qara Qash to the north-west and the Galwan to the south. The DBO area is highly mountainous and the height of Daulat Beg Oldi is over 5000 metres(29). The place is situated in the Despang plains at a distance of 16 km south-east of the Karakoram Pass (approx. 5,575 metres). From Leh, there are two routes to Daulat Beg Oldi, one, via the Shyok river, known as the winter route; and the other, across the Saser La, used during summer. Both routes converge on Murgo(30).

In the north of the Chip Chap river there are two mountain ranges or ridges. Through one of the ridges, passes a mountain stream, called Lungnak Lungspa, which joins the Chip Chap river about 8 kms east of Daulat Beg Oldi. This stream is separated from the DBO nullah, which springs from the Karakoram Pass, by a hill feature. The nullah joins the Chip Chap river to the west of the Daulat Beg Oldi. In the south of the Chip Chap river there are two mountain ranges - Range I and the Karakoram Range. There is also a stream, which may be called the Southern

Stream(31) which flows parallel to the Chip Chap and then joins it. In the south of this stream is the Murgo river. After flowing to the west, the Murgo river joins the Shyok river in the south of the Murgo Camp. Still further south there is the Nachhu Chu which springs from the mountains in the east. These mountains form the watershed between the Chip Chap and the Qara Qash basins. The Nachhu Chu flows west and joins the Shyok river near Sultan Chushku. It is here that the Shyok, after receiving the waters of the Chip Chap and having pushed through glaciers, comes out of the snowy region.

The western part of the DBO area is covered with glaciers, the vagaries of which have made the Shyok valley an inaccessible and hazardous place.

In the DBO area, there is plenty of drinking water in summer months. Tibetan grass is also available near the water points which are many in the season. Even in the perpetually snow-covered western part of the DBO area explorers have noticed fresh and crystal clear water collected in many places(31).

The Raskam river valley extends from the Tagdumbash Pamir in the west to the Karakoram Pass in the east. It is bounded on the north by the Kun Lun mountains and on the south by the Muztagh and the Aghil-Karakoram. "The whole of this tract", noted Younghusband, "is a vast mass of lofty mountains and even the lowest valley - bottoms are situated at a very considerable altitude above the sea level"(33). It is entirely unpopulated and uncultivable, except in a few places along the Yarkand river. "The mountain summits are covered with perpetual snow, and their sides.....are always utterly devoid of vegetation"(34).

The central region of eastern Ladakh is bounded by the Chang Chenmo river in the north and the Indus, flowing from the south-east to north-west, bounds it in the south. Like other areas of Ladakh, it is highly mountainous. Two big lakes - Pangong (elevation approx 4,270 metres) and Spanggur are the special features of this region. The Ladakh-Tibet boundary passes virtually through the middle of these lakes. Lanak La (approx. 5,485 metres), Kone La, Domjor La, Chang La and Jara La are important border passes in this area.

The area south of Indus, extending from Demchok in the east to Kargil in the west, is the southern region of Ladakh. On the eastern and south-eastern side the region touches the border with Tibet. The Zaskar Range encloses it towards south-west. The

region is mountainous with many peaks ranging in height between 5,000 and 7,000 metres with several glaciers. But as the valley itself is at a great height, the slopes of high mountains are moderate. It is cut up by several streams, like Zaskar, South Shigar and Hanle. The valleys of these streams are generally broad and their current slow. The eastern part of the region, astride the border with Tibet, is called Rupshu, where there is a small inland drainage basin with a salt encrusted lake - Tso Morari - in the centre(35). About 8 km to the west of the place where the Indus enters India is located the town of Demchok. Further north-west is located Hanle on the west bank of the river of the same name. Hanle sub-division is the area contiguous to the Tibetan territory. The Ladakh Range passes through its middle. The area is very remote rugged and sparsely populated(36). Charding La, Imis La and Kyungzing La are the important border passes located in this region of Ladakh.

Leh, at a height of 3,522 metres, is the capital of Ladakh. In 1962, Leh was connected with Srinagar by a fair weather "access road" (without surfacing, but with some strengthening of curves on route) by Army engineers under 'Project Beacon'(37). From Srinagar, the road ran towards north and then north-eastward. After criss-crossing the river Sind it reached Sonamarg. Continuing its north-easterly ascent, through towering peaks lining the route most of the way, the road crossed Zoji La (approx. 3,530 metres) and passed through Dras before reaching Kargil. From Kargil the road took a south-easterly turn, crossed the 4100 metre high Fotu La and then turned north and crossed the Indus at Khalsi (Khala tse) about midway between Kargil and Leh. Thereafter, it hugged the valley of the Indus most of the way and ran almost parallel to the river along its right bank. After passing through Nimu where the river Zaskar joined the Indus from the south, the road terminated its 389-km(38) journey at Leh.

It is obvious that the logistical problems of Leh were enormous. It was situated at a distance of over 820 km from the nearest railhead, Pathankot. While the route from Srinagar to Leh (389 km) was not fully developed and was subject to vagaries of weather, the road from Pathankot to Jammu(112 km) and then Jammu to Srinagar (about 320 km) was only somewhat better, in that it was also liable to be disrupted by snowfall and landslides beyond Jammu.

There was a subsidiary route to Leh from Manali. It passed through Lahul, Rupshu and Zaskar areas before reaching Leh. The 400-km(39) route crossed Rohtang Pass (approx. 3,980 metres), and Baralacha Pass (approx. 4,890 metres) and was even more undeveloped, being just a mule track.

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Except for the road connecting Leh with Srinagar, modern road communication was virtually non-existent in Ladakh. Stone avalanches, which were of constant occurrence in the hills after rain and during the period the winter snows were melting away, greatly hindered the work of road building in the area, apart from the extreme altitudes and sparse population.

The scenery and climate of Ladakh are entirely different from the Kashmir Valley. The joint effects of elevation and isolation amidst snow mountains produce perhaps the most singular climate in the known world. Rain clouds are held up and forced back in the Kashmir Valley by the Himalayan wall; so that Ladakh gets very scanty rainfall, about 15 cm in the west and only 5 cm in the east, every year(40). In January and February the air is generally calm, and April and May are the windiest months of the year.

The atmosphere in the Indus Valley is remarkably clear. Not a speck of cloud is to be seen in the deep blue sky. Burning heat by day is succeeded by piercing cold at night and everything is parched by the extreme dryness of the air(41). There is generally a difference of more than 33°C in temperature between spots exposed to the sun and those in the shade. The extreme range of recorded temperature is not less than 60°C(42). January and February are the coldest months, and July-August is the warmest period of the year in Ladakh. In Leh, the temperature falls below -25°C in winter and it rises above 34°C in summer.

Central Sector

Lahul & Spiti and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh and the districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithoragarh of Uttar Pradesh lie along the Central Sector of the Indo-Tibetan boundary. The whole region of the Central Sector, covering about 38,000 sq km, is a mountainous tract. It contains all the three Himalayan sections, viz., the Sivalik, Himachal (lesser Himalaya) and Himadri (great Himalaya)(43). These ranges are, however, by no means uniform or parallel to each other in their whole course. Innumerable branches of various height and extent strike off from each range in every point and direction(44). The intervals between the bases of the mountains are extremely small. The high mountain ranges and narrow river valleys are the two important features of this area.

The slopes of the mountains are characteristically stony and bare. The whole Lahul

and Spiti area is a cold desert whose bare rocks and steep slopes stare the visitor in the face. The highest village of Spiti is Gette, situated at a height of about 4,270 metres, one of the highest in the world(45).

Of the three Himalayan sections, the Sivalik range proper, with its forest covered slopes and flat summits rising to 900 and 1000 metres, extends uninterruptedly for about 74 km between the Ganga and the Yamuna. The Himachal section comprises mainly two linear ranges, the Mussorie and the Nag Tibba. The Himadri contains about 6,600 sq km of Himal, snow fields. The Gangotri Himal feeds the Gangotri and Kedarnath glaciers, and the Nandadevi Himal feeds the Milan and Pindari glaciers. Nilkantha stands directly above Badrinath, rising in a single awe - inspiring sweep to a beautiful snow-capped cone-summit. Nandadevi (7,817 metres), the highest peak in the region, stands within a vast amphi-theatre, 112 km in circumference. The other peaks are Dunagiri (7,056 metres) and Trisul (7,120 metres) standing on its northern and southern arms respectively. Further west lies the Kamet Himal with towering Kamet peak (7,756 metres). Above the Gangotri Himal there are Satopanth (7,094 metres), Badrinath (7,138 metres), Kedarnath (6,940 metres), Gangotri (6,614 metres) and Srikanta (6,728 metres) peaks. In Kulu Valley there are two main peaks, viz., Indrasan (6,220 metres) and Deo Tibba (6,001 metres). Most of the rivers, such as Ganga, Yamuna, Sutlej and their tributaries have their origin in this region(46).

The people on both the sides of the border had been freely using the border passes - Shipki, Mana, Niti, Kingri Bingri, Darma and Lipu Lekh for their trade and social get-together(47).

Eastern Sector

The Indo-Tibetan border in the Eastern Sector, i.e., the McMahon Line, spans from tri-junction of India-Bhutan-Tibet (south of the Me La) in the west to tri-junction of India-China-Burma (east of the Diphu Pass) in the east. The McMahon Line marks the border along the highest crest of the Himalayan range on the basis of the watershed principle adopted for determining firm international borders. North of the McMahon Line lies the Tibetan Plateau. The land south of the boundary is the mountainous territory of Arunachal Pradesh earlier known as North East Frontier Agency or NEFA. It is separated from the river Brahmaputra in the south by a belt of northern Assam plains. Along the border with Tibet lie four of its five frontier divisions(48), viz., (west to east) Kameng, Subansiri, Siang and Lohit. The fifth - Tirap - lies entirely south of the Brahmaputra and has common borders with Burma in the east and south.

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Arunachal Pradesh has aptly been described as a region 'of bare, craggy hills, huge tropical and alpine forests, steep, rugged valleys and great cascading rivers'(49) and contains many lofty ranges and towering peaks, some of which rise to nearly 5,000 metres. The mountains are precipitously steep. The ranges are perpetually covered with snow. Separate names are applied to the different parts of this hill-belt with reference to the names of the local peoples, e.g., the Aka Hills, the Dafla Hills and so on.

Between the craggy hills, the dales open out at some places to plateaus with bold undulations intersected by glens and ravines. From the higher elevations of mountainous tract spring forth a number of rivers - Nyamjang Chu, Subansiri, Siang, Dibang and Lohit. The upper courses of these rivers lie in areas which are higher in altitude, difficult of access, and thickly wooded(50). The serpentine course of the rivers through the spurs of the hills, with dense forests on both sides, make the land difficult to cross. Landslides are frequent and very dangerous(51). The valleys in the area are marked by sharp contours of pointed hills and precipitous slopes(52).

The large flat pastures become quagmires in the monsoon. The locals use logs to make crossing places. When large bodies of men and cattle move across these logs, they are liable to be submerged, and the only way to negotiate marshy patches is to wade across in knee-deep mud(53). Much of the country is exposed to inundation in the rainy season and is covered with dense masses of grass and reeds more than 3 metres in height(54).

In the westernmost part of Arunachal Pradesh is located the Kameng Division. In its north-western part, from the India-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction which, in itself, is a massive orographical knot on the Great Himalayan range, emanate other mountain ridges or spurs. One of the ridges is called the Thagla Ridge(55), which runs to the south-east of the Me La for some distance, and is then cut by the Nyamjang Chu. The depressions of the Thagla Ridge are the Dum La, Yumtso La and the Thag La situated on the ridge on the western side of the Nyamjang Chu(56). The ridge extends to the east of the river to embody Bum La. The average height of this ridge is about 4,270 metres(57). Its southern slopes are steeper than the northern. The Namka Chu, a small rivulet, separates the Thagla Ridge from the Tsangdhar Ridge. Its main features are Tsangdhar (approx. 4,880 metres)

and Karpo La I. The Hathung La (approx. 4,570 metres) is its main depression. The area is dominated by numerous very high and practically inaccessible features, passage across which is possible only through some high altitude passes. The fast flowing rivers, principal among them being Nyamjang Chu and Tawang Chu, have made deep and big gorges. The area is marked by steep rises and deep depressions. The rivers are not generally fordable, either because of the fast current or their depth or sheer walls on either side.

The important monastery town of Tawang in the western part of Kameng Division was connected with the railhead of Misamari (near Tezpur) by a road in 1962. Starting from Foot Hills, the road went upto nearly 2,900 metres height via Bompou La and Chaku (approx. 2,130 metres) to a place named Eagles Nest (approx. 2,745 metres) with thick jungles, steep climbs and extremely difficult terrain.

Then the road glided down slightly to climb up to cross the next range through Bomdila. Bomdila is approx. 100 km from Foot Hills at a height of about 2,900 metres. The high ground around Bomdila dominated the surrounding area. Important routes from Dirang Dzong which is at a height of about 1,675 metres. Tracks from North Lungthang-Sangti met at Dirang Dzong. It is situated in a long stretch of valley. From Dirang Dzong the road skirted the stream on to the Sapper Camp, and later climbed to Senge Dzong and Se La (approx. 4,270 metres). The road to Se La passed through Nykmadong, a focal point where the tracks bypassing Se La met. The area was covered with thick jungles which started disappearing as the climb towards Senge Dzong - Se La started. Pine forests appeared in the beginning and they faded away when one reached Se La. The road up to Se La could be used by one-ton trucks. Beyond Se La, the road was jeepable upto Tawang (approx. 3,200 metres). Before covering the 40-km stretch from Se La to Tawang Chu the road passed through Nuranang (approx. 3,660 metres) and Jang (approx. 1,525 metres). From the Tawang Chu there was another 37-km drive up the hills to Tawang(58).

The Subansiri Division (now divided into two - Upper and Lower districts) got its name from the river which drains its eastern and northern parts. It is separated in the west and east by high mountain ranges from Kameng and Siang divisions. The Indian frontier area opposite Tibetan area in the Subansiri division was called the Longju Sector.

Siang Division (now divided into West Siang and East Siang districts), like Subansiri, is named after

the river Dihang or Siang which runs across the division from north to south. The Siang Division is separated from the Tibetan Plateau in the north by the Great Himalayan range, whose height varies from 3,660 metres to 5,500 metres(59).

The Lohit Division, the north-eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh, is now divided into two districts. The upper district is called Dibang Valley after the name of the principal river in the district, and the lower, Lohit, also named after the river of the same name. The Lohit Division is bounded by the Himalayan range in the north and east. The range that separates it from Burma in the east is called the Patkoi Range(60).

Walong is an important strategic town in the Lohit District. It is situated on the Lohit river (the Tsayul or Zayul Chu of Tibet) which enters India at a height of about 1,371 metres approximately 6 km north of Kibithoo. Walong is located in a bowl-like tract surrounded by hills. About 16 km north-west of Walong is the prominent and dominating feature 4,410 metres high. Another feature in the east is the tri-junction (India-Burma-China) at a height of 4,038 metres(61).

Of all the strategic places in the Eastern Sector, Walong had been the most inaccessible. The nearest roadhead was at Lohitpur, about 14.5 km north of Tezu. Lohitpur was connected to Walong by a 174-km long mule track, but the track was not fit for movement of large bodies of men. Troops were to disembark from trains at Jorhat to be airlifted to Walong(62). Aircraft had been the most practicable means of communication between Walong and Lohitpur. Similarly, Dakotas were the most dependable means of communication between Jorhat and Lohitpur available in 1962(63).

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1. Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Government of India and China, September-November 1959 and A Note on the Historical Background of the Himalayan Frontier of India : White Paper (hereafter referred to as White Paper) No.II, (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Nov 1959); Appendix I, p.125.
2. Bhutan is attached to India by special treaty. Under this treaty, the defence and external relations of Bhutan are the responsibility of the Government of India. Since India is responsible for the defence of Bhutan's borders with Tibet, the Bhutan-Tibet border, in effect and for all practical purposes, becomes part of India's northern border.
3. For other details about the alignment of the boundary in this sector, see Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question (hereafter referred to as REPORT) (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, February 1961), pp.1-2.
4. The Sino-Indian Boundary (Texts of treaties, agreements and certain exchange of notes relating to the Sino-Indian Boundary) (published by the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi-1), pp.1-2.
5. Ibid, p.3.
6. Quoted in letter dated 26.9.1959 from Prime Minister of India to the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-Lai, para 7, White Paper No.II, p.36.
7. Bajpai, S.P., India-China Boundary: Central Sector, in S.P. Sen (ed): The Sino-Indian Border Question- A Historical Review, (Calcutta, 1971), p.92.
8. In March 1890, the Anglo-Chinese Convention signed at Calcutta defined and confirmed the boundary of Sikkim - then a protectorate of India - and Tibet. The boundary alignment was jointly demarcated on the ground - the eastern portion in 1895-1896 and the northern in 1902-1903. REPORT, p.101.
9. This is also a traditional, customary and natural border which follows the crest of the Himalayan range which forms the main watershed between the

rivers flowing into Tibet, on one hand, and those into Bhutan, on the other. This whole natural alignment stands recognised by the Chinese Government except for a small discrepancy between the delineation on the maps of the two sides. See Chinese note of 26 December 1959. Cited in White Paper III, p.79.

10. REPORT, p.2.
11. Letter of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to Chou En-Lai, Prime Minister of China, 22 March 1959, quoted in China's Betrayal of India - Background to the Invasion (Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, November 1962), p.20.
12. REPORT, p.84.
13. Ibid.
14. The word 'La', in Tibetan, means a 'pass'. The use of the word 'Pass' in this case is, therefore, superfluous.
15. REPORT, p.85.
16. White Paper II, p.40. The area was renamed as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) after the promulgation of the North East Frontier Areas (Administration) Regulation, 1954.
17. The whole McMahon Line also included the Tibet-Burma border. But for the purposes of this study the McMahon Line has been used to signify the Eastern Sector of India's border with China.
18. This description is based on WHITE PAPER, V, p.20; REPORT p.2, and S.K. Pathak, India-China Boundary: Eastern Sector in S.P. Sen (ed), The Sino-Indian Border Question - A Historical Review, pp.144-146. For further details about the alignment of the boundary in this sector, see REPORT pp.2 & 12-17.
19. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, (Lucknow, 1969), p.10.
20. Jagjit Singh, The Saga of Ladakh - Heroic Battles of Rezang La & Gurung Hill 1961-62, (Delhi, 1983), p.19.
21. Bajpai, S.C., India-China Boundary: Western Sector in Sen, S.P., (ed): The Sino-Indian Border Question - A Historical Review, p.83.

22. Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, (Delhi, 1974), p.13.
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24. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, p.62.
25. Ibid., p.68.
26. Ibid., p.63.
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32. Ibid., p.69.
33. Younghusband's description of the area he visited in 1889. Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of India, p.91, cited in Rao, G.N., The India - China Border, A Reappraisal (Bombay, 1968), p.41.
34. Ibid.
35. Bose, S.C., Geography of the Himalaya (New Delhi, 1972), p.118.
36. Ibid.
37. In an interview on 14 March 1988, Brig J.F.N. Vakil (Retd), who was Brig ASC, Western Command in 1962, informed that in 1961 the road was motorable only upto Kargil. It was made motorable upto Leh by May 1962. But the road was narrow in many areas necessitating the adoption of 'gateway system' at those places.
38. Operations in Jammu and Kashmir 1947-48, Ministry of Defence, Government of India (New Delhi, 1987), p.9. Various distances mentioned here are based on the information given in this publication on pages 8 and 9.
39. Ibid., p.326.
40. Ibid., p.7.

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41. Charak, S.S., Indian Conquest of the Himalayan Territories, (Military Exploits of General Zorawar Singh Dogra), (Pathankot, 1978), pp.55.
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43. Chatterji, S.P., Physical Features of the Himalayas, Himalayan Seminar Volume (IISS/Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi, 1965), pp.1-13. quoted in S.C. Bajpai, India-China Boundary: Central Sector in S.P. Sen (ed) The Sino-Indian Border Question - A Historical Review, p.121.
44. Official Report on the Province of Kumaon, edited by J.H. Batten, Esq., Commissioner of Kumaon, 1878, p.1.
45. District Gazetteer, Lahul & Spiti, (Published by Himachal Pradesh Government, 1975), p.70.
46. Chatterji, S.P., Physical Features of the Himalayas as reproduced in S.C. Bajpai, op.cit., pp.121-122.
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48. In 1964, the word 'Frontier Division' was changed to 'District'. In 1980, under the Arunachal Pradesh Re-organisation of District Act, nine districts were created. These are:- (West to east) West Kameng & East Kameng (out of the earlier Kameng Frontier Division), Lower Subansiri and Upper Subansiri (out of the former Subansiri Frontier Division), West Siang and East Siang (formerly Siang Frontier Division), Dibang Valley and Lohit (erstwhile Lohit F.D.) and Tirap.
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50. Rao, G.N., The India-China Border: A Reappraisal, p.71.
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52. District Gazetteer, Lohit, p.4.
53. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder (The Curtain-raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962), (Bombay, 1969), p.204.

54. District Gazetteer, Lohit, p.5.
55. In this text, popularly known Tibetan word 'La' is used separately to name a particular mountain pass, e.g., Thag La. But, if the name of the pass is used as an adjective signifying a place or thing associated with its name, then 'la' is used as suffix to the name of the pass, e.g., Thagla Ridge.
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57. Ibid., p.35.
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CHAPTER - III

TOWARDS ARMED CONFLICT (NOVEMBER 1959 - OCTOBER 1962)

EFFORTS FOR SETTLEMENT THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS

Though the Chinese Government had converted a frontier which had been an undisturbed frontier of peace for centuries into an area of tension and conflict, thereby forcing the Government of India to adopt some military measures to safeguard her borders with Tibet, India did not give up efforts to reach a friendly settlement of the dispute in a peaceful way.

It was believed that by patient explanation of the facts about the India-Tibet border, China might be convinced and persuaded to accept the traditional border alignment.

The facts about the India-Tibet border were again set out in the official note of the Government of India of 4 November 1959(1). The note stated that the "traditional and historical frontier of India, has been associated with India's culture and tradition for the last two thousand years or so, and has been an intimate part of India's life and thought"(2). While declaring that the Government of India would "resist by all means available to them" any infringement of independence and integrity of India, the note expressed the Government's trust that "the Chinese Government will remove their forces from Indian territory and seek to resolve minor frontier disputes by peaceful methods"(3).

Prime Minister Chou En-lai acknowledged the receipt of Nehru's letter of 26 September 1959,(4) as well as the note of 4 November 1959, in his letter of 7 November 1959. In this letter(5), the Chinese Premier proposed that, in order to maintain the status quo, to ensure the tranquility of the border regions and to create a favourable atmosphere for talks, "the armed forces of China and India each withdraw 20 kilometres at once from the so-called McMahon line in the east, and from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west"(6). The Chinese Premier, however, did not respond to the facts and arguments adduced by Nehru in his letter of 26 September 1959 in support of the Indian position on the boundary question. Instead, Chou En-lai proposed in his letter that the two Prime Ministers should "hold talks in the immediate future"(7).

✓ The Chinese proposal for mutual withdrawal meant that, in return for a Chinese evacuation of Longju - the only area actually occupied by them south of the McMahon line - Indian forces would have to withdraw 20 kilometres within their own territory over the whole of the Eastern sector. This would have also left the Chinese in continued possession of a vast span of territory illegally occupied by them in Ladakh, where they had penetrated much more than 20 kilometres at many points, but India would have been required to withdraw her troops further 20 kilometres inside Ladakh also. By this proposal China wanted to consolidate what it had nibbled of the Indian territory. It was, in fact, an insidious attempt to secure a tacit recognition of its illegal occupation of Indian territory.

Nehru, therefore, in his letter of 16 November 1959, (8), proposed that in the Eastern and Central sectors, both sides should refrain from sending out patrols and thus avoid the possibility of border clashes; the Chinese should withdraw from Longju and Indian forces on their part would not reoccupy it. For the Western sector, Nehru proposed that as an interim measure, India should withdraw her troops to the line which China claimed as the boundary, and the Chinese troops should withdraw behind the traditional alignment shown on official Indian maps. Since the two lines would be separated by long distances, there would not be the slightest risk of border clashes between the forces on either side.

As regards the proposal for an immediate meeting of the two Prime Ministers, Nehru said: "I am always ready to meet and discuss with Your Excellency the outstanding differences between our countries and explore avenues of friendly settlement"(9). But, in order that "such a meeting should bear fruit" and that they did not lose themselves "in a forest of data", Prime Minister Nehru suggested that "some preliminary steps are taken and the foundation for our discussions laid"(10).

In a letter of 17 December 1959, the Chinese Prime Minister rejected India's proposal for the mutual withdrawal of forces in the Ladakh area and pressed for a meeting between himself and Nehru on 26 December 1959, either in China or at Rangoon(11). Nehru in reply pointedly asked: "How can we, Mr. Prime Minister, reach an agreement on principles when there is such complete disagreement about the facts? I would, therefore, prefer to wait for your promised reply to my letter of September 26 and our Note of November 4, before we discuss what should be the next step"(12).

It was only on 26 December 1959, that the Chinese Government sent a long Note(13), in which it only reiterated the Chinese stand and mustered such arguments as it could in an attempt to counter the formidable volume of factual Indian evidence in support of the accepted traditional boundary between India and China. The Chinese Note asserted again that the entire boundary between India and China in the Western and Central sectors had never been delimited and that the McMahon line was illegal. Since further reiterations of each other's position would lead nowhere, Nehru wrote to Chou En-lai on 5 February 1960,(14) suggesting that they might meet and discuss the problem at an early date sometime in the second half of March 1960. But he pointed out that there could be no negotiations on the basis of the position taken in the Chinese Note, viz., that the entire frontier had never been delimited. A detailed Note, producing additional evidence in refutation of the Chinese contention about the Indo-Tibetan border, as contained in the Chinese Note of 26 December 1959, was sent on 12 February 1960. In reply to the main Chinese thesis, repeated endlessly, that the entire boundary between the two countries had never been delimited and hence was open to question, the Note stated: "The Sino-Indian boundary, based on custom and tradition, follows natural features, and for the major part this customary and traditional boundary is also confirmed by treaty and agreement. This boundary throughout has been fixed and well-known for centuries. According to international usage and practice a customary boundary which follows well-known and unchanging natural features like main watersheds stands defined and does not require further or formal definition"(15).

Chou En-lai accompanied by Foreign Minister Chen Yi and a big Chinese delegation, arrived in New Delhi on 19 April 1960, on a six-day visit. Long sessions of talks took place. The meetings, however, only confirmed the fear expressed by Prime Minister Nehru earlier that there could be no agreement on principles when the basic facts were disputed.

There were some vague reports in the Press that during the talks, Chinese were proposing "overall" settlement on the basis of "present actualities" and "mutual accommodation" and constitution of a joint boundary Commission(16). In concrete terms, some concluded that China wanted to exchange recognition of the McMahon line for India giving up her claim to Aksai Chin. In other words, China wanted formal acceptance of the status quo as the solution of the border problem. But the acceptance of the proposal

would have been a "derogation of the juridical validity of the northern border but also compromise the territorial integrity of the country"(17). India stood her ground firmly and did not agree to barter away the Aksai Chin area, under illegal occupation of China, in return for China giving up its unreasonable claim on Indian territory south of the McMahon line. Since the Chinese were adamant on their claim to Aksai Chin, the talks were certain to end in failure. However, it was agreed that officials of the two Governments should meet to collate all the historical evidence and prepare a report listing the points of agreement and disagreement. The officials' report, it was hoped, "should prove helpful towards further consideration of these problems by the two Governments"(18). It was also agreed that, in the meantime, "every effort should be made by the parties to avoid friction and clashes in the border areas"(19).

Official teams of the two sides accordingly met in three sessions in Beijing, Delhi and Rangoon between June and December 1960. At the conclusion of the Sino-Indian talks at official level, each side wrote its own report in December 1960. The Indian Government, having established its stronger case, published in full the report of the Indian officials, along with the English translation of the Chinese report as supplied by the Chinese side, in February 1961. The Government of China, on the other hand, did not for long even acknowledge the existence of the report. It finally published the report as late as in April 1962.

The Report of the Officials of India and China on the Boundary Question established beyond doubt that the true traditional boundary between the two countries was that shown by India; that China kept undisclosed till September 1959 claims to 129500 square kilometres (50,000 sq miles) of Indian territory; and that China was already, at the time of the Report in December 1960, in unlawful occupation of 31080 square kilometres (12,000 sq miles) of Indian territory.

During the discussions(20), the Indian side furnished a vast and varied amount of material and fully established that the long traditional boundary shown on current Indian maps was clear and precise, conformed to unchanging natural features, had support in tradition and custom as well as in the exercise of administrative jurisdiction right up to it, and had been recognised for centuries and also confirmed in agreements. On the other hand, the Chinese side provided evidence which was scanty, imprecise, of very recent date and entirely inconsistent both in facts and arguments.

The qualitative superiority of the evidence produced by the Indian side was even greater than the quantitative superiority. The Indian evidence contained definite references to the alignment and to the areas in dispute, and provided the strongest possible proof to establish that these areas up to the boundary were traditionally parts of India.

Right at the start, while the Indian side offered to exchange maps on the standard international scale of one to one million the Chinese side were unwilling to provide map of any scale larger than one to five million. Both sides sought clarification of the location and natural features of the boundary line claimed by each. The Chinese side put nearly 60 questions, to each of which the Indian side gave full and precise answers promptly. On the other hand, the Chinese side, although claiming initially that the alignment shown on the map furnished by them was precise and clear, was unable to provide accurate information regarding the points through which their alignment ran, or even regarding the line of particular stretches. Of the nearly 120 questions put to the Chinese side to ascertain the exact location of important points along the claimed alignment, half were met by blank silence. Of the 60 odd questions that were answered, the answers to many were far from precise or complete.

That the border alignment claimed by the Chinese was wholly arbitrary was also clear from the fact that, in addition to the inconsistencies already prevailing in Chinese maps, the alignment shown in the Chinese map officially given during the talks was quite different in the Ladakh area from the alignment shown in the 1956 map which Chou En-lai had had endorsed in 1959.

The boundary line in Ladakh, as claimed by China in 1956, started east of the Karakoram Pass. It moved in the south-easterly direction, crossed the source of the Chip Chap river, moved in the same south-easterly direction for some distance and then proceeded down towards south, crossed the river Qara Qash to the west of Sumdo and then ran in a gradual arc towards south-east to the east of Shamul Lungpo. The claim line then took slightly south-westerly direction and passed Kongka La and Dambuguru and then on along the International Border to Khurnak Fort. From Khurnak Fort the line proceeded towards south, cutting the Pangong lake in the middle, then passed through the eastern extremity of the Spanggur lake. From there the line ran towards south and then in south-easterly direction where it crossed the Indus, and then moved towards south cutting the International Border to the south-west of Demchok.

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The new claim line advanced by the Chinese in 1960, though started to the east of the 1956 line, ran generally much to the west of the 1956 claim line. After cutting the earlier line east of Daulat Beg Oldi, the new line ran further to the west of the 1956 line, running close to the eastern bank of the Shyok river, cutting the Galwan river close to its confluence with Shyok, and then it ran south-east to Kongka La. From there it ran towards south, a little to the west of the 1956 claim line, passed through Sirijap and cut the Pangong lake at the point where it took a turn towards north-west. From there, it ran to the west of Spunggur lake, and then ran towards south almost along the 1956 claim line, ending south-west of Demchok(21). The new 1960 claim line covered some 5180 square kilometres (2,000 square miles) more of Indian territory in Ladakh.

In the discussions on the location and natural features of the boundary alignment, the Indian side demonstrated that the boundary shown by India was the natural dividing line between the two countries and conformed to the watershed principle. It is significant that where the Indian and Chinese alignments coincided, it was along the Himalayan watershed line. Where the two alignments differed, it was because the Chinese line arbitrarily swung westwards and southwards away from the watershed line, always towards India and never towards Tibet.

Geographical principles, however, provided only the original basis of a traditional boundary. Both the Governments of India and China acknowledged that the boundary between them was in origin a traditional one. But there was a radical difference regarding the actual alignment of the traditional boundary.

It was, therefore, necessary to ascertain whether it was the natural features along the alignment shown by the Indian Government, or along that claimed by the Chinese Government, which had been accepted for centuries as marking the traditional boundary. It would be necessary to establish that sovereign authority, in a form appropriate to the geographical terrain, had been exercised up to the claimed boundary, and particularly over the areas intervening between the two alignments. For this, it should be shown that these areas were part of administrative sub-divisions and subject to the pattern of revenue collection prevalent in the contiguous territory, and that the State wielded the power of enforcing law and order. Finally, it should be established that legislative enactments had mentioned the area and were enforced therein.

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In short, a picture of a legally constituted and effective sovereign authority should emerge, exercising the normal and regular functions of an established Government, not intermittently but continuously, over what was claimed as a national territory. The Indian side produced abundant proof to establish this pattern.

The Chinese officials made a vain attempt to dismiss a vast wealth of evidence on the ground that it came from British sources and merely represented the ambitions of British Imperialism. In fact, the Chinese side themselves tried to seek support for their stand from British official and non-official records. In any case, no evidence was brought forward to show that the British had intended deliberately to push forward the traditional boundaries.

It was inevitable that Indian evidence of the last three centuries, particularly of administration, should be largely British. But for every sector where British evidence had been mentioned, the Indian side also mentioned evidence recorded by persons of German, French or Italian origin. They could not have been impelled by the desire to support British imperialist policy. What was more, the Indian side brought forward evidence even from Chinese sources to confirm the alignment shown by India.

Thus, the Indian officials produced every kind of strong evidence to convince the Chinese of the correctness of the Indian position on the boundary question. In fact, most of the India's case could be proved from the Chinese maps and the material produced by the Chinese themselves. But the Chinese seemed to be adamant not to be convinced. They "disputed every treaty, every tradition and even geography"(22). Under the circumstances, the failure of the official level talks was inevitable. The whole exercise yielded nothing in so far as the resolution of the boundary problem was concerned.

CHINESE AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES

It is no wonder that the efforts put in by India to resolve the border tangle peacefully through diplomatic means yielded little fruit. The basic cause for such a failure lay in the dual policy of China whereby it professed a desire for peaceful settlement of the border question while pursuing, at the same time, the path of flagrant aggression. Keeping India busy in negotiations, the Chinese went on extending their occupation of Indian territory,

always asserting that their interpretation of the India-China boundary was correct and the occupied territory had been with India illegally. To cover their provocative and aggressive activities, China kept on accusing Indian troops of creating tension on the border and disturbing the peace of the area.

After having consolidated their position in Tibet, the Chinese intensified their military activities directed against India. The People's Liberation Army cadres started propogating that they had come in Tibet to save it from 'expansionist designs' of the neighbouring countries. They launched a propoganda that it would be in the interest of the Tibetans to help China in annexing bordering areas. The Chinese also tried to win the allegiance of the various tribes inhabiting the bordering areas, telling them that they belonged to the same stock and they would free them from India(23).

The Chinese had started constructing strategic roads, many of them usable even during the winter. The Chinese also started improving communications in the border areas. It was also noticed that they were constructing some airstrips near the Indo-Tibetan border.

By the end of 1959, the Chinese had spread west and south of the Aksai Chin road and established new posts disregarding Indian protests(24). Later they also constructed a road from Lanak La to Kongka La. In the north, they had built another road, west of the Aksai Chin Highway, from the northern border to Qizil Jilga, Sumdo, Samzungling and Kongka La. Another road connected Shamul Lungpo with this road from the north(25). That established for the Chinese north-south line of control from Qara Tagh, Shamul Lungpo and Lanak La.

During 1960, the Chinese turned their attention further south of the Chang Chenmo valley, by opening posts at Nyagzu and Dambuguru. During 1961, they completed construction of a road linking these posts to Khurnak Fort and to Kongka Pass. Yet another new road connected Rudok in Tibet with Spanggur(26).

With the construction of roads both towards and inside Indian territory, the Chinese consolidated their hold over the occupied areas by establishing a network of year-round forward checkpoints as stages from where patrols could be sent for further incursions into Indian territory. By the end of summer of 1960, the Chinese had established a regimental headquarters at Qizil Jilga, another in the

area to the east of the Lanak La and the third at Rudok. These regiments formed a division, the headquarters of which was located near Shahidulla in Sinkiang. The division itself was a part of the regional Army Headquarters linked by road to Urumchi, the capital of Sinkiang. The units of those regiments were being reinforced to full strength and the troops of the so-called frontier guards had already arrived in sufficient numbers in forward areas(27). By October 1961, they had established 61 new posts - seven in Ladakh, fourteen opposite the Central sector, twelve facing Sikkim in the Chumbi valley, three opposite Bhutan and twenty-five across NEFA border(28).

Forward patrolling and intrusions were resorted to by the Chinese troops deep inside Indian territory in the Western, Central and Eastern sectors.

In June 1960, more than 25 armed Chinese soldiers moved into Taktsang Gompa, the monastery village in the Tawang area, a little over 7 km within Indian territory in the Eastern sector(29).

In September 1960, the Chinese turned in a new direction, for the first time sending across an armed patrol several hundred metres into Sikkim, near the Jelep La(30).

In the Western sector, a Chinese patrol reached a point hardly eight kilometres east of Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) in autumn 1960(31). The Chinese continued to patrol the Chang Chenmo valley. It was learnt in August-September 1961 that they had established a strong military base at Nyagzu, well within Indian territory. The same time it came to knowledge that the Chinese had also converted Dambuguru, south of Nyagzu, into a military base(32).

Besides intrusions on land, "aircraft flying from Tibet", had violated Indian airspace 102 times from December 1950 to September 1960(33). Of those, 52 air violations took place since March 1960 alone(34).

In 1961, not a month passed without a Chinese intrusion or encroachment. Those incidents were now, more often than not, accompanied by firing. Since the beginning of 1961, the Chinese had started patrolling right up to the new boundary line which they had put forward during the officials' meeting, obviously with a view to justify their claims on the ground of occupation(35). As soon as the weather improved, from April 1961 onwards, Chinese made further intrusions.

On 20 April 1961, Chinese personnel once again crossed into Sikkim near the Jelep La(36). The next month they intruded near Chushul in the Western sector(37). In July 1961, a Chinese patrol crossed the frontier in the Kameng Frontier Division in the Eastern sector and penetrated more than a kilometre west of Chemokarpola(38). In September, the Chinese crossed into Sikkim for the third time, again near the Jelep La(39).

Road-building activities were also noticed, as a result of which new roads leading to the border in Arunachal Pradesh, opposite Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal were constructed. New roads were also constructed in North-east Ladakh, and some old ones were improved. Those roads included seven inside Indian territory in Ladakh, several close to the border in the Central sector; six roads to Sikkim and Bhutan borders and eight to the border in the Eastern sector(40).

From the above activities, it was apparent by October 1961 that Chinese, eversince December 1959, had been directing their efforts at seizing more Indian territory wherever possible and creating evidence in support of their 1960 claim by pushing forward the line of actual control.

China also took advantage of Tibetan exodus, following the brutal suppression of the Revolt of 1959, to smuggle their espionage agents by the score, who mixed themselves with the fleeing Tibetan refugees. These agents, racially akin to the local people on the Indian side of the border, spread themselves all over NEFA and Assam(41).

To support those activities, Chinese military strength was being increased all along the Indo-Tibetan border. By October 1961, the Chinese had a Division, stationed at Rudok, opposite the single understrength Indian brigade in Ladakh. They had all the regular support arms for their troops, such as heavy mortars, recoilless guns; and their infantry had semi-automatic rifles(42).

As the year 1962 dawned, Chinese intrusions multiplied along the Indo-Tibetan frontier, and many thousands Chinese soldiers moved up all along the border. The whole of south Tibet had been readied as a formidable base, obviously for some military adventures, since such elaborate measures were not needed to police Tibet.

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According to an assessment, made in May 1962(43), the Chinese had further strengthened their military posts by bringing additional troops from the rear. The total strength of their troops along the Himalayan frontier, including the border with Nepal and Bhutan, was 61 battalions (equivalent to nearly 7 Indian divisions) as compared with 45 battalions deployed in September 1961, all along the Himalayan frontier. The position with regard to Chinese troops deployment along various sectors of India's northern frontier was as follows:-

	<u>As in</u> <u>September</u> <u>1961</u>	<u>As in</u> <u>May 1962</u>
Ladakh	4 bns	4 bns
		(Although there was no increase in strength, four companies had been moved from the rear areas to forward positions at Sumdo, Hot Spring, Spanggur, Dambuguru and Nyagzu)
Central Sector	5 bns	5 bns
Northern Sikkim	Nil	3 bns
Eastern Sikkim	3 bns	6 bns
		(The addition of 3 bns was effected in November - December 1961 in Chumbi Valley soon after exchange of rather strong notes between India and China)
NEFA	15 bns	18 bns
Total*	27 bns	36 bns

* Strength of Chinese troops deployed along the frontier with India (including Sikkim)

In January 1962, the Chinese forces occupied Roi village, nearly 1 kilometre south of Longju in the Subansiri Frontier Division of the Eastern sector. Indian protest against this aggression(44) was rejected on the ground that the village was in Chinese territory(45). Since early 1962, the Chinese troops had stepped up their aggressive forward patrolling in the Western sector. In spite of Indian protest against it, Chinese troops kept up forward patrolling in the Chip Chap area right through April and May 1962(46). In fact, the Government of China announced on 30 April 1962 that they had ordered patrolling in the whole of the Western sector from the Karakoram Pass to the Kongka Pass and demanded that India withdraw two of her posts in the area(47). Sometime before mid-April, the Chinese had set up a new military post a little over 9 km west of Sumdo(48). In May 1962, the Chinese set up a new post in Indian territory 16 kilometre south-east of Spanggur(49). In June 1962, the Chinese occupied 8 pickets at a distance of a few kilometres in the east and north-east of Daulat Beg Oldi(50). They also extended their occupation further west in the Qara Qash region of Ladakh and established 5 pickets and also constructed a branch road, thereby assuring supplies to those pickets(51).

In this way, the Chinese had pushed forward towards their 1960 claim line in the Western sector. By April-May 1962, they had completed the construction of roads inside Ladakh linking the outposts which had been established in 1960-61(52). In addition, they had also started building three new roads in Ladakh: one from Samzungling along the Galwan river; another from Khurnak Fort to the vicinity of Sirijap; and the third from Spanggur to Shinzang along the southern bank of the Spanggur lake(53).

In May 1962, China took another highly provocative anti-Indian step. It entered into an agreement with Pakistan to start negotiations to locate and align the portion of the India-China boundary west of the Karakoram Pass in the Kashmiri territory under unlawful occupation of Pakistan. India promptly drew the attention of China that the sovereignty over the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir vested solely in the Indian Union, and that any agreement reached with Pakistan regarding any sector of the boundary of Kashmir would have no legal validity(54). But China paid no heed to Indian protest.

INDIAN STEPS TO DEFEND THE BORDER

Chinese aggressive activities against India had not only been continuing but, since the latter half of 1959, they were even intensified. India was, therefore, obliged to take some defensive measures to halt the aggressive Chinese advance.

In the wake of Chinese incursions both in NEFA and Ladakh in August 1959, the DMI, Army Hqrs, had prepared an Appreciation(55) in September 1959 of the threat posed by the Chinese to the northern borders. Although the Appreciation deduced that "with the present state of development" it was unlikely that the Chinese can "launch a major incursion on any part of the country" or create "a situation where there is a likelihood of major operation taking place"(56), yet it mentioned that the Chinese, whose "intention of coming over Himalayas onto our side is apparent", were prepared and, in fact, would continue to create border incidents unless threatened by major retaliatory action by India. Based on the assessment of the strength of the Chinese troop deployment across the border, the Appreciation made detailed recommendations for positioning of troops in various sectors to counter the Chinese threat(57). The Appreciation recommended that "any vulnerable points which we have on the frontier should be adequately protected against the Chinese forces that are deployed"(58).

But certain constraints worked which made immediate implementation of those recommendations not feasible. The political leadership in the country, too, shared the Army's assessment that whatever be the situation, China was not likely to launch a big attack on India(59). They were, therefore, reluctant to respond to the Chinese aggressive activities in a big way. Instead of rattling swords, greater reliance was being placed on solving the border dispute at political and diplomatic level. Moreover, for various historical and economic reasons, the expansion and modernisation of Indian armed forces had not been taken up ever since India attained freedom(60). To do that now, a serious cut would have to be effected into the Governments appropriations for national economic development. Also, the logistics posed tremendous problems for the Army to physically control the long border. Border areas had to be developed; roads connecting those areas had to be constructed and a network of airfields had to be created before the required contingents of the Army could be inducted and maintained in those sensitive areas. It required time. Hence, to start with, the strength of the police and militia was increased(61) to perform frontier defence duties under the operational control of the Indian Army.

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In October 1959 occurred the Kongka Pass incident which added an element of urgency to the implementation of the recommendations of the Appreciation. In November 1959, 4 Infantry Division was ordered to move to Assam to take up the responsibility of safeguarding the northern border from Sikkim to Burma(62). This move should have taken place soon after the August 1959 decision of the Government to hand over the security of the border in the Eastern Sector to the Army, but it did not, due to problems of logistics. Now, in November its three brigades (5, 7 and 11) were moved to Assam, notwithstanding the absence of logistical set-up for deploying the division in NEFA(63). The responsibility of 11 Bde was to look after the 225-km long, Sikkim-Tibet border. The task of defending over 1075-km long NEFA-Tibet border (i.e. McMahon Line) was given to 7 and 5 Bdes with the former being made responsible for the Kameng Frontier Division and the latter for the defence of rest of NEFA(64).

With a view to construct lines of communication in the northern border area, the task of building roads was taken up earnestly in January 1960 with the setting up of a semi-military organisation - "General Reserve Engineering Force (GREF)" better known as Border Roads Organisation(65).

In NEFA "Operation ONKAR"(66) was launched in 1960. According to this plan, there was to be a large expansion of the Assam Rifles, and units were to be posted all along the frontier and also in the areas not occupied till then(67). Those posts were to be manned by Assam Rifles personnel but were to be established under Army supervision. The siting of those posts and their exact location was, however, decided mainly by the Intelligence Bureau and not the Army(68), although the Army Headquarters, on being consulted in this respect, had authorised the Eastern Command to site those posts as they deemed it fit(69).

As regards the Central Sector, sometime in mid-1960, Army Hqrs asked the Western and Eastern Commands to submit their recommendations regarding the quantum of troops required to take over the responsibility of the defence of Indo-Tibetan border in Himachal Pradesh (some portion of it then touched Punjab of that time) and U.P. from the police, and the time required to effect this change-over. Although the two commands gave their requirements(70), they showed disinclination for taking over the responsibility because of many administrative difficulties, particularly of stocking and provision of accommodation. In view of the difficulties

expressed by both the Commands, Army HQ decided that Police Forces should continue to be responsible for the defence of the border in this sector. However, the commands were instructed to complete all preparations to enable regular troops to take over border security duties from the police at short notice in an emergency.

For the defence of UP-Tibet border, HQ Eastern Command, in a paper(71), had recommended two defence lines, one to be held during the summer and the other during the winter. Till early 1960, the UP-Tibet border was being guarded by six companies of Special Police Force (SPF)(72). By July 1961 the strength of SPF had gone up to 9 companies, seven (21 platoons) of which manned seventeen summer posts on the border and one company was with the Bn HQ and the remaining one in Jammu and Kashmir(73).

In Ladakh, new Intelligence Posts were opened(74) and some of the existing ones strengthened by putting Army units there(75). Some posts were opened by the Army(76).

The decision to hand over the border in Ladakh was implemented in April 1960 with the induction of Headquarters 114 Infantry Brigade(77) with 7 and 14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia Battalions under its command(78). In April 1961(79) the brigade was strengthened with the addition of 1/8 Gorkha Rifles and some ancillary troops. Notwithstanding tremendous difficulties posed by lack of road communications(80), shortage of aircraft, severe wintry conditions and other logistical problems, the three battalions of the brigade were not only deployed in forward areas(81), but a few additional posts were also established, bringing their number to 27 by the end of 1961. Those posts were:-

(a) Nubra Valley Sector

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| i. Khalsi | vi. Daulat Beg Oldi |
| ii. Biagdangdo | vii. PT 16550 |
| iii. Thoise | viii. Track Junction |
| iv. Pa Deshkit | ix. Sultan Chushku |
| v. Panamik | x. Shyok and |
| | xi. Murgo. |

(b) Chang Chenmo and Chushul Sector

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| i. Nala Junction | iv. Phobrang |
| ii. Hot Spring | v. Chushul |
| iii. Tsogetsalu | vi. Base Rezangla |

(c) Indus Valley Sector

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| i. Tsakala | vi. Demchok |
| ii. Dungal | vii. Jara La |
| iii. Dumchek | viii. Hanle |
| iv. Chang La | ix. High Ground and |
| v. Koyul | x. Zarsar(82) |

In view of the increasing Chinese activities in the northern areas an air landing ground was built at Daulat Beg Oldi in 1961-62 where Dakotas and Packets, bringing supplies, could land. DBO was transformed into a military base with supply depots at Sultan Chushku and Murgo(83). Also efforts were made to improve the tracks linking Panamik with Thoise and Murgo with DBO. The Army opened a new post at Charding La(84) which along with the post at Chang La enabled them to protect the two sides of Demchok. IB set up a new post at Chumar, almost right on the frontier, to cover south-eastern end of Ladakh(85).

In the midst of reports about intensifying aggressive Chinese activities in the bordering areas, a high powered meeting(86) was held under Prime Minister Nehru in New Delhi on 2 November 1961(87). At this meeting, after the DMO had explained the existing positions and after a general discussion, Nehru decided(88) that Indian forces should remain in effective occupation of the whole frontier from NEFA to Ladakh and they should cover all gaps by setting up posts or by means of effective patrolling. No longer should the Chinese be allowed to encroach surreptitiously into our territories not occupied by Indian troops or police. He, however, ordered that our troops should not fire except in self-defence(89).

There was nothing new in this directive. The tasks had already been accepted by the Army in October 1959. In fact, the Defence Minister had been stressing this step since the summer of 1960(90). What happened now was that the directive coming directly from the Prime Minister speeded up the implementation process.

The Army HQ on 5 December 1961, issued an order(91) in which as regards the Ladakh sector, the Western Command was instructed "to patrol as far forward as possible from our present positions towards the International Border as recognised by us. This will be done with a view to establishing additional posts located to prevent the Chinese from advancing further and also to dominate any Chinese posts already established in our territory". The instruction to the Western Command also said: "This 'forward policy' shall be carried out without getting involved in a clash with the Chinese unless it becomes necessary in

self-defence". Regarding U.P. and other Northern areas (including the Eastern Sector) the Eastern Command was told that "there are not the same difficulties as in Ladakh. We should, therefore, as far as practicable, go forward and be in effective occupation of the whole frontier. Gaps should be covered either by patrolling or by posts". The order visualised that the implementation of the directive "will entail considerable movements of troops with attendant logistical problems" for which "a fresh appraisal of your task in view of the new directive from Government, especially with regard to the additional logistical effort involved" was demanded by 30 December 1961,(92). Meanwhile "Wherever possible action should be taken as indicated above"(93).

The large expansion of Assam Rifles started earlier had made sufficient number of trained personnel available by the end of 1961. Now the Army HQ directive(94) gave impetus to the setting up of new posts under "OP ONKAR" expeditiously as near the border as practicable. With all the constraints put up by the difficult terrain, adverse weather conditions and lack of adequate maintenance facilities, firm bases/posts were established at several new places as near the McMahon Line as possible and the strength of already existing posts was increased. Although those posts were being manned by Assam Rifles, they were physically established under supervision of the Army. The posts were in most cases a platoon strong and almost entirely dependent on air-dropped supplies. In February 1962 the Assam Rifles detachments had been posted at Chutangmu, Chuna, Khinzemane and Bum La in the Kameng Frontier Division(95).

In the case of Ladakh, by the time the implications of the new policy had been worked out, the winter of 1961-62 had far advanced. Hence it was only from April 1962 that the induction of another battalion could be taken up and it was concentrated at Leh by mid-May 1962(96). Now army units from DBO started moving eastwards and setting up posts along the Chip Chap river valley, and within a couple of kilometres of the Chinese posts to prevent their further penetration westwards(97). The task was difficult, due to the terrain and lack of proper communications and logistic support. Although there were now four battalions posted in Ladakh, the force was most inadequate to defend the front, covering nearly 480 kms from DBO in the north to Demchok in the south. Perforce troops had to be dispersed into small, isolated posts each barely 10 to 20 strong. Obviously, such posts could act only as flag posts, merely to show physical presence of Indian troops in

new areas in which they were located. Those posts, however, could serve one purpose. The Chinese pattern of encroachment had always been to creep into Indian territory whenever it was unguarded, but not to launch an offensive against the Indian posts. In view of this, it was decided to establish as many posts as possible in Ladakh, even though in penny pockets, rather than wait for substantial build-up(98). By "leapfrogging" Chinese posts they could block surreptitious Chinese advance further into Indian territory and could watch the patrol activities of the Chinese. In this way, by the end of September 1962, 36 Indian posts had been established in Ladakh(99) as against forty seven posts set-up by the Chinese in the area by that time(100). As a result of the setting up of these posts by the two sides, Indian presence was established in a fairly deep area in the northern sector from DBO to Tsogetsalu. Around Chushul the Indian posts and the Chinese posts confronted each other at close range and in the south around Rezangla and Demchok the Indian posts reached almost up to the International Border(101).

As regards the UP-Tibet border, the HQ Eastern Command, recommended that if the forward posts were to be converted into all-weather posts, the available strength of SPF (i.e. eight companies) had to be augmented by two to three companies and 9 Inf Bde should have four bns, one each to be deployed in three sectors(102) and the fourth with Bde HQ to be moved from Lucknow to Nainital or Ranikhet. But the idea of deploying the Bde in the hill region was not agreed to by the AHQ. Other recommendations were discussed at a meeting in Delhi on 8 February 1962. In view of the many difficulties it was decided that it would not be possible to undertake the conversion of any of the police posts to all-weather posts in 1962, but the priority for conversion to all-weather posts was to be accorded to the posts at Sangchamala and Pulamsumda. In a letter dated 28 February 1962,(103), AHQ asked the HQ Eastern Command that not more than one battalion should be committed in an "Operational Role" so as not to disturb the turn-over programme.

As noted earlier, the Chinese had reinforced considerably their posts all along the Indo-Tibetan border by May 1962. A report on the "Frontier Security Situation" prepared by the Intelligence Bureau(104) was discussed on 17 May 1962 at a meeting presided over by the Defence Minister(105). After reviewing the position, the Defence Minister ordered that all the gaps left still unoccupied in the border areas should be filled up. Even if sizeable forces could not be spared, there should be at least a platoon of the Army or police or the Assam Rifles at each of those places(106).

In the wake of this order, efforts were further intensified. In the Eastern sector some Assam Rifles platoons were placed under 4 Inf Div in May 1962(107) which speeded up the establishment of forward posts "as close to the border as possible"(108) under 'OP ONKAK'. By 20 July 1962, a total number of thirty four posts (8 in Kameng, 8 in Subansiri, 7 in Siang and 11 in Lohit Frontier Divisions) were established in NEFA along the border with Tibet(109). Those posts included the one at Dhola, established a little south of the Namkha Chu on 4 June 1962 under the guidance of Captain Mahabir Prasad of 1 Sikh who accompanied the Assam Rifles party(110). In June 1962 the HQ 4 Inf Div designated Tawang as the Divisional Vital Ground and, consequently, 7 Inf Bde was moved to Tawang to strengthen the defences of the town(111). As regards the availability of troops, a total force of 2 Inf Bde and 74 platoons of Assam Rifles stood deployed for the security of a long border along very difficult terrain(112).

FURTHER DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

Though the Government of India, being forced by aggressive Chinese activities, had to take limited protective measures, she continued to make approaches for easing tension so that a proper climate could be created for further talks to resolve the differences with China.

The voluminous 'Officials' Report had unmistakably shown the strength of India's case on the border dispute. In the wake of its publication it was surmised that now, probably, China might adopt a reasonable attitude. To see whether it had affected any change in the Chinese stand, R.K. Nehru, Secretary General in the Ministry of External Affairs, visited China in July 1961 on his return journey from Mongolia. In his meeting with Premier Chou En-lai, R.K. Nehru found no change in Chinese position on Ladakh(113).

In its note of 1 March 1962, China rather accused that the Government of India had "refused to hold negotiations", since it has been persisting "in its illegal occupation of the Chinese territory south of the so-called McMahon Line in the eastern sector" while demanding that "China withdraw from vast tracts of Chinese territory in the western sectors"(114). The contradiction in Chinese argument was very clear. China had recognised McMahon Line in the case of Burma but when it came to India the same very line became 'so-called' or illegal. As regards the Western Sector, all should accept that the Aksai Chin plateau belonged to China contrary to vast amount of evidence adduced by India, only because China so claimed and it had forcibly occupied it.

The Government of India, in its Note of 13 March 1962, refuted the charge that they refused to negotiate. They urged the Chinese Government for the "restoration of the status quo through the withdrawal of Chinese forces from Indian territory, into which they have intruded since 1957", because it was "an essential step for the creation of a favourable climate for any negotiations between the two Governments regarding the boundary"(115). But to the Government of China the Indian approach was "in fact tantamount to the summary rejection of peaceful settlement"(116). What the Chinese meant by 'peaceful settlement' was first to recognise that Aksai Chin was Chinese territory and had always been in its lawful possession. The continuance of that possession was the maintenance of status quo as viewed by China. It was on this basis that "as far as the Chinese side is concerned, the door for negotiations is always open"(117). The note of the Government of India, sent in reply to the Chinese note, refuted the Chinese charges and stated that "while the Government of India are always willing to negotiate with the Government of China, they cannot obviously compromise with any aggression on Indian territory. Nor can they negotiate as long as their territories remain under Chinese occupation. It is for the Government of China to correct the errors of the recent years and, by withdrawing from the Indian territory, create the essential conditions for peaceful negotiations so that the boundary question is settled"(118).

On 14 May 1962, the Government of India took initiative afresh for breaking the ice. In a note(119) sent to the Chinese Government, India urged it to give serious consideration to Prime Minister Nehru's proposal of 16 November 1959 for the withdrawal of Indian forces in Ladakh to the west of the boundary line shown in the 1956 Chinese maps, and of Chinese forces to the east of the international boundary shown in official Indian maps. As a token of India's earnest desire for peaceful settlement, India made an offer "to permit, pending negotiations and settlement of the boundary question, the continued use of the Aksai Chin road for Chinese civilian traffic"(120). This was a very fair proposal, leaving the disputed territory in occupation of neither of the parties with an important exception in favour of the Chinese for the continued use of the Aksai Chin road by China for civilian purposes. But China spurned the offer, saying: "How can one assume that the Chinese Government would accept unilaterally imposed submissive terms? Is China a defeated Country?"(121). As a counter move China expressed its willingness to consider the proposal only if India withdrew from NEFA(122), thereby disputing the validity of the McMahon Line which it had accepted earlier in an agreement with Burma.

The Government of India, in a note dated 26 July 1962(123), showed further relaxation by letting the Chinese to continue their illegal occupation of Indian territory up to their 1956 claim line as a starting point till a settlement was arrived at by asking them not to intrude beyond it and reiterated their willingness, as soon as the prevailing tensions had ceased and the appropriate climate was created "to enter into further discussions on the India-China boundary question on the basis of the report of the officials"(124).

The Government of India had, however, to come in for much adverse criticism for this relaxed stand both in Parliament(125) as well as in the Press(126).

But the Chinese Government, in its reply(127) remained adamant even to the above suggestion of the Government of India and blamed India for creating tensions by its so-called intrusions into "Chinese territory" in Ladakh. China asked India to stop it and then start discussions on the boundary question for which "there need not and should not be any pre-conditions"(128).

Almost simultaneously with the above Chinese note, the Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in a broadcast on the Italian-Swiss Radio TV Network on 3 August 1962, had proclaimed that "to wish that Chinese troops would withdraw from their own territory is impossible. That would be against the will of 650 million Chinese. No force in the world could oblige us to do something of this kind"(129).

The November 1959 Indian proposal, by each side withdrawing behind the claim line of the other, would have separated the personnel of two countries far apart to remove the chances of clashes and tensions and would have thus created favourable atmosphere for peaceful discussions on the boundary issue. But China had unabashedly rejected it in every form.

What steps could have been taken to ease the tensions? The Government of India suggested in the same note that an essential preliminary, therefore, was "a definition of measures that should be taken to restore the status quo of the boundary in this region which has been altered by force during the last five years and to remove the current tension in this area so as to create the appropriate climate for purposeful discussions"(130). And for discussing those essential preliminary measures the Government of India invited China to send its representative to India(131).

While notes for finalisation of dates for talks were still being exchanged, the Chinese expanded the area of tension. On 8 September 1962, Chinese troops marched across the hitherto quiet international boundary in the Eastern sector.

CHINA ESCALATES AGGRESSION

While India was making peaceful approaches to China to help in easing tensions thereby creating suitable atmosphere for negotiations on the boundary question, China went on increasing its provocative and aggressive activities all along the border. The Chinese forces were extending their military bases; they had already established a number of new posts bringing their number to 47 by the end of September 1962(132) and were poised in strength in menacing proximity to existing Indian border posts in the Central and Eastern sectors(133). They were also busy in making roads to their frontier posts and moving stores of rations, ammunition and other war materials to these posts opposite NEFA(134) as well as in Ladakh(135).

Meanwhile, reports were coming in about fresh arrivals of troops in Tibet(136). Those reports indicated that the Chinese had deployed long range Artillery Units along the Central and Eastern sector borders. The troops deployed in Ladakh were more or less regular soldiers, mostly equipped with heavy Machine-guns, Mortars and Howitzers, the forces deployed opposite the NEFA border included units of guerilla fighters as well(137). According to an assessment of "Chinese Army Strength and dispositions across the Northern Frontier", made in the beginning of September 1962, the total deployment of Chinese troops along the northern frontier had gone up by 6 battalions since the beginning of the summer of 1962(138). Of the total strength of Chinese troops in Tibet, which was of the order of eight divisions, a little under seven divisions were dispersed in the south and south-western border areas and in addition two regiments (6 battalions) were deployed opposite North Ladakh(139). The deployment of 6 battalions of the Chinese against Indian positions from DBO to Spanggur area marked an increase of 2 battalions since the spring of 1962(140). In the area in front of south Ladakh and the Central sector, the strength of Chinese troops, which had remained at 5 battalions till June 1962, had been augmented by 2 battalions(141). Against Sikkim, three regiments (brigades) were deployed of which two were in the Chumbi Valley and one brigade opposite North Sikkim(142). Across NEFA, the estimated Chinese

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deployment was of the order of 19 battalions(143). The above estimate, however, took into account only those Chinese troops which were located near the Indian border and did not include 3 to 4 divisions held by the Chinese as reserves in places like Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse, Chamdo and Nagchuka in case they were required during any operation(144).

All the above military preparations were followed by a spurt in provocative activities of the Chinese troops and intrusions by them deeper in the Indian territory. On 6 July a Chinese patrol found that Indians had already established a post in the Galwan Valley. They sent a protest note(145) which was suitably replied to by India(146). Then on 10 July 1962, over 350 Chinese advanced towards the Indian post manned by about 30 Gorkhas. They closed in to approximately 45 metres and surrounded the post. The post was cut off. On the night of 12/13 July, the Chinese advanced to within 15 mtrs of the post. After the initial surrounding of the post, the Chinese vacated the area to the south and south-east with a view apparently to give the Indian post option to withdraw. The Chinese troops tried every trick, short of a direct assault, to intimidate, cajole and isolate the post. The Indian post was ordered to stand fast. The Gorkhas did not budge an inch(147) nor did they fire. The orders were to fire only if fired upon. The Chinese continued the encirclement of the post, though they moved back a little on 14 and 15 July. The Chinese did not permit the relief of the post and threatened to open fire on a party that was sent for the purpose in August. Consequently, the post had to be supplied by air(148).

Soon after the encirclement of the Galwan Valley post, a Chinese party of 70-80 troops, on 21 July 1962, opened fire with LMGs, mortars and rifles on routine Indian patrol of 14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia, about 8 km south-east of the DBO camp. The patrol exercised great patience and restraint and did not return fire. Later, however, in the face of Chinese persistent firing, the Indians were forced to return the fire in self-defence. In this action, one Naik and one Sepoy were seriously wounded(149). On the same day, the Indian patrol of 1/8 GR was fired upon by the Chinese. In this action 2 Indian soldiers were wounded(150). Then, on 27 and 29 July, the Chinese again fired at Indians on several occasions in the central regions but no casualties were reported(151). On 4 August 1962, the Chinese fired a shot near Karakoram Pass close to the Indian post at DBO(152). On 26 August at 1200 hrs, a party of the Chinese troops attempted to ambush an Indian patrol on routine

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duty about 53 km south-east of DBO. The Indians, however, detected the ambush. The Chinese opened fire and the Indians were forced to return it(153). There was an incident of firing by the Chinese on Indian patrol party in the Galwan Valley area on 2 September 1962. Indians had to return fire(154).

Chinese aircraft frequently violated Indian air space particularly in the Eastern sector(155). In the Eastern sector, during the period June/July, the Chinese had intensified their border patrolling opposite the Subansiri and Siang Frontier Divisions. They had about one battalion each deployed in the border-areas there. The Chinese troops brought under control the Pemako area opposite North-Eastern Siang Frontier Division. They had intruded about 140 metres inside Indian territory at Lhola in the western part of Siang Frontier Division(156).

In June/July, the movement of some senior Chinese officers was noticed opposite Subansiri and Siang Frontier Division. They obviously had come for reconnaissance of the area(157). A Chinese VIP also visited the Thag La Ridge in July 1962. By that time, the Chinese had constructed a road upto Le village, approximately 10 km short of the McMahon Line(158).

During the last few months, all Chinese border posts had moved forward and had been considerably reinforced. The Chinese posts had now come very near to Indian Frontiers. Since July, Chinese troops across the NEFA had been practising Jungle Warfare and training in hand grenade and musketry. They had constructed defence works in all the forward posts. They had been issued modern machine-guns in place of the old weapons. Telephone lines had also been brought quite near the Frontier(159). The Chinese had posted 2 companies of their troops in front of the Khinzemane Indian post and a company at Shao opposite Bumla(160).

The biggest threat was posed by the Chinese in the Eastern sector in August when they moved troops to the Thag La Ridge in the Kameng Frontier Division and occupied it. By the end of August 1962, they had concentrated about 400 troops in the area(161).

The next month the Chinese moved two additional battalions across the Subansiri Frontier Division to bring their strength in the area to one full Brigade. As in the case of Kameng Frontier Division, defence preparations, road construction, storing of supplies and ammunition had been made in this area also(162). In the Siang Frontier Division, the Chinese had moved

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forward close to the border at Tamadem and Lola. They had reinforced Ngiti and Nayu and were rapidly constructing roads to the frontier - and also parallel to it. The Chinese strength deployed against the Siang border had reached 5 battalions(163). Chinese activities had also been noticed across the Lohit Frontier Division and the Drowa Gompha - Rima road leading to Kibithoo and Walong had been improved. There was also movement across the Anini frontier and posts had been established there also(164).

The concentration of troops in great strength and other military activities by China all along the border as well as deep inside Indian territory particularly in Ladakh was not only leading to highly provocative intrusions and bloody incidents but it seriously threatened the security of the whole of the border areas.

The Chinese now demonstrated their aggressive intentions in the Eastern sector also in September 1962. On 8 September 1962, Chinese troops were noticed moving across the Namkha Chu in the Tawang sector. In a few hours about forty of them(165) crossed the river, virtually surrounded Dhola and threatened the small post manned by troops from 9 Punjab. The Chinese troops also destroyed two bridges near the post on the Namkha Chu. The news of the seige was flashed to Lumpu, where the battalion Commander of 9 Punjab was present. The post Commander at Dhola was immediately informed that reinforcements were being despatched. In the meantime he was told to hold on at all costs(166). The Chinese settled into positions near and dominating the post, thus repeating the tactics they had adopted in the Western sector against Indian posts. By 14 September, the intruders, however, withdrew about 700-900 metres north-east of the Indian post across the Namkha Chu(167).

On 20 September 1962, the Chinese again started a serious clash at the Dhola post. About 2130 hrs, two Chinese soldiers crept up near the post and lobbed hand grenades at it. The Indian post fired Verey lights and saw a considerable number of Chinese soldiers massed some distance away. The Chinese soldiers opened fire on the Indian post, which was compelled to reply in self-defence. Intermittent firing continued until the morning of 21 September. The Chinese resumed firing after a short interval. After the incidents of 20 and 21 September, there was intermittent firing on 22-25 September. On 28 September, the Chinese used automatic weapons. The Indian troops retaliated(168). In those bloody clashes both sides suffered casualties. Suddenly the Chinese stopped firing. But it turned out to be the proverbial lull before the storm.

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Side by side with these highly provocative and aggressive activities in the border areas, China also launched a hostile and malicious propaganda against the Indian Government. China dubbed Prime Minister Nehru as a reactionary, a Western lackey, and accused him of abandoning the path of non-alignment(169). The Chinese also indulged in propaganda, in varying degree of intensity, asserting claims to Indian territory and affirming the Chinese determination to take it(170).

The increasing intensity of hostile and aggressive China activities against India, particularly in Ladakh, forced the Government of India to take some more steps to tighten the security measures.

After the Galwan Valley incident in early July 1962, the order given to the post was modified from 'fire only if fired upon' to 'fire in self-defence'. On 21 July 1962, Commander 114 Inf Bde issued modified order to all post Commanders authorising them "to open fire at their own discretion for defence of post which will be defended at all costs"(171). On 22 July 1962, Army HQ gave the discretion to all post Commanders to fire on the Chinese if their posts were threatened(172) and thus confirmed the modified order given by the Brigade Commander a day earlier. This changed order was given effect to in the beginning of September 1962 in an incident in the Chip Chap Valley when the Chinese advanced menacingly close to one of the Indian posts. The Indian post had to open fire on the Chinese when the latter disregarded order to halt and back off. In the incident, Chinese suffered casualties(173).

The 8 September incident (when Chinese troops invested the Dhola post south of the river Namkha Chu in the Kameng Frontier Division in the Eastern Sector) and subsequent positioning of Chinese troops south of the Thagla ridge brought about a qualitative change in the situation. It was for the first time, that the Chinese crossed the international boundary in the Eastern Sector in strength. The crisis was approaching the flash point.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Prime Minister Nehru, in his letter of 26 September 1959, sent to Prime Minister Chou En-Lai, has stated the facts about the Indo-Tibetan border in detail. WHITE PAPER, No. II, pp.34-46.
2. Ibid., p.20.
3. Ibid.,p.24.
4. Ibid.,pp.34-46.
5. Letter from the Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 7 November 1959, WHITE PAPER, No.III pp.44-45.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p.45.
8. Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China, 16 November 1959. Ibid.,pp.46-50.
9. Ibid.,p.49.
10. Ibid.
11. Letter from the Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 17 December 1959. Ibid.,pp.51-55.
12. Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China, 21 December 1959. Ibid.,p.56.
13. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to the Embassy of India in China, 26 December 1959. Ibid., pp.58-79.
14. Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China, 5 February 1960. Ibid., pp.80-81.
15. Note of the Government of India to the Chinese Government, 12 February 1960. Ibid.,p.82.
16. Times of India, (New Delhi), 21, 23 and 24 April 1960. According to T.N. Kaul, a senior diplomat closely associated with the development of Sino-Indian relations, Mr. Chou En-Lai, instead of suggesting a settlement recognizing NEFA

within India and Eastern Aksai Chin as part of China as had been indicated earlier, harped on his six points and wanted to open the whole border question anew. Diplomacy in Peace and War, p.114.

17. An Indian official statement quoted in Times of India, 24 April 1960.
18. Joint Communique of the Prime Ministers of India and China, 25 April 1960. DOCUMENTS, p.171.
19. Ibid.
20. For details about the proceedings of the official level discussions and for comments on REPORT, See China's Betrayal of India - Background to the Invasion (Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Delhi; November 1962) pp.28-34.
21. Based on the information given in Chinese Aggression in Maps (Director, Publications Division, Old Secretariat, Delhi; Revised edition, January 1963), Map 3.
22. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.278.
23. From Official Records.
24. Jagjit Singh, The Saga of Ladakh, p.38.
25. From Official Records.
26. Mankekar, D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.38.
27. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, p.41.
28. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.313.
29. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 29 July 1960. WHITE PAPER IV, p.3.
30. Memorandum of the Government of India to the Government of China, 27 September 1960. Ibid. p.4.
31. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, p.41.
32. Ibid., p.42.
33. Mankekar, D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.23.
34. Statement showing details of Air violations of our Air Space as annexure to Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 22 August 1960. WHITE PAPER IV, pp.29-30.

35. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.310.
36. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 6 May 1961. WHITE PAPER, V, p.11.
37. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 31 October 1961, Ibid., p.53.
38. Ibid., p.54.
39. Ibid., p.53.
40. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.313.
41. Mankekar, D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.20. In a small hamlet north of Bomdila, a Chinese operated a tea-stall along the Missamari-Towang road. Also, at Chaky, south of Bomdila, a Chinese agent operated a wireless set for nearly 18 months before being detected. Ibid.
42. Praval, K.C., Indian Army After Independence, pp.240-241.
43. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, pp.324-326. Also From Official Records.
44. Note given by the MEA, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China, in India, 18 April 1962. WHITE PAPER, VI, p.27.
45. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 15 May 1962. Ibid., p.44.
46. For example, in early May 1962, a 100 strong Chinese patrol reached upto 130 metres from our Post Alfa, located about 24 kms to the north-east of DBO. From Official Records.
47. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 30 April 1962. WHITE PAPER, VI, p.39.
48. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 15 April 1962. WHITE PAPER, VI, p.26.
49. Ibid., 21 May 1962, p.49.
50. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, p.54.

51. Ibid.
52. From Official Records.
53. Mankekar, D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.41.
54. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, pp.27-28. Also Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 10 May 1962. WHITE PAPER, VI, (November 1961-July 1962), pp.96-97.
55. From Official Records.
56. Ibid.
57. The deployment pattern recommended by the Appreciation was as follows:-
- (i) A bde in the Ladakh area. This bde could well maintain one or even two local militia bns to provide strong bases on the periphery at Shyok and Chushul with outpost at Demchok and Nawi.
 - (ii) Assam Rifles type of bns, one for Himachal Pradesh Sector and another for U.P. Sector.
 - (iii) A striking division with armour against Chumbi Valley to be stationed in Gangtok-Kalimpong area in Sikkim to act as a deterrent to Chinese and impose a threat to Shigatse.
 - (iv) A bn worth of Frontier Guards or militia for Sikkim and Bhutan each.
 - (v) A division for NEFA with a bde in Bomdila-Tawang Sector, a bde in Daporijo-Limeking Sector and a third bde in reserve for remainder of NEFA. This Division could contain one-third Assam Rifles type of units. Besides, it also recommended strengthening of the intelligence set-up and deployment of more wireless intercept stations on the frontier and construction of motorable roads to connect battalion bases to the road heads. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. B.M. Kaul said in a report of June 1962 that "I am convinced that the Chinese will not attack any of our positions even if they (viz. Indian Positions) are relatively weaker than theirs". From Official Records. In Mullik's opinion

endorsed by the External Affairs officials present at the November 1961 meeting presided over by Nehru, the Chinese were not likely to react to the establishment of Indian posts over their claim line except in diplomatic protests - certainly not with force. Maxwell, Neville, India's China War, p.221.

60. At that time the state of affairs in the Army, too, was not good. There was widespread frustration in the armed forces, particularly the Army, because of differences between the Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon and the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen K.S. Thimayya.

61. By 1960, the total number of border check-posts had gone upto 67 - 9 in Ladakh, 9 in Himachal Pradesh, 17 in U.P., 10 in Sikkim and 22 in NEFA. The total staff employed in those posts was 1,334. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.136.

62. 4 Infantry Division, with Headquarters in Tezpur, was placed under newly raised 33 Corps (HQ-Shillong) which was responsible for the entire north-eastern region. In 1960, Lt Gen S.P.P. Thorat, GOC-in-C Eastern Command, had prepared of his own an Appreciation for the defence of the McMahon Line. He divided NEFA into two by a "Defence Line" south of which Chinese penetration was not to be accepted at any cost. This defence line ran from Towang to Bomdila, Ziro, Daporijo, Along, Roing, Tezu, Lohitpur, Hayuliang and Jairampur. The northern sector was to be defended by 90 platoons of Assam Rifles and the southern by three divisions of Army. In the "Defence Line" of revised appreciation for 1961, Roing was removed. From Official Records.

63. The poor state of communications delayed forward moves of 7 bde and it was only in April 1961 that the Bde Hqs could move to Towang. Ibid., The tasks given to the bde were :-

- (i) defend Towang - Primary role;
- (ii) prevent any penetration of the McMahon Line;
- (iii) establish Assam Rifles posts ; and
- (iv) assist Assam Rifles posts.

Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder (The Curtain-Raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962) (Bombay, 1969), p.118.

5 Inf Bde was sent to Walong to support the Assam Rifles, if need arose. The policing of Lohit Frontier Division, as of other NEFA divisions, was the responsibility of a battalion of the Assam Rifles. From Official Records.

64. From Official Records.

65. Border Roads completed the road connecting Foothill with Towang via Bomdila in eighteen months. Mankekar, D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.31.

66. Code-name given to a plan to establish Assam Rifles posts along the McMahon Line from Khinzemane in the west to the India-Tibet Burma tri-junction. It was to have been completed by the end of July 1962. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Towang, 1962 (New Delhi, 1981), p.16.

67. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, pp.323-324.

68. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Towang 1962, p.17.

69. From Official Records.

70. Eastern Command had demanded one Inf Bde HQrs with five bns instead of one bde group with three bns already earmarked for U.P.-Tibet border and the Western Command asked for an additional bde HQrs with three bns as against the one bn earmarked already for the defence of the Himachal Pradesh-Tibet border. From Official Records.

71. From Official Records.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. For example, Zarsar in South-East Ladakh and Qizil Langar between Murgu and DBO. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.309.

75. For example, Hot Springs Post. Ibid.

76. For example, at Sultan Chushku, about 16 kms south of Murgu and at Phutsang La. The second post was, however, to be abandoned during the winter. Ibid.

77. Advance HQ 114 Inf Bde had moved from Srinagar to Leh on 1 May 1960. From Official Records.

78. Ibid. Keeping in view all considerations affecting the defence of Ladakh, a Brigade Group consisting of five battalions was considered essential. However, due to various factors, like the availability of aircraft, flying conditions, building up of maintenance stocks and construction of accommodation and the state of airfields in the theatre, it was not found possible to implement the plan and accordingly it was modified to suit phased induction. In the initial stages, therefore, it was decided to induct four bns, but even this could not materialise in 1960. Instead only two bns could be deployed. From Official Records.

79. According to B.N. Mullik, the vigorous activities on part of the Army for the defence of the border areas from April 1961 were the direct outcome of the advent of Gen P.N. Thapar and Lt Gen B.M. Kaul as COAS and CGS respectively. The Chinese Betrayal, p.310.

80. 'Border Roads' cut the Srinagar-Leh road and made it capable of taking heavy traffic on which military traffic could begin to ply only in May 1962. From Official Records.

81. According to deployment plan, 14 J&K Militia was to look after the area north of the Galwan river, 1/8 GR to hold the area between Galwan river and Chushul and 7 J&K Militia the rest of the area south of Chushul. Jagjit Singh, The Saga of Ladakh, pp.38-39.

82. From Official Records.

83. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, p.80.

84. The establishment of this post in area Charding La was reported on 9 June. From Official Records.

85. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.310.

86. Present at this meeting, besides Nehru, were Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon, new Foreign Secretary M.J. Desai, COAS Gen P.N. Thapar, Lt Gen Kaul, CGS, Director I.B. B.N. Mullik and his Deputy, Hooja, DMO, Brig D.K. Palit, and other officials. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.314. Also From Official Records.

87. From Official Records. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.314, has wrongly given 12 November 1961 as the date of the meeting.
88. According to Neville Maxwell, it was B.N. Mullik who argued that the Chinese intended to come right up to their claim line but that they would keep away where Indian troops were present even if in a small number and hence the Indian Army should quickly move forward to fill the vacuum, as otherwise Chinese were bound to do so within a few months. The final outcome of that meeting was on the lines suggested by him. India's China War, p.221. According to Lt Gen B.M. Kaul, who was also present in that meeting, Nehru framed this policy principally for the benefit of the Parliament and public and also perhaps as a 'strategy of beating the Chinese at their own game'. The Untold Story (New Delhi, 1967) p.281.
89. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.314. Paragraph (a) of the three-paragraph directive pertained to Ladakh sector, paragraph (b) to U.P. and other northern areas and paragraph (c) gave allowance to "the numerous operational and administrative difficulties" in the implementation of (a) and (b). From Official Records.
This policy-directive was mistakenly called the 'forward policy' since it did not include the ingredients of the British policy known by the same name pursued earlier in relation to the frontier. But nomenclature, appearing convenient, stuck.
90. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, pp.314-315.
91. Before this order was issued, Gen Thapar had written to the Defence Minister warning against Chinese reaction to that policy in Ladakh and the problems posed by the inclement weather and inadequacy of logistics for a suitable build-up. However, he had informed that reconnaissance parties had already been ordered towards the Aksai Chin area to establish posts in pursuance of that directive as soon as the weather permitted. From Official Records.
92. From Official Records.
93. From Official Records. The Army HQ order while excluding the following paragraph (c) of the Government directive, "In view of the numerous operational and administrative difficulties,

efforts should be made to position major concentrations of forces along our borders in places conveniently situated behind the forward posts from where they could be maintained logistically and from where they can restore a border situation at short notice" added the concluding portion thereby converting the Government directive into a categorical order.

94. According to Army HQ directive to HQ Eastern Command, it should establish new posts which should be manned by Assam Rifles personnel. Only in critical sectors such as the Tawang sector, regular troops were to be located near the border; in other cases they were to be kept concentrated at suitable locations where they could be more easily supported logistically and from where they could move forward to restore a situation when necessary. From Official Records.
95. From Official Records.
96. Ibid.
97. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.324.
98. From Official Records.
99. Those posts included two in Pangong Lake area, two in Chip Chap area, three in Chushul and one at junction of river Shyok and Galwan, which were established after June 1962. But this figure might not have included temporary/subsidiary posts since the total number of all types of posts established by the troops under that brigade by the end of September 1962 came to forty eight. From Official Records.
100. From Official Records.
101. Ibid.
102. Those sectors were: (i) Pulamsumda - Uttarkashi axis, (ii) Mana-Joshimath and Barahoti - Joshimath axes; and (iii) Lipulekh - Carbyang and Milan - Askot axes.
103. Ibid.
104. A report had pointed out some gaps which were still unoccupied by the Indian Army and the Chinese plan of forward patrolling might result in their intruding into these areas. The assessment recommended that it would be desirable to push forward Army, Assam Rifles or police units to occupy these gaps as early as possible. From Official Records.

105. Foreign and Defence Secretaries, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Defence (H.C. Sarin), the COAS, the Dy COAS, the CGS and Director, Intelligence Bureau were others who attended that meeting.
106. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.326.
107. From Official Records.
108. Ibid.
109. It was stated that the number of the Assam Rifles checkpoints along the NEFA-Tibet border was thirty five. With the establishment of a seasonal post at Chuna/Topgee in the Lungar area by 4 Inf Div, on their own, the number rose to 35 by September 1962. From Official Records.
110. The place actually was Che Dong a few kilometres north of the Dhola feature, but the man on the spot somehow gave it the name of Dhola and it stuck.

The idea was to establish a post at the tri-junction of India-Bhutan and Tibet, but that area being inaccessible due to heavy snow, this place (viz., Che Dong) was selected. Che Dong was north of the McMahon Line marked by a thick line in the available maps. Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, GOC 4 Inf Div is reported to have questioned the siting of the post on that ground but he was told that the line drawn in those maps because of its thickness misrepresented the boundary which should be along the Thagla Ridge to the north on the basis of the watershed principle. Then Gen Prasad made representation to the effect that in that case "either the post should be withdrawn or moved forward to tactically sound position on the Thagla Ridge itself". He was ultimately told in September 1962, that Thagla was Indian territory and we must exercise our right on it. From Official Records.

111. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.43.
112. From Official Records.
113. Maxwell, Neville, India's China War, p.218.
114. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 1 March 1962 WHITE PAPER. VI, p.15.

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115. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 13 March 1962, Ibid., p.18.
116. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 22 March 1962. Ibid., p.24.
117. Ibid.
118. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 30 April 1962. Ibid., p.36.
119. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 14 May 1962. Ibid., pp.4143.
120. Ibid., p.43.
121. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 2 June 1962. Ibid., p.57.
122. Ibid.
123. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 26 July 1962. WHITE PAPER VII. pp.34.
124. Ibid. p.4.
125. In Parliament the note was described as disgraceful, 'a most shocking and surprising document.' Lok Sabha Debates (3rd Series), Vol.6 1962/1884 (Saka) (August 6 to 18, 1962/Sravana 15 to 27, 1884 (Saka), Second Session 13 August 1962. Col.1496.
126. The Hindustan Times, in its two-part editorial "The Road to Dishonour" published on 9 and 10 August 1962, commented that the Government of India note has "all but sanctified the illegal gains of Chinese aggression in Ladakh as the price for the opening of a new round of negotiations with the overlords of Peking. In so doing it has broken faith with the people of India - the people and its Parliament."
127. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 4 August 1962. WHITE PAPER VII. pp.1718.
128. Ibid., p.18.

129. Quoted in Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 22 August 1962. Ibid., p.36.
130. Ibid., p.37.
131. Ibid.
132. By 12 July 1962, the Chinese had set up 9 new posts (7 in Chip Chap River region, one in Chang Chenmo Valley Region and one in Spanggur Region), six of which were located well inside Indian territory even beyond the Chinese claim line as shown in their 1956 maps, (See Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 12 July 1962. WHITE PAPER VI, p.83) bringing their number set up in recent months to 13. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 14 July 1962. Ibid., p.88. Subsequently between 12 July and 22 August 1962, the Chinese set up 18 new posts (ten in Chip Chap region, 2 in Galwan Valley region, four in Pangong-Spanggur region and two in Qara Qash region). Besides, four camps were established and five additional strong points were set up by the Chinese forces around an Indian post on the Galwan river. Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 22 August 1962. Ibid., VII. pp.3233. After establishing one post, on 23 August, provocatively located in close proximity of the supply line to Indian posts (Note, 24 August 1962. Ibid., p.40), the Chinese set up four more posts (2 in Pangong-Spanggur region and 2 in Qara Qash region). Note, 28 August 1962. Ibid., p.47. In the beginning of September, two new posts were set up, one in the Chang Chenmo Valley region and another in the Pangong-Spanggur region. Note, 7 September 1962. Ibid., p.59. By 21 September, the Chinese had established 6 more posts in Ladakh (four in Chip Chap region, one in Qara Qash region and one in Pangong-Spanggur region). Note, 21 September 1962. Ibid., p.82.

In all, the Chinese had, upto the end of September 1962, set up 47 posts (as against 36 set up by Indians) as follows:

- 26 in Chip Chap region
- 2 in Sumdo Region
- 3 in Galwan Valley region
- 5 in Chang Chenmo Valley region
- 6 in Pangong Lake region and
- 5 in Spanggur area

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Practically all those posts were connected by motorable roads. The strength of troops at the Chinese posts varied from one platoon to double companies (about 250 men) as against the strength of the Indian posts which varied from a section (about 10 men) to a platoon (about 30 men). From Official Records.

133. According to an IB review of the situation, made in May 1962, the Chinese had, even as early as April 1962, moved fairly large additional forces to the border and they were hurriedly extending their road communications and building fortifications round their frontier posts. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.339.

Subsequently, it was estimated that the Chinese had concentrated about 40,000 troops (about four infantry divisions) all along the frontier with NEFA, about 30,000 (about three infantry divisions) opposite Ladakh and about 3,000 troops (about a regiment equivalent to an Indian brigade) at Thuling Math facing Bara Hoti in the Central Sector - Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.44.

134. Ibid.

135. From Official Records.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.336. Also From Official Records.

141. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.336.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid.

144. Ibid., p.336.

145. Memorandum given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 8 July 1962. WHITE PAPER, VI, p.78.

146. Notes given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Embassy of China in India, 10 July 1962. Ibid., pp.81-82.

147. Naib Subedar Jang Bahadur Gurung, post Commander, was awarded VSM Class II for his cool bravery displayed in dealing with the situation.
148. From Official Records.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid.
Also Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of Ladakh, p.75.
154. From Official Records.
155. There had been 25 known air violations by Chinese aircraft in NEFA in a couple of months before the October 1962 invasion, obviously on air reconnaissance and photo missions. Mankekar D.R., The Guilty Men of 1962, p.20.
156. From Official Records.
157. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.334.
158. From Official Records.
159. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.343.
Also From Official Records.
160. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.343. Also From Official Records.
161. From Official Records.
162. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.344.
163. Ibid.
164. Ibid.
165. From Official Records. The post Commander had, however, reported the number of the Chinese troops at about six hundred calculating that if he reported that several hundred Chinese troops were threatening his post, it would surely bring the Army to his assistance. Dalvi, J.P. Himalayan Blunder, p.217.

166. From Official Records.
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid.
169. S.K. Lamba, "September 8, 1962 And After", in Rana, Satya Paul (ed), Our Northern Borders - India-China Border Dispute (New Delhi, 1963), p.49.
170. From Official Records.
171. Ibid. This order was issued in anticipation of its confirmation by higher Commands. The confirmation of the order by Army Headquarters was received subsequently.
172. From Official Records.
173. This incident has been mentioned by Neville Maxwell, India's China War, p.253 on the basis of reports in The Times (London) and the Baltimore Sun of 12 September 1962, and the Hindustan Times of 15 September 1962, in its editorial "New Danger" has also referred to it.

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CHAPTER IV

INVASION OF NEFA - FALL OF TAWANG

INDIA ACCEPTS CHINESE CHALLENGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Op. 'Leghorn' with all earnestness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

three following alternatives:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHINA UNLEASHES WAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TOPOGRAPHY OF TAWANG AREA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INDUCTION OF TROOPS

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

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

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

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

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

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

1/9 GR at Tawang

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

1 Sikh at Tenga Valley.

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

HQ 7 Inf Bde

9 Punjab

1/9 GR.

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

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

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HQ 7 Inf Bde - Tawang.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

position of Indian troops was as follows:-

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

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

HQ 7 Inf Bde at Lumpo

Troops under 7 Inf Bde

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HQ 4 Inf Div - Tezpur

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

Tawang sub-sector

HQ 4 Arty Bde - Tawang

Infantry

1 Sikh

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

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

Supporting troops

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nankha Chu Sub-Sector

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

Infantry

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

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

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

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

One Pl - Tsangdhar.

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

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

4 Grenadiers less two Coys - Bridge 1

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

Arty

34(M) Hy Mor Bty less Tp - Tsangdhar

Tp 17 Para Fd Regt Tsangdhar

'C' Coy 6 Mahar MG less One Pl.

One Pl - with 1/9 GR.

One Pl - with 2 Rajput at Bridge 4.

Five Observation Post Parties from 51 Mtn Regt.

Engr

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

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

BATTLE OF NAMKHA CHU

(1) Deployment of Troops

(i) Chinese Forces

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

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

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

(ii) Indian troops

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

(a) Troops at Namkha Chu

Bridge 1 - 2 Coys of 4 Grenadiers with Bn HQ

Bridge 2 - Three Coys of 9 Punjab with Bn HQ

Bridge 3

Bridge 4

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

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

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

Tsangdhar - Two Platoons of 1/9 GR.

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

Dhola Post - One Platoon of 5 Assam Rifles.

Supporting arms/troops

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

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

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

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

Five Observation Post Parties from 51 Mtn Regt.

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

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

(b) Troops at Zimithang-Khinzemane approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(3) Chinese Occupy Tsangdhar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(6) Withdrawal from Namkha Chu

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

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

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

(7) Chinese Occupy Hathongla-Serkhim Area

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

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

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

(8) TAC Headquarters 4 Inf Div Abandon Zimithang

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(9) Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

MVC

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

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

WITHDRAWAL FROM TAWANG

(1) Deployment of Forces:

(i) Chinese

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

(ii) Indian

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

Infantry

1 Sikh

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

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

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

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

Arty

22 Mtn Regt less two Btys

97 Fd Bty

116 Hy Mor Bty (33 Hy Mor Regt)

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

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

1 Sikh -

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

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

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

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

5 Assam Rifles

One Pl 'A' Wing - At Bum La post

In support

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

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

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

One Coy 1 Sikh

One Pl 'A' Wing 5 Assam Rifles

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Troops for defence of Tawang

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

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

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

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

In support

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

(2) Actions on Bum La Axis:

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

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

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

(i) Assam Rifles Post at Bum La attacked.

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

(ii) Attack on IB Ridge

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

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

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

(iii) Engagements at Tongpeng La

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

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

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

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

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

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

PVC

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

VrC

Lt Haripal Kaushak - 1 Sikh
(IC-11811)

(3) Withdrawal to Jang

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4) Chinese Occupy Tawang without Battle

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

Battle for Jang Bridge

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

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

(6) Comments

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

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

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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following words:

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

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

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

From Official Records.

From Official Records. Other three points were:

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

Kaul, B.M., The Untold Story, p.361.
Also From Official Records.

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

From Official Records.

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

From Official Records.

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

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

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

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

45. From Official Records.

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

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

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

46. From Official Records.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

55. From Official Records.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

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

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

60. From Official Records.

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

62. From Official Records.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

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

67. From Official Records.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

208. Ibid.

209. Ibid.

210. Ibid.

211. Ibid.

212. Ibid.

213. Ibid.

214. Ibid.

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CHAPTER - V

DEBACLES AT SE LA AND BOMDILA

After the Indian troops vacated Tawang on 23 October 1962, the Chinese occupied it. But they did not pursue the Indians and stopped their push north of Tawang Chu. There was then a lull in fighting in Kameng which lasted a little over three weeks. The period of lull was utilised by the invaders in making preparations for further thrust into Indian territory beyond Tawang.

CHINA PREPARES

As it had been witnessed, the Chinese strategy in the Korean War had been to make a strong push towards some pre-determined military objective, then halt, replenish the supplies and ammunition, bring up the formations again to adequate strength and then make a further push towards a new objective(1). In this case the Chinese needed a 'breather' badly for the following reasons:-

- (a) Nearly five battalion strength of the Chinese attacking force on the two approaches - Dhola-Tsangdhar-Lumpo and Khinzemane-Shakti had suffered many casualties during its march to Tawang from the morning (0500 hrs) of 20 October to night of 22-23 October. The third Chinese column - more than one battalion - which came through Bum La and reached Tawang on the evening of 23 October, had also suffered many casualties. This total force of approximately two to three "Regiments" or brigades had been sufficiently reduced as the dead and wounded soldiers had not been replaced by fresh induction.
- (b) The Chinese had considerably extended their Line of Communication up to little short of Jang. The whole area up to Tawang from the Indo-Tibetan border was a mountainous terrain and only tracks existed there. The Chinese were finding it difficult to supply even food-stuffs to their advancing troops. There was no question of moving heavy guns. A road connecting Bum La with Tawang had to be constructed. Immediately after 24 October, the Chinese got themselves busy in constructing that road.

- (c) Bridge 4 over Tawang Chu at Jang had been blown by the Indian army, and the Chinese were not in a position to cross the river in sufficient strength. For that purpose a bridge had to be constructed.

To gain time for their troops to regroup themselves and make necessary preparations before commencing fresh attacks, the People's Republic of China, on 24 October 1962, issued a statement a copy of which was sent by Premier Chou En-lai to Prime Minister Nehru, through the Chinese Charge d' Affairs in Delhi on the evening of 24 October(2). The circumstances in which the statement was made and the conditions stipulated by China in that statement for a 'friendly settlement' of the boundary question were such that there could hardly be any doubt that it would be rejected by India. But this exercise, apart from its propoganda value, provided a good cover for the lull in fighting which was, in fact, utilised by China to make preparations for further offensive.

REORGANISATION IN IV CORPS

The lull period was made use of by India, too, to organise defences to check further enemy advance. HQ IV Corps issued the following orders(3) to advance HQ 4 Inf Div at 2305 hrs on 23 October for the immediate disposition of troops and their tasks:-

- (a) 4 Arty Bde, with under command 18 Fd Coy, already located at Jang, and one Inf Bn from Tawang, should hold Jang, and it should not be allowed to fall into enemy hands.
- (b) HQ 62 Inf Bde with one Bn from Tawang and 4 Sikh LI (ex 48 Inf Bde) will hold Se La.
- (c) HQ 65 Inf Bde was assigned the responsibility of Bomdila defences.

To instil confidence in the rank and file of the Army, some important changes in the Command of IV Corps and its units were made. Lt Gen B.M. Kaul who was at that time lying sick in Delhi, was replaced on 24 October by Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh as the new GOC IV Corps. Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, who was at that time occupying the post of Director General, National Cadet Corps at Army Headquarters, replaced Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad as GOC 4 Inf Div wef 25 October 1962. Gen Pathania had a good combat record and was highly decorated officer, having won the Military Cross in World War II and MVC in November 1948 during Jammu and Kashmir Operations.

A new Division, viz., 2 Inf Div, was created to look after the operations in all the NEFA areas other than Kameng Frontier Division, with Maj Gen M.S. Pathania, a cousin of Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, as its GOC. Maj Gen M.S. Pathania was GOC 23 Inf Div at that time.

While new troops were being inducted, changes were made at the level of Brigade Commanders as well. Brig Kalyan Singh was moved to IV Corps and in his place Brig G.S. Gill became Commander, Arty Bde under 4 Inf Div.

Brig Hoshiar Singh, an officer with an outstanding war record, replaced Brig N.K. Lal as Commander 62 Inf Bde and Brig A.S. Cheema succeeded Brig G.M. Sayeed as Commander 65 Inf Bde.

The new Div Cmdr, Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, arrived at Tezpur, along with newly appointed Corps Commander, Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh, on 24 October, where the Army Commander Lt Gen L.P. Sen gave him the task of defending area Se La-Dirang-Bomdila. This task was given the code name Operation OLYMPUS with effect from 0001 hrs on 10 November 1962.

7 Inf Bde with its four battalions (viz., 9 Punjab, 2 Rajput, 1/9 GR and 4 Grenadiers) having completely disintegrated, the troops available under 4 Inf Div at that time consisted of elements of three scattered battalions - 1 Sikh, 4 Garhwal Rifles and 13 Dogra. While efforts were being made to bring in more troops for induction in the area, the new GOC established his Rover Gp at Shukla Camp between Senge and Se La and shifted his Main HQ, 4 Inf Div from Tezpur to Dirang. HQ 4 Arty Bde also handed over its additional responsibility of commanding infantry elements to 62 Inf Bde on 27 October and joined main Div HQ at Dirang.

To bring confidence in the troops and to re-activate their energies, the new Corps Commander on 28 October issued a Special Order(4) of the Day, as under:-

"On Taking over command of IV Corps at this critical juncture, I am conscious of the great responsibility that has fallen on my shoulders. My task however is made easy by the knowledge of your skill, tenacity, courage and endurance as soldiers and patriotic fervour as citizens of our great country. I should like you to know that I am mighty proud to be in command of such a fine body of men. With abiding faith in our

nation and our leaders and in the sacred cause of the defence of our motherland, on to battle, and may God be with you".

But, just when the new Corps Commander had completed a recce of the area and was coming to grips with the situation, he was suddenly changed. Exactly after five days of taking over command of IV Corps, Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh was replaced and Lt Gen B.M. Kaul assumed the command of the Corps again on 29 October 1962.

TOPOGRAPHY OF SE LA, DIRANG DZONG AND BONDILA SECTORS

(A) Ridges/Rivers(5)

The Se La, Dirang Dzong and Bomidila sectors are marked by high mountain ridges. The Se La Ridge emanates from the main Himalayan range at the orographical knot of the Kangto (7,090 metres) massif. It forms the watershed between the Nyamjang Chu and the Bhareli (Kameng) river basins, and separates the Tawang Sector from the Dirang Dzong Sector. The Ridge runs south-west and terminates in the immediate north-east of Dewangiri (Devsthan). Its prominent passes are the Tse La, Kye La, Se La, Chebra La and Orka La, all of them over 4000 metres in altitude. In the northern vicinity of the Orka La and Se La Ridge sends out a bifurcation which after separating from the parent feature runs south-east and then east, making a curve - the Mandala arc or Ridge.

The Mandala Ridge forms the watershed between the basins of the Dirang Chu and the Rupa Chu. It ends at the confluence of these two rivers. The average height of this Ridge is 2,700 metres. Its important passes are the Samya La, the Manda La, the Rib La (Bomidila II) and Bomidila.

The Lagan Ridge is a spur of the Se La Ridge and bifurcates from the latter in the vicinity of Tse La, running in a southerly direction, and crossed by the Poshing La (3,660 metres). From here, the Ridge starts losing height till it comes down to 1,525 metres near Thembang. The turning in an easterly direction, it disappears at the junction of the Bhareli (Kazeng) and the Dirang Chu rivers.

In the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, the Bomidila area is peculiar, as at some places the altitude of the Piri range is more than three thousand metres, whereas in other parts of the State, the heights of the outer hills seldom exceed even 1,500 metres. The Piri Ridge, which is a bifurcation of the Se La offshoot and separates from it near the Orka La, runs

parallel to the Mandala Ridge in an arc. Its bulge is towards the plains of Assam, extending a few km to the south of Shergaon. It runs up to the great bend of Bhareli (Kameng) river.

Besides the Piri range, there are many of its branches, each separating a pair of streams rising from the Piri range itself. These spurs have given a south-easterly direction to these streams and rivulets.

The main river of the Se La sector is the Nuranang Chu. It emanates from the Se La (Pass) and flowing from south to north, joins the waters of the Tawang Chu, a little north of Jang. An important tributary of the Nuranang Chu, which has its source at Kye La joins the Nuranang Chu just below Se La.

The main river of the Dirang Dzong area is the Dirang Chu, which has as its catchment areas the eastern and the northern slopes of the Se La Ridge and the Mandala spur respectively. The main tributary of Dirang Chu is the Sangti Chu. The Sangti Chu, which drains the southern slopes of the upper Se La Ridge, joins the Dirang Chu about 3 km west of Dirang Dzong.

Bhareli (Kameng) river is the biggest river of the Bomdila Sector. Its main tributary is the Rupa Chu which emanates from Orka La. Rupa village is situated on the bank of this stream. The Rupa Chu also separates the Piri range from the Mandala Ridge.

Besides the Rupa Chu, there are many other rivulets in the region: the Belsiri is notable among them.

(B) Main Defensive Positions

Se La, Dirang and Bomdila were the main defensive positions selected in Kameng Frontier Division after the withdrawal of Indian troops from Tawang.

Se La

Se La, situated at a height of 4,190 metres is the gateway to the Jang-Tawang sector. It can be said to be an impregnable defensive position due to its horse-shoe formation, rugged peaks, and great height(6). The flat area on the top is extensive and includes two small lakes bordered by large patches of rhododendron bushes(7). About 3 km to the west of the Se La top, the valley begins to drop sharply towards Jang and narrows down. At Nuranang, about 10 km from the top, the valley becomes quite constricted, with

wooded slopes rising sharply on either side(8). It lies behind a formidable river obstacle - the Tawang Chu - at Jang. The Senge area provides an excellent supporting depth for the main position at Se La. But there were tracks that by-passed Se La. However, there could be mud only with Yak-borne or porter-based forces, and that too not in any great strength(9).

Dirang Dzong

The village where HQ 4 Inf Div were located during the second phase of the operations, is situated approximately 150 metres above and on the right bank of the Dirang Chu(10). At an altitude of 1,670 metres (5,500 ft), it was a most inviting location, not only because of the comfortable huts it offered but also because it was a good twelve to fifteen hundred metres below the cold Senge Camp, where TAC HQ of 4 Div were located. The place contained many structures and barracks constructed by the Border Roads Organisation. However, the location was a tactical death trap, boxed in and with high Ridges and peaks surrounding it on all sides(11). Moreover, many tracks existed which easily by-passed the location.

Bomdila

Situated at an altitude of 2835 metres, Bomdila lay about 160 km to the north of Tezpur, and 181 km from Tawang(12). It was the headquarters of the Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA. A little less than 2 km north of the town was situated the pass Bomdila(13). The pass Bomdila II (also called Rib La) was about 305 metres (1,000 ft) above the main pass.

(C) Road Communication

Se La, Dirang Dzong and Bomdila were located along the road connecting Tawang with Foot Hills. When hostilities with China broke out in October 1962, the road from Tawang to Se La was only jeepable, but from Se La to Foot Hills, it was a fair weather one-ton road(14). The whole road alignment was cut across the grain of the slopes of the Himalayas and was subject to frequent landslides. The road from Se La that was in use in 1962 passed through Senge Dzong, Sappers Camp, Dirang Dzong, Munna Camp, Bomdila, Rupa, Piri La, and down to Chako and Foot Hills. A new alignment was subsequently brought into use because the old one was prone to landslides.

Starting from Jang the road along the south bank of Nuranang Chu, crossed it at Bridge 3 before reaching Nuranang. Nuranang, now called Jaswantgarh, was 18 km south of Jang. Se La was the highest point

crossed on way from Tawang to the plains of Assam. From Se La, the road went down 27 km to reach Senge (2810 metres). From Senge the road covered another 25 km, crossing Bridge 2 and a sharp turn near Nyukmadong, before reaching Sappers' Camp (1,704 metres). Further south-east from Sappers' Camp, the road crossed Dirang Chu at Bridge 1 and then reached Dirang Dzong (1,630 metres), situated in an open valley and about 10 km from Sappers' Camp. From Se La to Dirang Dzong, the descent was fairly steep and the road passed between densely-wooded ranges on either side, each rising to over 4,000 metres. Before reaching Bomdila from Dirang Dzong - a distance of 42 km - the road passed through Munna Camp (1,361 metres), about 12 km south-east of Dirang Dzong, and then, after running along the river Dirang Chu for a little distance, the road climbed to the pass Bomdila (2835.3 metres), two km short of the town of that name. About 20 km south of Bomdila was Rupa(15). Throughout, the road ran through high mountains and deep valleys, and on many occasions, as for example between Jang and Nuranang and between Se La and Nyukmadong, the gradient of the road was steep(16).

(D) Routes/Tracks

Many foot-paths, and mule tracks emanated from both the right and left sides of the main Bum La axis coming from the Indo-Tibet border. While the foot-paths and goat tracks were being used by the local population to reach their settlements, the traders used the other routes to reach places in India - in the Assam plains - from Tibet, as these were shorter than the main trade route. The Chinese, during the 1962 Operations, were able to use some of these traders' tracks to their advantage to by-pass the Indian defensive positions/garrisons at Se La, Dirang Dzong and Bomdila, and also to cut Indian Line of Communication. Some of the important tracks used by the Chinese during the operations were(17):-

On the right side or south of the main road axis

- (a) Mukto Bridge area to Senge Dzong, via Chebra La.
- (b) Chebra La to Dirang Dzong along right bank of Dirang river.
- (c) Across Tawang Chu, then through Bhutan - Sakteng Orka La along Pobrang Chu to Bridge 1 on the main road, and then to Dirang Dzong.
- (d) Sakteng - down Phudang Chu - Phudang.

The enemy used the first two foot-paths(18) to come to the rear of Indian garrison at Se La and also to cut the Lines of Communication of the 4 Inf Div at various places. The remaining two tracks were circuitous and also passed through Bhutan. Moreover, as these tracks were not established ones, a large body of troops could not be moved through them(19).

On the left side of the main road axis from North.

(a) Chuna - Se La

Chuna (3,965 metres) in the Mago area, which used to be Indian summer post, stood connected with Tsona Dzong and Lhuntza Dzong in Tibet through Tulung La and Pen La. The track came down to Gorio Chu, where it crossed the river over a wooden bridge. The track coming from Tse La in the east joined this track before it crossed the river. The track then came to Truke La (4,575 metres), after crossing the valley of Gorio Chu. From Truke La, the track ran south to Luguthang and then moved in the south-westerly direction and climbed up the Se La Ridge to avoid deep gorges in the lower reaches of the river, specially near nullah junctions. It then descended into the valley of the Nuranang Chu tributary, which emanated from Kye La, and finally terminated at Se La (Pass) after skirting the two glacial lakes(20), embedded in the pass itself.

There were several narrow footpaths also from Mago valley to Dirang valley across the Se La Ridge. One of them started near Luguthang passed through Yangyap La and terminated near Nyukmadong on the main road. During 1962 Operations, the Chinese used this track when they established a road block near Nyukmadong, 52 km south of Se La.

(b) Chuna-Lap-Tse La-Poshing La - Lagam-Pangma -
Thembang - Rahung - Bomdila Track.

As already mentioned in (a) above, the track coming from Chuna to Gorio Chu bifurcated before crossing the river. An offshoot of this track continued to the east and reached Lap. Here it crossed the Gorio Chu valley and climbed up to Tse La. From Tse La, the track turned south-west for some distance and then turned south-east and reached Poshing La. From Poshing La, the track came down to Lagam monastery, passed through Pangma (2,000 metres) and then moved down to Thembang, a village on a spur over-looking the main valley between Se La and Bomdila(21). After crossing the river, the track met the main road near Rahung village.

(c) Tungri - Dirang Dzong Track

From the main track, Lap Bomdila, a foot-path emanated, from Tungri, some distance north of Lagam, and came direct to Dirang Dzong. Yet another track joined Tungri to Munna Camp on the main road, via Chongdor.

(d) Thembang - Dirang Dzong Track

Another track emanated from Thembang, took a north-westerly direction and terminated a little north of Dirang Dzong on the main road. This track was comparatively less difficult to traverse than the Tungri-Dirang Dzong track described above(22).

(e) Dirang Dzong - Manda La - Phudung Track

From Dirang Dzong a track went up to Manda La and then to Phudung, after which it descended into Rupa Valley. After crossing Shergaon and Pankim La, the track ended at Udalgi.

The Chinese blocked the Manda La track on 20 November, when bulk of the Indian troops trapped forward were using this route to escape to the plains. This Chinese infiltration caused heavy casualties among the Indian troops(23).

TROOP-BUILD UP IN THE AREA(A) Chinese

Extensive patrolling was being done by the Indian troops to know the Chinese movements. Aerial photography was also being carried out. All these revealed that the Chinese had improved the vehicular traffic from Tsona Dzong to Shao. Continuous flow of vehicular traffic was also observed on the route from Shao, the Chinese forward post in Tibet, to Tawang through Bum La. It was noted with surprise that the Chinese were able to construct the road to Tawang in less than three weeks. Rapid road development towards Tawang by the Chinese indicated their intention to complete the stocking before snowfall. They had also improved the road from Tawang to Jang, constructed a large bridge over Tawang Chu and also repaired Bridge 4.

As appreciated by the HQ IV Corps vide their Operational Instruction No.3(24), issued to 4 Inf Div on 9 November 1962, the Chinese had, by the middle of November 1962, i.e., before the start of the second phase of Chinese offensive, concentrated two divisions(25) in the Tawang area. An estimated one Chinese division crossed the Tawang Chu for operations against Indian positions in Kameng Frontier Division in the second phase. Of this force, approximately one Regiment (equivalent to an Inf Bde) was pushed through

Mukto Bridge by the evening of 15 November. As had been visualised by the HQ IV Corps(26), elements of this force tracked down to Senge Dzong and Dirang Dzong to cut the line of communication of 4 Inf Div at various places from south west of the main road. Simultaneously, two Chinese brigades crossed the Tawang Chu nearabout Bridge 4 and Mago for operations from the north and east of the main road axis. Of one of those brigades, one battalion was assigned the task of attacking Indian covering troops (4 Garhwal Rifles) and the other two battalions crossed the Se La Ridge via Kye La to by-pass Indian defensive positions at Se La and to harass the Indian troops in the area. Elements from this Chinese column infiltrated into the Dirang valley in the east of Nyukmadong Ridge and took up positions on a dominating feature north of the village, Nyukmadong. Of the other brigade, two battalions reached the vicinity of Poshing La through the track via Tse La(27).

(B) Indian (under 4 Inf Div)

By 28 October 1962, in this first reconnaissance carried out after taking over Command of 4 Inf Div from Maj Gen Niranjan Prasad, Maj Gen A.S. Pathania felt that in order to effectively stop an enemy offensive along the Tawang-Foot Hill main approach, there were two vital grounds to be held, i.e. Se La-Senge Ridge and the Bomdila feature. As these two points were separated by a distance of about 104 km, it was felt necessary to station some troops mid-way. The GOC established his Headquarters at Dirang Dzong and Rover Group at Senge Dzong. In his first appreciation made in the first week of November, the GOC had asked for a force of nearly 17 battalions to ensure a coordinated defence of the Se La - Dirang Dzong - Bomdila area(28). However, troops made available were 12 infantry battalions (of which two viz. 6/8 GR and Jammu and Kashmir Rifles reached the area of operations towards the fag end of the fighting and hence made little impact on the course of the operations), which were placed under three Brigade Headquarters - 62, 48 and 65 - at Se La, Bomdila and Dirang Dzong in the above order of priority.

Se La Sector:

Indian Army's plan was to convert Se La into a 'Fortress'. Se La was indeed a natural fortress whose occupation provided every tactical advantage against any attacker. It could never easily be stormed frontally. The new Commander 62 Inf Bde, Brig Hoshiar Singh, had taken over the command on 29 October 1962. By mid-November, all the five battalions earmarked for the defence of Se La, under 62 Inf Bde, were fully

employed. A few anti-personnel mines had been laid around the covering defensive positions of the battalions and the Brigade HQ. The Brigade was being maintained almost completely by air. It had about first-line scales of ammunition (SAA) and ten days' stocks stocked with the units. Artillery, however, had only one and a half scale of first line(29) ammunition. The deployment of troops in Se La sector is as follows:-

HQ 62 Inf Bde - a few kilometres south of Se La.

Infantry

4 GARHWAL RIFLES - as covering troops deployed between Nuranang and Jang (Area Bridge 3)

2 SIKH LI (ex 65 Inf Bde) }
4 SIKH LI (ex 48 Inf Bde) } All deployed at
1 SIKH } Se La or nearabout.

13 DOGRA (ex 11 Inf Bde) Senge Dzong(30).

Supporting Arms(31)

Artillery

HQ 5 Fd Regt with its own 95 and 96 Fd Btys; and under its command 87 Fd Bty of 6 Fd Regt(32)

One Battery (less section) of 22 Mtn Regt

'C' Tp Hy Mor Bty(33) of 36 (Maratha) Lt Regt (Towed)

MMG

One Pl of 'A' Coy 7 Mahar (MG) plus a section(34) of 6 Mahar (MG)

Engineers

19 Fd Coy

Dirang Dzong Sector

65 Inf Bde, which completed its move to Dirang Dzong area by 10 November 1962, was assigned the task of defending the general area from international boundary with Bhutan and Pobrang Chu to Dirang Dzong and (excluding) Bridge 2(35). 65 Inf Bde group had reached Bomdila on 24 October with its battalions -

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4 Rajput, and 2 Sikh LI. But 2 Sikh LI was taken away from 65 Inf Bde and placed under 62 Inf Bde. Instead, 1 Madras and 19 Maratha LI were to come under its command on reaching the operational area. In the meantime, the Commander of 65 Bde was changed. Brig A.S. Cheema replaced Brig G.M. Sayeed on 3 November. After 48 Inf Bde arrived at Bomdila, a demarcation in the area of responsibility was made. Under the revised task, 48 Inf Bde was made responsible for the Bomdila sector and 65 Inf Bde was assigned the task of defending the Dirang Dzong sector and to reinforce, as a secondary task, 62 Inf Bde in case of need.

The deployment of 65 Bde Gp and units under it on 12 November 1962 was as under:-

HQ 65 Inf Bde with

Sig Coy and LAD

One Pl 19 Maratha LI
(as defence platoon)

Tac HQ 65 Inf Bde

Infantry

19 Maratha LI

Bn HQ with one coy
plus Pl

Two Coys and one Pl

}
}
} Area Ewang, near
} Sappers' Camp.
- Area Sappers' Camp

- Area Dirang
- deployed in the
north (Pt 2090),
northwest (Chug),
South - west
(Pt 2900) and west
of Dirang
(Lunchhana).

4 Rajput

Bn HQ

One Coy

One Coy

Two Coys

- Area Sappers' Camp
- Area Bridge 1
- North of Sappers'
Camp
- South (Lubrang
area) and south -
west (Dangsikpu)
area of Sappers'
Camp(36).

Supporting Arms

Arty

HQ 6 Fd Regt with 86 Fd Bty(37); under command one Tp of Mtn Bty of 22 Mtn Regt (in support of Pl 4 Rajput south of Sappers' Camp)(38).

MMG

One Pl of 'A' Coy of 7 Mahar (Pl HQ and one section with 4 Rajput and one Section with 19 Maratha LI)(39).

Armour

'B' Sqn Less one Troop, 7 Cavalry(40).

Besides HQ 4 Inf Div, 4 Arty Bde also had their HQ located in Dirang. As the Div HQ had no troops for its defence, it ordered 48 Inf Bde and 62 Inf Bde to send troops to Dirang for the purpose. Consequently, a Coy of 1 Madras arrived from Bomdila on 16/17 November night and two Coys of 13 Dogra from Senge Dzong reached Dirang on 17/18 November night for the defence of Div HQ(41).

Bomdila Sector

48 Inf Bde, whose 'R' Gp alongwith 1 Sikh LI had arrived in Misamari from Ambala on 25 October, was made responsible for the defence of Bomdila sector on 28 October(42). For this task, two more battalions - 5 Guards (moved from Jungle Warfare School, Dehradun)(43) and 1 Madras (from OP RAJI area)(44) were placed under it. 1 Madras arrived in Bomdila on 27 October and 5 Guards concentrated there on 7 November. The bulk of the third battalion - 1 Sikh LI - reached Bomdila on 11 November.

On or about 11 November, the forces under 48 Inf Bde in the Bomdila sector were:-

Infantry

1 Madras
1 Sikh LI
5 Guards

Supporting Arms

Artillery

HQ 22 Mtn Regt with one Mtn Bty(45); under command 135 Hy Mor Bty less one Tp(46) and 88 Fd Bty of 6 Fd Regt(47).

MMG

'A' Coy of 7 Mahar (MG) less two Pls(48).

Armour

One Troop (3 tanks) of 7 Cavalry(49).

Engineers

15 Fd Coy

On 15 November, 48 Inf Bde issued its Operational Order No.1(50) which mentioned that the Bde Gp would occupy the defences with a view to holding Bomdila. The brigade defences were based on Bomdila Pass I and II, as they covered approaches from the north and dominated Bomdila town, dropping zone and helipad. No penetration was to be accepted in the defence sector and the whole area was divided into 3 zones, making each battalion responsible for one of the zones.

1 Madras was to be deployed on the right flank, high ground with Palit Hill being the dominating position. The battalion was assigned the tasks of denying to the enemy track from Hut to Bomdila, observation of Bomdila DZ and helipad, and to dominate the locality(51). 88 Fd Bty of 6 Fd Regt and one section MMGs were also placed under the Battalion.

The CO of 5 Guards with one officer and four ORs had left for Bomdila from Misamari on 29 October, two days after the battalion had concentrated at Misamari to recce the area for deployment of the battalion. The battalion could, however, concentrate at Bomdila only on 7 November. 5 Guards were given the responsibility of defending Rupa - Bomdila axis, and deny the enemy Observation of Bomdila DZ/helipad(52).

1 Sikh LI less 'B' Coy had left Foot Hills on 9 November and after forced marching for 3 days reached Bomdila on 11 November. The battalion was given the task of holding Bomdila Pass I and II(53-54). One Section MMGs, One Tp of 135 Hy Mor Bty and one Tp of mountain guns were in support for 1 Sikh LI. Administrative build-up situation on 14 November 1962 was as follows:-

(a) Se La

Ammunition	- One first line
Rations	- Ten days

(b) Dirang

- Ammunition - One first line
- Rations - Fifteen days

(c) Bomdila

- Ammunition - One first line for SAA and half first line of Arty ammunition (which was built upto one first line by 17 November)
- Rations - Fifteen days.

Main reasons for the slow administrative build-up were:-

- i. Insufficient MT especially Nissan 1 Ton, which could operate upto Se La.
- ii. Turn round of vehicles from Misamari to Dirang was 3 days when road conditions were good.
- iii. Heavy requirement for daily maintenance by air.
- iv. Sudden induction of troops that arrived without even the first line transport.
- v. Airlift was available upto about 50 tons a day only, whereas there was a requirement of nearly 250 tons a day(55).

In other words, on 14 November the GOC 4 Inf Div had only 2/3rd of his minimum requirement of 17 Inf Battalions, 1/3rd Field Artillery and 1/4th Mountain Artillery and Heavy Mortars.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES UPTO 16 NOVEMBER

(A) 62 Bde Sector

Intensive patrolling was being carried out by all the units under 62 Inf Bde to find out enemy's activities, to recce various tracks/approaches available to the enemy which he could use to outflank the main Indian defensive positions, and to keep the enemy at bay. In this task the troops of 4 Garhwal Rifles, played active part.

4 Garhwal Rifles was positioned in the area between Nuranang and Jang which covered Bridge 3. It was responsible for the defence of the Nuranang valley. 'A' Coy was positioned ahead of other Coys on the left of the road on the slopes - midway between Bridge 3 and 4(56). 'B' Coy, (which was directly under the advance HQ 4 Inf Div at the time of the Battle of Namkha Chu, had initially withdrawn to Dirang Dzong but by the middle of November had rejoined the battalion) with Sec MMG from 6 Mahar(57) was backing up 'A' Coy and covered the left flank of Battalion HQ which was immediately south of Bridge 3. 'D' Coy was forward on the right side of the road. 'C' Coy was in depth on the right side of the road. One section of mountain guns (2(D) Mtn Bty of 22 Mt Regt) was deployed on the right side, behind 'C' Coy(58).

The battalion, which covered the withdrawal of the Tawang garrison across the Tawang Chu, had suffered from confusion and disorder on reaching south of the river. As a result many of its troops ran southward towards Se La in what appeared to be a state of demoralisation. But they were halted, grouped together and the situation was stabilised(59). They then occupied delaying positions at Jang where they battled with the Chinese(60), inflicted casualties on the enemy and when the defence of the Bridge 4 over Tawang Chu became untenable, they, as per plan, got it demolished on 24 October 1962, around 1800 hrs(61). As it appeared that the Chinese had no intention to continue further advance, the battalion was to be prepared to stay for the on-coming winter in its 'Delaying Position'(62). The Garhwalis thus settled down in the Nuranang area to perform their duties as covering troops for main defences of 62 Bde sector. They were to hold the area "as long as the enemy build up permits"(63). In the meantime, the covering troops were "to harass the enemy and impede his build up" in order to provide more time to induct additional troops(64) in the defensive positions of 4 Inf Div.

During the period 24 October - 16 November 1962, 4 Garhwal Rifles carried out aggressive patrolling in the no-man's land. A fighting patrol which included Major H.B. Rai, Coy Cmdr 4 Garhwal, and Maj Goswami of 2 Derajat Bty, covered the area upto Mukto suspension bridge over Tawang Chu from 1 to 6 November 1962. They harassed enemy on the other side of the river by directing Howitzer shelling on their concentrations. Finally Mukto Bridge abutments were partially destroyed(65).

On 11 November, reports were received that the enemy was moving troops, in small groups, from Rho village towards Meling. Movement of a large number of mules was also observed eastward north of Tawang Chu. To assess the situation, a patrol, consisting of one JCO and 40 ORs, under 2/Lt V.K. Goswamy was sent to village Rho on 14 November at 1500 hrs. The patrol established a firm base in an area south of Tawang Chu. It observed about 20 Chinese near a hut in Rho village across the river. 2/Lt Goswamy, with seven men, crossed Tawang Chu with the help of a log. Lt Goswamy was successful in capturing a Chinese soldier who was standing outside a hut. The patrol lobbed hand grenades inside the hut which killed and wounded all the occupants. In the meantime, the enemy got alerted and they opened fire all over the place. The sub-unit of the patrol, which was allocated in support of this patrol, on hearing the enemy fire moved across Tawang Chu to create further confusion in the enemy and to facilitate the withdrawal of Goswamy's patrol. In order to avoid fire from Chinese weapons sited on fixed lines by night, Lt Goswamy decided to roll down from precipitous heights to reach the river. During this process of rolling down, the Chinese prisoner was killed. His arms and equipment were, however, brought back. The patrol returned safely to firm base at 0100 hrs without any casualty(66). Lt V.K. Goswamy was later on awarded Vr C for his exemplary courage, initiative and leadership.

Besides the above, the battalion had been regularly informing the HQ 62 Inf Bde about:-

- (a) Movement of enemy troops and loaded mules along the track north of Tawang eastward towards Chuna. This happened almost daily. These very forces obviously debouched themselves to Kye La behind Se La and Dirang Dzong.
- (b) Rapid progress in the construction of the road from Bum La to Tawang.
- (c) Movement of enemy across the Mukto Bridge in single file towards the Bhutan border. These troops apparently moved in that direction to cut off line of withdrawal of Indians. A portion of it moved to Dirang Dzong(67).

But, unfortunately, no proper notice of those reports was taken. In fact, higher Headquarters admonished the reporting units for sending "exaggerated" reports about the enemy movements and activities(68).

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By 16 November, the Chinese had succeeded in extending Bum La road to Tawang and constructing a log bridge over Tawang Chu approximately 275 metres west of the destroyed Bridge 4. In spite of best efforts of Arty elements attached to 4 Garhwal to harass the enemy, the Chinese succeeded in crossing the river. Thereafter, hectic Chinese build-up began against the Garhwalis. At this juncture, CO 4 Garhwal spoke to Maj H.B. Rai, Coy Cmdr 4 Garhwal from Brigade HQ ordering him to take out a patrol to area behind the battalion's defences and towards north-east of Kye La. As claimed by Maj Rai, in view of the prevailing situation, he protested against this order. The CO then came down to Battalion HQ at about 0400 hrs (17 November) and repeated the same order, Maj Rai again resisted pleading to let him remain with the battalion. CO 4 Garhwal then consulted Brigade Cmdr and as per the wishes of the Bde Cmdr, ordered Maj Rai to take out a patrol to find feasibility of establishing a Coy defence in that area and whether local resources were available for the same.

Maj Rai alongwith 2 weak sections, left at about 0900 hrs on 17 November, by which time the Chinese attack on forward positions had already started. After having quickly finished the task, the patrol was on its way back on 18 November morning when enemy mortar shells fell amidst them. Soon a platoon under Sub Sardar Singh Aswal which had been attacked by the enemy also joined them. A patrol sent to the battalion area reported that the 4 Garhwal Rifles had left the area. Moving towards Se La, Maj Rai found it in occupation of the enemy. Major Rai then broke the combined party of about 30 men into five groups, which were to move on their own towards Bomdila. Some of these men perished enroute and others were captured by enemy(69).

2 Sikh LI had reached Se La on 28 October. The main task assigned to the battalion was to check the entry of the enemy to the southern part of the Se La Ridge from the Kye La and to protect the right flank of the Brigade. One Fd Bty was made available to the battalion in support. The deployment of the battalion(70) was as follows:-

Battalion HQ about 4 km ahead of Se La towards Nuranang along the road.

'A' Coy - Kye La (Pass) (4,270 metres)
with one section
of 7 Mahar (MG)

'D' Coy - North-east of Se La. and
approximately 2 km south of
Kye La.

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- 'B' Coy - On a feature (4,850 metres), north-east of Se La.
- 'C' Coy - One km behind battalion HQ with one section road Se La - Jang. of 7 Mahar (MG)

On 1 November, the battalion was ordered to send a patrol under the command of an officer from Kye La to reconnoitre a track from Kye La along nullah to south of Mago Chu and then along south bank of the river to Jang and Bridge 3 and to report on any dispositions of the enemy if seen from south bank of Mago Chu. When this patrol under Captain M.K. Saxena did not turn up at Bridge 3 by the appointed time on 4 November, a patrol of 'D' Coy was sent from Bridge 3 on 5 November to locate Captain Saxena's patrol. 'B' Coy sent another patrol towards south of Mago Chu for the same purpose on 6 November. 'A' Coy sent a third patrol with the same objective. The search patrol located captain Saxena lying with frost bite on the toes approximately 2 km away from Kye La(71).

Lt Col A.R. Irani, the Commanding Officer of the unit, who had been on leave, was recalled and rejoined the unit on 9 November 1962. After appreciating the dispositions on the ground of all the companies, he preferred to reinforce Kye La at least with another company and with one section Medium Machine gun.

The various patrols sent in the area brought some valuable information(72) which indicated that the Chinese were -

- (a) guarding bridge 4 over Tawang Chu in strength;
- (b) holding ridge, north of Rho with more than a battalion;
- (c) holding Iron bridge over Mago Chu; and
- (d) visiting villages south of Mago Chu, and had issued the villagers some sort of a 'pass' to identify them.

Upto 15 November most of Indian patrols had suffered heavy casualties at the hands of the enemy(73). It had a bad effect on the morale of the troops. To boost it up, the Bde Cmdr on a visit to 2 Sikh LI, on 14 November ordered that a strong column of 3 Coys under command of Maj S.S. Jaspal, 2 I/C, 2 Sikh LI, be sent to ascertain the enemy activities at Luguthang and to destroy them if possible. Besides

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two Coys of 2 Sikh LI, one Coy of 1 Sikh and one Pl of 1 Sikh (to carry 3-in mortar ammunition) comprised the column. The column was to be self-sufficient for four days and a Forward Observation Officer also accompanied the column. The column was given the nick name of KAUA(74). The CO of the battalion established his command post at Kye La to watch the progress of the column, which left the battalion HQ at 0430 hrs on 15 November. The column established a night harbour a little short of Luguthang. One platoon from the Coy of 1 Sikh(75) was left behind at a pass as a firm base with a wireless set 31, on the command net of the Column Commander.

At 0005 hrs on 16 November(76), approximately 500 to 600 Chinese attacked the column in its night harbour from all directions. The column gave a good fight for two hours. Due to the nature of the ground, none of the sets could communicate with the control set Kye La, and as such the FOO could not arrange any artillery shoot, although the column was within the range of field guns at Se La. The column Cmdr therefore, gave orders for withdrawal(77). In the meantime, the platoon ex 1 Sikh positioned at firm base was also attacked and thrown back. The route of withdrawal of the whole column was, thus cut off by the enemy. When 2 Sikh LI men reached the firm base, they found enemy already in occupation of the place. The column ultimately returned to battalion HQ by approximately 1100 hrs after suffering heavy casualties - 1 JCO and 59 ORs were reported to be missing. 2/Lt Khaira of 2 Sikh LI was killed during the engagement with the enemy(78). Another strong patrol was sent out to the area at 1100 hrs on 16 November with a view to assist any straggler that might be trying to make for the battalion HQ. This patrol returned to battalion HQ at 1700 hrs after collecting a few wounded soldiers(79).

This episode, it is reported, caused some bad blood between the two battalions. 2 Sikh LI felt badly let down by 1 Sikh(80).

After its withdrawal from the Bum La-Tawant axis on 23 October, 1 Sikh moved to Se La and was deployed under 62 Inf Bde. One Fd Bty and elements of 34 Hy Mor Bty were placed in support of the battalion. The deployment of companies of 1 Sikh was as under(81):-

- Battalion HQ - South of Se La (Pass) on the right side of the road.
- 'A' Coy - High Ground on the right of the Se La.

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- 'B' Coy - South-east of 'A' Coy position.
- 'C' Coy - South-east of 'B' Coy position.
- 'D' Coy - High Ground in the south-west of 'C' Coy position. 3-in mortars - west of 'D' Coy position.

The unit had been sending regular patrols to Kye La, Luguthang and Yangyap La to know the enemy activities and to keep them under check(82). As already narrated, 'A' Coy of the battalion under S/Lt Surendra Dagur had formed part of the three-Company fighting patrol, which was sent to Luguthang on 15 November under the command of 2 I/C of 2 Sikh LI. The men of 1 Sikh had stayed at the firm base, established by this fighting patrol near Dzalung La. They were attacked by the enemy and forced to withdraw(83).

Another patrol of this battalion under Maj A.C. Lahiri, with one platoon of 'B' Coy and two platoons of 5 Assam Rifles, was sent on 17 November 1962 to locate two platoons of Assam Rifles which were positioned at Yangyap La. Before the return of this patrol to its base, the battalion had withdrawn from Se La, and when the patrol came to know about the situation, it also withdrew to Senge/Dirang. This patrol party was ambushed by the enemy on its way and was forced to split itself in small parties(84).

The fourth battalion - 4 Sikh LI - was moved from Dagshai (Simla Hills) as a part of 48 Inf Bde on 22 October 1962, and immediately on arrival in the area it was placed under 62 Inf Bde(85). It reached Se La on 24/25 October. Its Rifle Companies were deployed(86) as under:-

- Battalion HQ - High Ground on the left of 'B' Coy Se La
- 'D' Coy - Nuranang
- 'A' & 'C' Coys - Two-Lake area, north-west of Se La

87 Fd Bty was in support of the battalion and was deployed south of Nuranang.

The battalion was made responsible to protect the left flank of the Bde defences and to prevent the infiltration of the enemy down to Dirang Dzong from the tracks/routes available to the enemy on the left of the road axis, i.e. via Chebra La.

The Unit continuously patrolled the routes coming up from Tawang Chu to the Two-Lake area and Senge Dzong so as to see that the enemy could not by-pass Se La defensive position(87). The troops positioned in the Two-Lake area on 16 November reported movement of more than 1,000 Chinese troops along Bhutan border towards south between the border and the track Chebra La - Jangle CG.

The fifth battalion - 13 Dogra - under 62 Inf Bde was deployed at Senge on the high ground overlooking the Dirang Dzong. It was located midway between Dirang Dzong and Se La(88). The place was 35 km north of Dirang Dzong and 27 km south of Se La.

(B) 65 Bde Sector

The two battalions 4 Rajput and 19 Maratha were sending regular patrols in their area of responsibility on various tracks to get latest information about the Chinese. The Rajputs, whose task was to check the Chinese infiltration from the east, sent one Coy patrol under Maj K.P.P. Nair and on 15 November instructions were issued to reinforce Maj Nair's column for intensifying combing operations in the area(89). The reinforcement patrol was ambushed on its way. When another patrol was sent to retrieve the casualties, it too, was ambushed and failed to return. On 16 November, a Coy strong patrol was sent to the area, but this patrol was also fired upon and had to return to the base(90).

'C' Coy of 19 Maratha under Maj S.D. Parab with a Forward Observation Officer was sent to Tungri via Sangti and Rungza. The AR post Chhangla had been withdrawn earlier and there was no communication with the Coy of 5 Guards that had been sent to Chhangla a day earlier. At 1400 hrs on 17 November, 'C' Coy was ordered to withdraw from Rungza to area Kachow and occupy a defensive position there(91).

After the 'C' Coy column had left on 16 November, it was decided to send another column to area Chongdor under Maj A.M. Shaikh, consisting of 'D' Coy less one Pl and a Pl from 'B' Coy. This column, with a FOO, going along the Dirang-Munna Camp-Namsu route arrived in the vicinity of Chongdor by the noon of 17 November. There they were halted by the enemy(92). On orders from Bde HQ, all patrols that were out were then ordered to return to battalion HQ as the enemy had established a road block between Dirang and Bomdila(93).

(C) 48 Bde Sector

1 Madras being the first battalion to reach Bomdila, it was given the task of digging positions for the whole Bde(94). Later, after the arrival of other two battalions - 1 Sikh LI and 5 Guards - in the area, all the three battalions got busy in digging their defences. By 16 November all weapon pits, fire trenches and bunkers were ready, except completion of over-head covers in certain cases(95).

All the battalions were also asked to carry out regular patrolling to obtain information about approaches to the Indian positions, enemy movements, etc(96). Accordingly, between 1 and 16 November, 1 Madras sent thirteen patrols in different directions. When 'D' Coy of the battalion under Maj Harbans Singh was sent to Dirang on 15/16 November for the defence of the Div HQ, the defences of the battalion were reorganised. An ad-hoc Coy was formed from Pl of 'C' Coy, Admn Coy personnel and Sp Coy anti-tank platoon to man the position vacated by 'D' Coy on the left flank of the battalion location(97).

Even before the second battalion - 1 Sikh LI - could concentrate in Bomdila, its 'B' Coy under Maj J.L. Sharma was sent as a special patrol on Bhutan border. Till 17 November, the battalion continued preparing main defensive positions, and one first line small arms ammunition was dumped in each Coy locality, except 3-in mortar ammunition which was 280 rounds only(98). Battalion occupied defensive position by 1000 hrs on 16 November. No defence stores like wire/mines were, however, issued to the battalion.

The third battalion - 5 Guards - which was deployed to the rear of 48 Bde defended area, from 4 November onward was ordered to move, piecemeal, to the Poshingla axis, first as a patrol and then as a force to counter the advance of the enemy from that direction. In this way the whole of the battalion was strung out along the Poshingla-Thembang track on 16 November.

BATTLE OF NURANANG

In the morning around 1000 hrs on 16 November, a patrol led by Jem Partap Singh Rawat, Pl Cdr of 'A' Coy which was occupying the forwardmost position in the 4 Garhwal defended area, reported heavy enemy concentration in area Lhau across the Tawang Chu. The patrol also reported, at 1800 hrs, that enemy was constructing a bridge over the river near the old Bridge 4 which had been demolished earlier(99-100).

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At about 0500 hrs on 17 November, Jem Gabar Singh Rawat, Pl Cdr No 2 pl, which was defending the right forward point of 'A' Coy, was informed by his Observation Post that some men were advancing along the road in Monpa dress towards the defences. On receipt of this information, Jem Rawat, along with two riflemen moved forward to personally check up who these men were. When the Pl Cdr was about 30 metres from the men in the Monpa clothes, he could see some rifles sticking out of their dress, which they were trying to conceal. At about the same time, noise of mine explosion was heard from the west flank of the company. It became clear that the Chinese were launching an attack. Jem Rawat and his party lobbed a few grenades on the approaching enemy, and made their way back to the company under covering fire from the forward defended localities(101).

The Chinese were now moving towards the defences, and attacked in a series of waves for about 30 minutes under cover of mortar fire. These attacks were beaten back with heavy casualties to the enemy. The enemy was then seen withdrawing to the rear, possibly to reorganise for a fresh effort. 'A' Company Commander, 2/Lt S.N. Tandon, apprised the Commanding Officer of the situation on telephone and the Commanding Officer reported the details to the Brigade Commander.

In the meantime, the patrol led by Jem Partap Singh Rawat, which had left the locality on 15 November 1962, reported at 0715 hrs on 17 November that approximately two infantry battalions of Chinese were forming up opposite 'A' Coy Defended Locality and were being followed up by a large body of men moving from the direction of Jang. The enemy launched a fresh attack at about 0745 hrs. This time, the attack was preceded by heavy mortar and artillery fire. Centre and right flank of the Garhwalis came again under heavy pressure. It was again mainly due to the hand grenades, that the enemy attack was broken up. This assault lasted for about twenty minutes. Having failed, the enemy withdrew again, leaving more casualties in front of Indian FDLs.

The enemy having regrouped and reorganised, again launched assault on 'A' Company locality at 0910 hrs. The battalion successfully repulsed the enemy attack again, inflicting heavy casualties. As the 'A' Coy of the battalion occupied the forward-most location of the battalion defended area, the enemy could not attack other Coy's locations without over-running 'A' Coy first. Battalion defence was in a deep ravine, with high cliffs on either side and as such flanks of the main battalion HQ were adequately protected(102).

The Chinese once again formed up and launched their most determined attack from three directions - front and both the flanks preceded by very heavy shelling, at 1055 hrs. The attackers came very close to the forward trenches of the front platoon. Nk Ranjit Singh Gusain, seeing an imminent danger, came out of his bunker to an open trench, and threw hand grenades very effectively on the assaulting enemy. He was hit by a bullet in the head, but continued throwing grenades till the enemy assault was broken up. He then fell unconscious(103). By this time, the enemy managed to bring forward and site a medium machine gun within thirty metres to the left flank of the Indian position, and simultaneously continued attacking in wave after wave(104). The 'A' Coy Cmr sent L/Nk Trilok Singh Negi, Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat and Rifleman Gopal Singh Gusain, who volunteered to destroy the MMG. L/Nk Negi was armed with a sten gun and the jawans with grenades. When these three reached within about 12 metres of the MMG position, they threw hand grenades which killed many enemy soldiers. Rifleman Jaswant Singh was also hit and collapsed on the spot, while Rifleman Gopal Singh Gusain was wounded(105). Enemy continued the assault in successive waves, but was repulsed every time. The wounded Indian soldiers were evacuated and the captured medium machine gun of the enemy was sent to the battalion HQ at 1330 hrs(106).

Once again the enemy attacked in strength at about 1450 hrs, preceded by intensive shelling and automatic fire(107). The attack was repulsed again, and at about 1600 hrs the enemy was compelled to withdraw under cover of his mortar and artillery fire. After these encounters, approximately three hundred Chinese were seen lying dead and wounded, compared to two Indians killed and eight wounded(108).

Realising that the enemy had obtained a foothold on flanks of 4 Garh Rif and had been shelling the battalion with mortars and mountain guns continuously, the Bde Cmr concluded (at 1530 hrs) that it was better to withdraw the battalion to the main defensive position at Se La before it was badly mauled(109). The Garhwalis had well served their role as a forward screen for Se La, serious attack on which was clearly building up.

As line and wireless communication between Bde and Battalion HQ had broken down, a message was sent by the Bde Cmr, at 1830 hrs to the Battalion Cmr through Captain Abraham of 4 Sikh. In his message the Bde Cmr congratulated the Bn Cmr and his officers and men for "a very steady and a well-controlled defensive battle". The instructions for re-deployment

of the battalion were as under:-

- (a) Battalion HQ less two Coys with Bde HQ at Se La (Bde HQ was 18 km in the rear from battalion HQ).
- (b) Two Coys under command 1 Sikh, at Se La.
- (c) Abandon present position so as to cross km 108 road Bomidila - Jang not later than midnight 17/18 November.
- (d) Inform Forward Observation Officer at km 106 road Bomidila - Jang to engage the enemy with artillery fire, once the positions were abandoned(110).

The orders for withdrawal to Se La were passed on to all sub-units, except the special patrol sent out under Maj H.B. Rai earlier, as he was not in communication with battalion HQ(111). The battalion arrived at Se La at 0300 hrs(112).

In the battle of Nuranang, the Garhwalis, fought very bravely and earned acclaim(113). The under-mentioned officers and personnel of 4 Garhwal Rifles were awarded gallantry awards after the Battle of Nuranang(114):-

MVC

1. Lt Col B.M. Bhattacharjea, OC 4 Garh Rif (IC-1338)
2. Rfn Jaswant Singh Rawat (Posthumous)

VrC

1. 2/Lt Vinod Kumar Goswamy (IC-12323) (Posthumous).
2. 2/Lt S.N. Tandon (IC-12691)
3. Rfn Gopal Singh Gusain
4. L/Nk Trilok Singh Negi (Posthumous)
5. Rfn Madan Singh Rawat (Posthumous)
6. Sub Udai Singh Rawat
7. Jem Jatan Singh Gusain

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS - 17 NOVEMBER (EVENING)

The few hours from the late afternoon of 17 November to the early hours of 18 November proved decisive for the operations in the Kameng sector. The sequence of events and developments in the evening of 17 November 1962, which led to the withdrawal of 62 Inf Bde from Se La and abandoning of Dirang Dzong by HQ 4 Inf Div, still remains shrouded in mystery. Statements made by persons directly concerned with those developments are contradictory to one another on important points. At times, they are at variance with recorded facts.

For example, Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, GOC 4 Inf Div, the central figure in those developments said that Brig Hoshiar Singh, Commander 62 Inf Bde had told him in the evening of 17 November (no specific time was mentioned) that his position was "attacked heavily from both flanks"(115). According to Gen Pathania, Brig Hoshiar Singh told him that in the face of one division strong enemy "his position at Se La was becoming untenable" and he could not hold on for more than 5 or 6 days. This, obviously, was the rationale for Gen Pathania to have ordered withdrawal of 62 Bde. But, according to an official record(111), Brig Hoshiar Singh, wherever he went, told the troops that Se La was impregnable and even if the Chinese did outflank them and cut off their axis of maintenance, they must hold on to their defences in the area. Brig Hoshiar Singh was clear about this tactical concept from the beginning. None of the persons who should have known the facts and none of the available records mention Brig Hoshiar Singh to have contemplated withdrawal of Bde on his own at any stage.

In a supplementary statement Gen Pathania admitted that "there was actually no real attack on Se La position on the evening of 17 November"(117), when Brig Hoshiar Singh talked to him at about 2230 hrs that night. It was Gen Pathania, who from the conversation claims to have drawn this impression that Brig Hoshiar Singh wanted to convey to him that heavy enemy pressure was building up and that the process of withdrawal of units under 62 Bde should start the same night. This clearly means that the idea of withdrawal of 62 Inf Bde had already been mooted before the position of the Bde became untenable consequent upon any attack by the enemy, although the plan had been to stand and fight even if the L of C was cut(118).

Under the circumstances, an attempt has been made in the following lines to gather various facts from different sources and to reconstruct the sequence in which developments are most likely to have happened on that momentous evening.

Maj Gen M.N. Rawat (Retd), who was EM 48 Inf Bde during the 1962 Operations, has stated in an interview that on 17 November early evening in a conversation with GOC 4 Div, Bde Cmdr 48 Inf Bde suggested to the former that since Chinese had reached Thembang, Pathania alongwith 62 and 65 Brigades withdraw to Bomdila, from where the whole Divisional resources would put up strong fight against the enemy if it advanced upto Bomdila. As an alternative, Brig Gurbux Singh proposed that if Se La could be assured of continued supplies through air, then HQ 4 Inf Div along with 65 Inf Bde should fall back to Bomdila, from where they could put up a successful fight. But, the idea was not acceptable to GOC 4 Inf Div at that time(119).

But as early as 1500 hrs on 17th it was known that HQ 4 Inf Div was planning to move back to Tenga valley, south of Bomdila. Chief Signal Officer of 4 Div had informed the Chief Signal Officer IV Corps that at about 1630 hrs he would be moving out with lay out group for the purpose of establishing the Div HQ in a new location(120). In the meantime, at 1630 hrs Thembang had fallen, and the enemy had established a road block between Bomdila and Dirang Dzong. The move to Tenga valley was, therefore, abandoned by HQ 4 Div(121).

The Chief Signal Officer 4 Inf Div while giving above information to Chief of Signals IV Corps also said that GOC 4 Div wanted to speak to Lt Gen Kaul. On being told that Gen Kaul was away from his HQ he expressed a desire to speak to BGS in the absence of Corps Commander(122). According to the statement given by Lt Gen K.K. Singh (Retd), who then was BGS IV Corps, at about 1630 hrs, GOC 4 Div, not finding Lt Gen Kaul, spoke to BGS. He described the situation of 62 Bde and his own HQ as very precarious as a result of road blocks established by the Chinese, and pleaded for permission for withdrawal. BGS refused to give permission for withdrawal. Rather, he advised him to stay put. Thereupon Maj Gen Pathania rang off(123). It was about 40 minutes after the above conversation between BGS IV Corps and GOC 4 Div, at about last light, that Gen Thaper, Lt Gen L.P. Sen, Brig D.K. Palit and Brig H.K. Sibal arrived at the Corps HQ(124). After briefing the high dignitaries about the situation on the ground, BGS told them about his tele-conversation with Gen Pathania earlier(125).

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Thereafter Gen Thapar and Gen Sen also talked to GOC 4 Div. But, in their conversations with GOC 4 Div neither Thapar nor Sen was willing to authorise the request for withdrawal in the absence of Kaul. They told him that it was only on the return of Kaul that any decision on the matter would have to be taken(126). Soon after, Lt Gen Kaul arrived(127) when the above conversation was still on(128).

The talk between Gen Kaul and Gen Pathania, must have taken place sometime around 1900 hrs, or thereafter. It is certain that GOC 4 Div spoke to Brig Hoshiar Singh before his tele-conversation with the Corps Commander. While talking to Brig Hoshiar Singh, Gen Pathania had asked him to prepare for the withdrawal of 62 Bde on 17 November night(129). Hoshiar Singh is reported to have protested against such a move and said that he had sufficient supplies to last for about a week and if he continued to be supplied by Air, he was prepared to give a fight to enemy, notwithstanding his land communication having been disrupted. Gen Pathania did not give any assurance for continuance of supplies, and wanted the whole Bde to fall back to Bomdila rather than lose the whole Bde at Se La. As GOC 4 Div had no reserves, road to Se La could not be opened if the enemy cut off Se La. Left with no alternative, the Bde Commander said he would withdraw "if ordered to do so". But the withdrawal could not take place before night of 18/19 November and withdrawal on 17/18 November night, for which the GOC was keen, was not possible as such a withdrawal without any plan and prior knowledge of Unit Commanders would have created panic amongst the troops. In the same conversation Brig Hoshiar Singh informed GOC that he had earlier issued orders for the Battalion 4 Garhwal Rifles and 2 Coys of 4 Sikh Light Infantry in the Two-Lake area to withdraw to the main defences of Se La. GOC gave ex-post-facto approval to those moves. GOC also ordered Brig Hoshiar Singh to send 2 Coys out of his garrison immediately for attempting to remove road blocks and for the defence of the Divisional HQ. Consequently, two companies of 13 Dogra were rushed to Dirang the same night(131).

Official records indicate that the tele-conversation between Brig Hoshiar Singh and Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, (in which the decision to withdraw 62 Inf Bde from Se La was taken) took place before 1800 hrs. As a result of that conversation the Bde Cmr, at 1800 hrs, called a conference of the senior officers at Bde Headquarters for briefing for withdrawal and the briefing was over and plans for withdrawal made, by 1830 hrs(132). If we exclude the possibility of GOC having talked to BGS, IV Corps,

around 1630 hrs as hinted to by BGS IV Corps(133) and accept the time of GOC 4 Inf Div's tele-conversation with the Corps HQ at about 1800 hrs, as informed by Gen Sen(134), Lt Gen B.M. Kaul(135) and Brig P.S. Gill(136), the conclusion is inescapable that Gen Pathania had spoken to Brig Hoshiar Singh before he had contacted the Corps HQ. In any case, it was well before any semblance of authorisation for such planned withdrawal could have been given by the Corps Commander, since from all the available evidence it is clear that Gen Kaul returned to his HQ from the Walong Sector not before 1900 hrs(137).

To pick up the thread of developments on 17 November 1962 in the evening, after Lt Gen Kaul arrived at the Corps HQ around 1900 hrs, there was a discussion among Gen Thapar, Lt Gen Sen, Lt Gen Kaul and Brig Palit about the situation in the 4 Div Sector and on Maj Gen Pathania's request for withdrawal for about half-an-hour. Lt Gen Kaul also talked to GOC 4 Inf Div. But from the available evidence one cannot be very clear as to how many times and at what time exactly did Gen Kaul speak to Gen Pathania(138). But, from all the records pertaining to those developments one can be certain about the following:-

(a) That on the pleadings of Maj Gen A.S. Pathania on telephone for permission to withdraw as there was a possibility of his being cut off from Senga that night, Lt Gen B.M. Kaul told him to stick out that night, and that he would issue final orders on 18 November morning(139). According to another record, Gen Kaul also told Gen Pathania that the latter could withdraw at his discretion if the situation was very bad(140).

(b) Lt Gen B.M. Kaul gave message(141) to C Sig O "withdraw to Bomdila", with instructions to clear immediately to HQ 4 Inf Div. BGS IV Corps did question as to why such a decision at that stage, but, Kaul simply asked him to get it cleared without any loss of time. Since it would have required considerable time in encyphering, transmitting and decyphering it after receipt at the other end, BGS immediately rang through to Cmdr 48 Inf Bde at Bomdila and gave the message to him to be passed on to GOC 4 Inf Div as soon as he could speak to him(142). Meanwhile, the message was encyphered in about 20 minutes. When it was being transmitted to HQ 4 Inf Div, Gen Kaul came and asked for its withdrawal(143). The transmission of the message was stopped(144). BGS then immediately told Cmdr 48 Bde on telephone that the message was not to be conveyed to HQ 4 Div. Brig Gurbux Singh informed that since the telephone line between Bomdila and Dirang was down, that message had not been passed on and he assured that no further action would be taken on that account.

(c) After about 20 minutes of the withdrawal of the above message(145), obviously, as a result of consultations with Gen Thapar and Lt Gen Sen, Gen Kaul handed over to BGS another message written in his own hand to be conveyed to 4 Inf Div(146). The message, read as follows(147):

"Firstly, you will hold on to your present positions to the best of your ability. When any position becomes untenable I delegate the authority to you to withdraw to any alternate position you can hold.

"Secondly, approximately 400 enemy have already cut the road Bomdila - Dirang Dzong. I have ordered Commander 48 Bde to attack this enemy force tonight speedily and resolutely and keep this road clear at all costs. You may be cut off by the enemy at Senge, Dirang and Bomdila. Your only course is to fight it out as best as you can.

"Thirdly, 67 Inf Bde less one battalion will reach Bomdila by morning 18 November.

"Fourthly, use your own tanks and other supporting arms to fullest extent to clear L of C".

The message was cleared to HQ 4 Inf Div at about 0230 hrs (18 November)(148).

(d) Lt Gen B.M. Kaul spoke to Brig Gurbux Singh, Cmdr 48 Inf Bde, on telephone, more than once, and ordered him to move out troops to destroy the road block.

At about 2230 hrs, Brig Hoshiar Singh rang up Maj Gen A.S. Pathania. The Bde Cmdr had rung him up, ostensibly to inform the GOC about the plan of withdrawal of his Bde and its progress. Gen Pathania then informed Brig Hoshiar Singh that as authorised by the Corps Commander, plan for withdrawal could be made but final orders to that effect would be given in the morning(149).

But, before the morning could dawn, 2 Sikh LI was pulled out of Kye La during night 17/18 November, according to plan(150), and not because that position was made untenable because of enemy pressure. Information about this step was given by the Bde Cmdr to GOC also(151).

On 18 November 1962, Maj Gen Pathania spoke to Lt Gen Kaul on telephone at 0530 hrs and sought his permission to fall back to Bomdila, which was given after the GOC had informed that 62 Inf Bde had started pulling out from Se La on 17 November night, as it was "attacked by the enemy from both flanks"(152).

WITHDRAWAL FROM SE LA

(A) Commencement of Withdrawal

Reports of the Chinese infiltration on both the right and left flanks of 62 Inf Bde defences had reached the Bde HQ. 4 Sikh LI troops, positioned in Two-Lake area had reported, on 16 November, movement of more than 1,000 Chinese troops along Bhutan border towards south-east. The 3-Coy strong patrol under 2-I/C of 2 Sikh LI had been attacked on the morning of 16 November which clearly confirmed the concentration of Chinese troops in the Luguthang area, on the right flank of the Bde defences. The enemy had followed the stragglers of this patrol. On 17 November, the enemy had secured a foot-hold on the main road axis by hammering the Garhwals' position. When it was found that 4 Garhwal could not stand the enemy's attack any longer, it was ordered to fall back to the main defences at Se La. There was every possibility that the brigade-defended area would soon be attacked from three sides; there was also a possibility that the line of communication of the brigade might be cut, isolating the formation from the 4th Division. In other words, there was a likelihood of the Chinese surrounding the Brigade on all sides.

In spite of this tactical situation, the Bde Commander stuck to his decision that the Brigade would stay put and fight the Chinese. When the Bde Commander was at Nuranang on 17 November, he ordered the 'D' Coy of 4 Sikh LI to take up a screen position in the area forward of Nuranang to cover the withdrawal of 4 Garh Rif and 'A' and 'C' Companies of its own battalion from Two-Lake area. These two coys of 4 Sikh LI were given orders to withdraw at 1730 hrs. The screen was to hold the position till first light 18 November and then withdraw on orders to main battalion defended area at Se La(153). At 2130 hrs on 17 November, 'A' and 'C' Coys of 4 Sikh LI ex Two-Lake area commenced their withdrawal through Nuranang to the main battalion HQ at Se La. As the track was frozen and steep, the progress was very slow. This withdrawal of 'A' and 'C' Coys was completed by 0450 hrs. The decision to withdraw 4 Sikh LI from Two-Lake area was taken by the Bde Cmdr to strengthen the battalion position at Se La which

was being manned only by the battalion headquarters' personnel and the 'B' Coy. 4 Garhwal Rifles had arrived at Se La earlier, at 0300 hrs. 'D' Coy 4 Sikh LI then withdrew towards Se La.

Chinese had reportedly pushed more than one Division troops through Kye La and Poshingla axis and these troops were using the numerous tracks to by-pass the 4 Inf Div defended locations on the main road axis. Poshingla had been attacked by the enemy on 15 November and Chinese troops were racing down to Thembang with speed. The Indian troops sent to Lagam to check the advance of the enemy coming through Poshingla had to retreat in a disorderly manner. By the evening of 17 November, the enemy was able to cut the L of C Bomdila - Dirang.

Faced with the above tactical situation, GOC 4 Inf Div talked to Cmdr, 62 Inf Bde on telephone late in the afternoon of 17 November and in that conversation it was decided that 62 Inf Bde would plan to withdraw during night 18/19 November from Se La to Dirang, from where, together with HQ 4 Inf Div and 65 Inf Bde, they would reach Bomdila, and there, alongwith 48 Inf Bde, full resources of 4 Inf Div would put up stout defence(154).

During the conversation, the Bde Cmdr informed about his earlier orders to 4 Garhwal and two Coys of 4 Sikh LI (deployed in Two-Lake area) to withdraw to the main defences at Se La and the GOC gave his approval to those moves. GOC also authorised Cmdr 62 Inf Bde to demolish Bridges 2 and 1 in the event of withdrawal from Se La. It was also agreed that 4 Rajput, located at Bridge 1 and east of Nyukmadong Ridge, would come under command of 62 Inf Bde so as to cover its withdrawal to Bomdila. On the orders of GOC, two Coys of 13 Dogra were sent to Dirang on night 17/18 November for the defence of Div HQ.

Soon after the teleconversation with GOC 4 Inf Div, Cmdr 62 Inf Bde chalked out the plan of withdrawal as follows(155):-

- (a) 4 Garhwal Rifles, ordered to withdraw from Nuranang to Se La, were to go straight to Senge and cover withdrawal of Bde.
- (b) 13 Dogra, (less two Coys) with 4 Garh Rif, to cover withdrawal of rest of the Bde from Se La.
- (c) 2 Sikh LI : to abandon Kye La at 1630 hrs on 18 November (no thinning before 181530), clear forward Coy location of 1 Sikh by 1700 hrs, and take up delaying position at Nyukmadong to cover withdrawal of rest of the Bde.

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- (d) 4 Sikh LI : Its forward Coy to withdraw at 1600 hrs on 18 November and the battalion (with 'A' and 'C' Coys already withdrawn from Two-Lake area to Se La and 'D' Coy from Nuranang, (after having acted as screen for the withdrawing 'A' and 'C' Coy of 4 Sikh LI and 4 Garhwal Rifles, also having reached Se La) to abandon its defences at 2100 hrs and concentrate at Bridge 1.
- (e) 1 Sikh to abandon its defences at 2300 hrs on 18 November.
- (f) HQ 62 Inf Bde: "Unessentials to leave at 182130 with 4 Sikh LI and rest of the Bde HQ to withdraw at 182300".

Later, at about 2200 hrs(156), Bde Cmdr advanced the abandoning of Kye La by 2 Sikh LI from 1630 hrs on 18 November to 2230 hrs on 17 November. Battalion less one Coy was asked to take up covering position at Nyukmadong. One Coy was to be left to cover Nuranang road(157). The reasons for this crucial change in the plan were later (after Bde Cmdr's death) recorded as follows:-

- (a) Enemy, building opposite Kye La, was likely to launch an attack on the morning of 18 November. It would then be difficult to extricate the battalion (2 Sikh LI) during the day.
- (b) By withdrawing the 2 Sikh LI earlier, it would be able to prepare its position at Nyukmadong and be able to cover withdrawal of 62 Inf Bde on night 18/19 November.

The Bde Cmdr informed CO 2 Sikh LI, CO 1 Sikh and GOC 4 Inf Div on telephone about this change.

In pursuance of the withdrawal orders, 4 Garhwal Rifles, (except the special patrol sent earlier under Maj B.B. Rai who was not in communication with Bn HQ) concentrated at about 0100 hrs on 18 November, with the company of 4 Sikh LI acting as screen to cover the withdrawal of 4 Garh Rif. The battalion arrived at Se La at 0300 hrs and waited for orders. By this time, the enemy had already contacted Se La defences from the direction of Kye La. The battalion crossed Se La but the rear was engaged by the enemy and a few casualties occurred(158).

In the meantime, as per the changed plan of withdrawal of 2 Sikh LI, the CO ordered his adjutant

at 2340 hrs to withdraw the battalion the same night and as soon as possible. The men were to carry all their personal weapons and ammunition and one sleeping bag each. Equipment which could not be carried was to be destroyed. 'C' Coy, with under command one section MMG and one section 3 inch mortar, were given an alternate locality and left there with a view to cover the withdrawal of 4 Garh Rif(159).

When the battalion withdrew, they were closely followed by the Chinese from the direction of Kye La(160). The enemy began mortar fire on them. Arty units and all others were withdrawing on the same route, and gaps between units either in terms of time or distance soon disappeared. The withdrawal was not orderly, CO 2 Sikh LI alongwith 'A' and 'D' Coys was able to reach Se La at 0300 hrs.

1 Sikh were informed by the Bde Cmr about the plan of withdrawal of the Bde. Its CO was later also informed about the advancement of the time of withdrawal of 2 Sikh LI from Kye La. There was, however, no change in the plan of withdrawal of 1 Sikh. According to the plan, 1 Sikh were to abandon Se La - last of all at 2300 hrs on 18 November night. But the CO of 1 Sikh, Lt Col B.N. Mehta, called his 2 I/C, adjutant and QM and gave orders for the withdrawal of 1 Sikh from its location at 2330 hrs on 17 November night(161). This decision appears to have been taken by the CO on his own, i.e., without any orders from the Bde Cmr, which resulted in the hurried and unexpected withdrawal of the battalion almost 24 hours before it was to withdraw as per the plan.

It seems that the news about the withdrawal of 4 Garhwal Rifles from Nuranang, the plan for withdrawal of the Brigade and above all, the advancement of the time of withdrawal of 2 Sikh LI had created confusion and panic in the brigade. Information about the withdrawal of 2 Sikh LI having been advanced was probably not passed on to the troops of 1 Sikh. Consequently while 2 Sikh LI troops were passing through 1 Sikh defences, at night time, with the enemy pressing on, their unexpected withdrawal resulted in disorderly withdrawal of troops of 1 Sikh also(162).

When, at about 0400 hrs on 18 November, the Bde Cmr left his HQ for Se La to watch the progress of the withdrawal, as per the plan, of 2 Sikh LI and 4 Garhwal Rifles, and to brief their COs, he saw that 2 Sikh LI and 1 Sikh were all mixed up and completely disorganised. All communications from Bde HQ to battalions had broken down or were cut off. Even

line/wireless communications with HQ 4 Inf Div were disrupted after 0500 hrs, and progress of the withdrawal could not be communicated to Div HQ. At this stage, the Bde Cmdr, realizing that the right side of Se La was completely devoid of troops, ordered that all troops should withdraw immediately, instead of withdrawing during night 18/19 November, and concentrate at Senge(163). The Bde Commander tried to withdraw 4 Sikh LI as well, but there being no communication and the route to the battalion being blocked by the Chinese, no orders could be conveyed to 4 Sikh LI. They were, therefore, left on their own.

(B) 62 Inf Bde disintegrates

After giving the withdrawal orders at 0545 hrs, the Bde Commander left Se La and reached at the battalion HQ of 13 Dogra at Senge at about 0630 hrs. At 0800 hrs, BM 62 Bde informed GSO I IV Corps from Shukla Camp that 62 Inf Bde was on its way to Dirang to join 65 Inf Bde, and Div HQ. BM also informed BM 48 Bde at Bomdila that 62 Inf Bde was expected to reach Bomdila on 19 November after clearing the enemy on Dirang Bomdila road.

When most of the troops, except 4 Sikh LI and 7 Mahar, withdrawing from Se La reached Senge, the Bde Commander divided his troops into three columns, i.e., vehicle column and two marching columns. The vehicle column was asked to move immediately to Dirang Dzong and report there to C Arty. Of the two marching columns, one consisting of two Coys - 'A' and 'D' of 4 Garhwal Rifles under their CO, was ordered to reach Dirang Dzong by the old mule track Nyukmadong - Dirang along the heights and not by the main road, with a view to protect the Bde Column's left flank. The other marching column - known as the Bde Column - consisted of all the other troops and their planned order of march was -

4 Garh Rif ('B' and 'C' Coys)

2 Sikh LI

Bde HQ and minor Units

1 Sikh

13 Dogra (less two Coys - 'C' and 'D' - which had already been moved to Dirang Dzong on night 17 November) was to act as rear guards.

4 Sikh LI and section 7 Mahar (MMG) were still at Se La as they had not been conveyed the withdrawal orders.

(i) 4 Sikh LI Column

The two Coys - 'A' and 'C' - of 4 Sikh LI were ordered to withdraw to Se La from Two-Lake area at 1730 hrs on 17 November. On arrival at Se La they were to occupy their original localities on the left flank of the main Se La defences. These Coys started withdrawal at 2130 hrs to Se La through Nuranang. Their progress was very slow because the track was frozen and steep. The 'D' Coy of the Battalion, which was holding a screen position in the area forward of Nuranang to cover the withdrawal of 4 Garh Rif and its 2 Coys from Two-Lake area, was also asked to withdraw from the screen position by the first light of 18 November. On withdrawal, it was to hold its original position at Se La. The orders issued by the Bde Commander at 0545 hrs - 18 November - to all the troops to withdraw from Se La could not be conveyed to 4 Sikh LI Battalion HQ and its companies because of breakdown of communication. As such, while troops of the Bde were marching towards Senge from Se La, the troops of three Coys of 4 Sikh LI - 'A', 'C' and 'D' - had not yet reached even Se La.

As the enemy had, by 0700 hrs on 18 November, infiltrated into Se La defences, these troops, while in the process of their withdrawal to Se La, came under enemy rifle and mortar fire. Pl 'A' Coy troops on reaching their original Coy locality at Se La, found to their dismay the Chinese troops in occupation of their trenches. A charge was made to clear the enemy out. Though a number of casualties were inflicted on the enemy, Pl 'A' Coy, too, suffered heavily (164). An enemy MMG opened fire from northern heights, earlier held by 2 Sikh LI, on to 4 Sikh LI troops astride the road, inflicting heavy casualties on the Indian troops.

Realising the futility of any aggressive action, OC 'D' Coy - the seniormost officer on the spot at 1030 hrs on 18 November - ordered the troops to withdraw south of Se La Ridge through a small saddle on the crest, and then move in one column to effect a link with the rest of the Battalion (Battalion HQ and 'B' Coy). The Battalion HQ and 'B' Coy location also came under repeated attacks. Being aware of his inability to hold Se La position any longer, with the enemy already in the rear, the CO 4 Sikh LI (Lt Col R.B. Nanda) ordered to fire all the remaining ammunition on the enemy, and then to withdraw southwards. The troops of the Battalion divided themselves into small parties and started marching south of Se La. These parties were repeatedly ambushed by the enemy in their downward march and a

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large number of them were killed or wounded. Most of the troops who could escape entered Bhutan. Capt R.D. Rosario who was killed in one of the ambushes was later on awarded Vr C (posthumously)(165).

(ii) 7 Mahar MMG Troops

While 'C' Coy, 2 Sikh LI, left behind to cover the withdrawal of 4 Garhwal Rifles, was conveyed orders to withdraw to Se La, such orders, however, could not be conveyed to the MMG Section of 7 Mahar under it. Unaware of the Infantry's withdrawal and in the absence of any orders to the contrary, the MMG Section continued to occupy its location. Later, the Section position and Platoon HQ was encircled by the Chinese under cover of darkness. When grenades were hurled into gun position, it was realised that the position was surrounded by the enemy. Hav Govind Kamble, the Section Commander, bore the full brunt of the bursting grenades and, both his legs were blown off. Undaunted, this gallant NCO ordered his Section to withdraw, while he himself took possession of the gun to cover their withdrawal. Even in that state he inflicted casualties on the enemy and his gun continued firing till it was silenced for ever. For his bravery and devotion to duty Hav. Kamble was awarded Vr C (posthumously).

In the absence of a planned withdrawal and with darkness all round, some personnel of this Section and Pl HQ after a long march of many days crossed into Bhutan. In the whole operation, the MMG platoon (the above section and the section which withdrew along with the Bde HQ) suffered 25 casualties, which included 3 killed, 7 wounded, 7 missing and 6 taken prisoners(166).

(iii) Vehicle Column

Vehicle column of the entire Brigade was permitted to move towards Dirang at 0830 hrs from Senge. At about 1030 hrs, when the column was approximately 2 km short of Bridge 1, it was ambushed by the enemy(167). The Bty Commander, 2(D) FF, accompanied by three jawans went up a knoll and took up an LMG position. The enemy opened fire from several directions on the vehicles and the Indian troops were pinned down. Soon, every one got separated and tried to make his way downwards independently. In this ambush, more than 30 all ranks were killed and many were made prisoners. Only a few could escape.

(iv) 4 Garh Rif Column

This column, consisting of 'A' and 'D' Coys under the CO of the Battalion, in its downward journey cleared enemy delaying position of about a platoon strength in the area of Nyukmadong and a series of enemy stops in order to facilitate the withdrawal of Bde HQ and other units moving along the road. Soon the Garhwals found the enemy in much greater strength and in depth. In these encounters, 4 Garhwal suffered many casualties. It was just after midnight 18/19 November that this column reached Dirang Dzong, where it ran into an ambush laid by the enemy. Most of the lead tired personnel were either killed, or captured. The CO and Lt Tandon were captured in the early hours on 19 November(168). Before this column could reach Dirang Dzong, the troops there had already withdrawn from the area but this fact was not known to the CO 4 Garhwal. What they took to be friendly troops from a distance turned out to be Chinese who were already in occupation of Dirang Dzong.

In the whole operation, including the battle of Nuranang and the withdrawal, 4 Garhwal Rifles (including the two Coys withdrawing with the Bde Column) suffered heavily - 3 Officers, 4 JCOs, 148 ORs and 7 NCsE were reported killed and 5 Officers, 8 JCO's 244 ORs and 7 NCsE were taken prisoner.

(v) Bde Column

At about 1100 hrs the leading elements of the Bde column came under fire when they were a little ahead of Bridge 2. 2 Sikh LI was leading, and tried clearing the enemy located on high features on both sides of the road. The jawans using 2-in and 3-in mortars were able to clear a distance of about 3 km. The column was being fired upon heavily by two or three MMGs from ahead. All further attempts to clear the enemy ambush along the road proved futile. A platoon of 2 Sikh LI under Lt Karam Singh was then sent on the ridge left of the road to try and drive out the enemy. But during its advance along the ridge, the platoon met heavy fire and the Platoon Commander was killed(169). In the meantime, 13 Dogra, who were in the rear, were attacked twice and could not, therefore, be brought forward to assist 2 Sikh LI or 4 Garhwal Rifles. Another cause of the disruption in the command and control at this time was the lack of wireless communication between Bde HQ and the units(170).

By 1600 hrs on 18 November the Bde Column was completely disorganised. Three or four enemy MMGs were still sweeping along the road and there was also intermittent fire of mortars. The efforts of 2 Sikh

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LI to dislodge the enemy had failed. As darkness came, even the semblance of command and control also broke down completely. The remnants of the Bde started dispersing in small parties with the aim of reaching Foot Hills. Some of these parties were again ambushed that night while trying to escape. But, generally speaking, there was a lull after darkness and many Chinese parties were seen moving here and there flashing torch lights. It was noticeable that as soon as darkness fell, the Chinese had stopped aimless firing, to conserve their ammunition(171).

Brig Hoshiar Singh's party was reportedly ambushed near Phudung on 27 November 1962, and the Bde Commander was killed much after the Cease-fire announced by the Chinese government with effect from 23 November.

13 Dogra, which was acting as rear guard, suffered casualties of 2 officers, 3 JCOs, 65 ORs and 6 NCsE killed, 24 all ranks wounded, and 56 all ranks made prisoners(172).

The withdrawal of 62 Inf Bde was so disorderly and disorganised that till 1 December 1962, i.e. after 14 days of withdrawal, two thousand, two hundred and ninety one all ranks were still missing as under(173)

Unit	Officer	JCOs	ORs	NCsE	Total
HQ 62 Inf Bde	6	2	47	4	59
62 Inf Bde Sig Sec	2	1	54	1	58
62 Inf Bde LAD	--	--	4	--	4
1 Sikh	3	9	339	17	368
2 Sikh LI	5	9	369	17	400
4 Sikh LI	12	18	487	19	536
13 Dogra	9	6	307	20	342
4 Garh Rif	8	12	488	16	524
Grand Total	45	57	2095	94	2291

GOC 4 INF DIV ABANDONS DIRANG DZONG

9 Decision Taken

During the tele-conversation held between GOC 4 Inf Div and the Corps Commander on 17 November evening, wherein GOC had sought permission to withdraw his troops from forward positions as well as Dirang Dzong to Bomdila, the former was told by the Corps Commander to stick out that night. He was also told that based on the tactical and operational situation, the final orders would be issued next morning, though he could plan for the withdrawal.

Before talking to the Corps Commander, it seems the Div Cmdr had made up his mind that by withdrawing the troops from Se La and Dirang Dzong he would be in a position to defend Bomdila, successfully. Some of the important events which, it seems, influenced the GOC 4 Inf Div, to take the decision to withdraw his troops to Bomdila, before his tele-conversation with the Corps Commander, are enumerated below(174):-

- (a) Withdrawal of 4 Garh Rif from Nuranang to the 62 Inf Bde defences at Se La on the afternoon of 17 November.
- (b) Withdrawal of 4 Sikh LI from Two-Lake area with the result that enemy infiltrated to the south of Se La defences.
- (c) There was every possibility that 62 Inf Bde defended area would be attacked by the enemy from three sides any moment.
- (d) The Rajput Coy, occupying defended locality in area north-east of Dirang Dzong, had failed to check the infiltration of the enemy in the Dirang Valley.
- (e) The troops of 19 Maratha LI, after their engagement with the enemy in area Chongdor, had failed in their bid to check the advance of the enemy towards Dirang Dzong from that side.
- (f) Failure of 5 Guards to check the advance of the enemy from Poshingla axis and the subsequent occupation by the enemy of Thembang on the evening of 17 November. (Withdrawal of 5 Guards from there was ordered by the Commander 48 Inf Bde)(175). By occupying Thembang, enemy had reached the rear of 4 Inf Div defended sector, south of Dirang Dzong, and was in a position to cut the L of C any moment.

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(g) The infiltration of the enemy on both the right and left flanks of the main road axis had forced the 65 Inf Bde to order the return of all Coys and patrols of 19 Maratha LI, to Battalion HQ at 1845 hrs on 17 November(176). The Marathas were occupying ideal positions for cutting the supply lines of the enemy and they had ammunition and supplies which could maintain them for a few days(177).

In anticipation of the written orders to be received from the Corps Commander next morning, the GOC 4 Inf Div seems to have decided to pull out his troops to Bomdila. At a Conference held at Div HQ at 1930 hrs, (17 November) most probably immediately after his tele-conversation with Corps Commander, it was decided that "62 Inf Bde will withdraw to Dirang Dzong during the night 17/18 and will advance to Bomdila with 65 Inf Bde Gp and Div HQ during the night 18/19. Whole div was to conc at BOMDILA"(178).

The tactical situation during night 17/18 November further worsened. GOC was informed by 62 Inf Bde Commander at about 2230 hrs that he had ordered 2 Sikh LI less one Coy, to withdraw from Kye La and Battalion HQ area and take up delaying positions at Nyukmadong.

The Bde Commander reportedly told the Div Commander that with the enemy build-up in front, which was estimated at one Inf Div, and with the limited artillery ammunition available to him, his position at Se La becoming untenable. There was also the likelihood of his getting cut off by the enemy which had by-passed the main Se La position from the left(179).

The withdrawal of troops Chongdor and Sangti, during the evening of 17 November, had facilitated the enemy's advance on Dirang Dzong. Not having any spare troops at Dirang, the Div Commander had called for troops - 2 Coys of 13 Dogra from Senge and one Coy of 1 Madras from Bomdila. These troops were intended to stop any advance from the direction of Bomdila and to link up with 48 Inf Bde, if possible with support of tanks from Dirang the following morning. This attempt was to be made by 48 Inf Bde only if they got fresh troops which were being rushed up on the morning of 18 November(180).

Information was also received in the early hours of 18 November that portion of Nyukmadong Ridge below

It seems no plans for withdrawal of the troops on Dirang Dzong were made or given out. The last order that the GOC gave was to Maj Jamwal, the Sqn Commander, 7 Cavalry, to clear the enemy road-block on the Bomdila-Dirang road, as related already.

After the GOC had left the place, some officers of the rank of Major and below made attempts to rally the troops into a scratch force to fight their way to Bomdila. But in the face of Chinese pressure, those efforts soon fizzled out, units split into small parties and made for the plains(187). Like his GOC, Commander 65 Inf Bde too, left the place immediately without giving any withdrawal plan to his troops.

At Phudung, where there was a Coy of 1 Sikh LI from Bomdila, the GOC was informed that the Coy had not been in touch with the Battalion since 1030 hrs, 18 November. Later when the GOC heard news about the fall of Bomdila, he decided to get to the Foot Hills via Kalaktang. The GOC, and a few officers of HQ 4 Inf Div were picked up by the Corps Commander on 22 November 1962, in his helicopter, near Bhairabkund. A total of 400 all ranks arrived at Udalgiri on 22 November 1962(188).

(B) Withdrawal by Units

'B' Squadron of 7 Cavalry, under Maj S.D.S. Jamwal, with 11 Stuart tanks was placed under 4 Inf Div, and reached Misamari on 27 October 1962. Out of the 11 tanks, one became defective on 2 November, and another went down into a Khud on 3 November. The remaining nine tanks reached Bomdila on 5 November 1962. Three tanks (one with seized engine and two in working condition) were left at Bomdila under Jem Siri Chand. Six tanks reached Dirang Dzong on 16 November, but two more went out of order, leaving only four tanks with the Sqn(189).

The Sqn Commander was warned by the GOC 4 Inf Div on night 17 November to be ready at first light on 18 November to clear the road block that the enemy had established on Bomdila - Dirang road. Again, on 18th morning, the GOC visited the Sqn harbour area at 0730 hrs and ordered the Squadron to break through to Bomdila. Further the Squadron Cmdr was instructed that if the tanks failed to clear the road block, they were to cover the withdrawal of Dirang Dzong Garrison, and later the Squadron was to abandon the tanks and withdraw on foot.

At about 0800 hrs, move towards Bomdila started. No.3 Tp, under Jen. Fateh Singh, led the party, followed by Maj S.D.S. Jamwal with the 'B' Vehicles Column. The leading troop came across a road block in the village of Dirang Dzong, covered by heavy automatic fire by the Chinese, at about 0830 hrs. Brushing aside such minor opposition, the troop advanced further. But after a few bends on the road it found a wooden bridge which had been damaged by the enemy, making it impossible for the tanks to advance any further. The halted column particularly the 'soft' vehicles, came under heavy automatic and mortar fire. It was estimated that the enemy was holding that position with approximately two Coys - with one Coy on either side of the road block. In a few minutes, several vehicles were destroyed and one Artillery officer and 5 ORs were killed(190). At 0930 hrs, the Commander ordered the vehicles column to abandon vehicles and make their way back towards the Dirang village. It was clear that the tanks could not break through to Bomdila.

Having effectively blocked the withdrawal route to Bomdila, the Chinese attempted to cross the Dirang valley and push on towards Rupa, using the direct track via Manda La. Maj Jamwal re-deployed his tanks as well as Rifle troops to engage the Chinese and the enemy was forced to withdraw to the hill in the North.

At 1100 hrs, No.3 TP was told to abandon their tanks and join the men from the Vehicles column at Dirang village. A message was sent to Tp 1 Commander, which was in the rear, to cover the withdrawal of Troop 3 and after covering the withdrawal to abandon his tank troop and withdraw.

In the afternoon the enemy attacked Dirang village in Coy strength supported by automatic weapons and mortars. 7 Cavalry troops held the ground and brought down heavy fire, halting the rushing enemy. A similar enemy attempt was made further to the north-west, in the area vacated by Div HQ, where Squ HQ was in position with a Rifle Coy and two tanks. The result was identical and the enemy was beaten back with much loss. The action continued till last light. Having been badly mauled in their earlier attempts, the Chinese did not come down from the hills again during day. Had the Squadron not fought off the Chinese, they would have been able to push through and block all the remaining routes for the withdrawing troops of 4 Inf Div. After last light on 18 November the Squadron personnel were collected, complete with

personal weapons and ammunition, and pulled out as a well organised force. It was tragic, but inevitable, that six tanks had to be left behind. Although the enemy had no anti-tank guns, his infantry would have rushed to the tanks during the night, and the tank crew would have been sacrificed needlessly.

19 Maratha LI except the patrol column to Chug and D Coy at Munna Camp, was ordered to collect at 'A' Coy location on the Ridge south of Dirang, after setting fire to bunkers/tents. Battalion HQ along with the troops moved at 0815 hrs, and on the way one Coy 4 Rajput joined the troops. The Battalion halted on 18th night, near Manda La and reached Phudung at 1400 hrs on 20 November.

4 Rajput could not withdraw as one body as its Coys were widely dispersed. 'D' Coy, ordered to withdraw to Foot Hills after destroying its heavy stores, reached Bhairabkund on 24 November. The jawans carried their personal arms, wireless sets, pouch ammunition and two grenades each. The other Coys of the unit - one Coy at Point 3582, one in area Bridge 1 and the third with Battalion HQ at Sappers' Camp - were to withdraw after troops of 62 Inf Bde had crossed their locations on their move downward. After waiting for the whole day of 18 November at his HQ for the troops of 62 Inf Bde, but getting no news about them, the CO of the Battalion - Lt Col Avasthi, decided to withdraw to Dirang Dzong next morning. However, during the day at about 1400 hrs, he ordered his Coy at Point 3582 to withdraw, and this Coy left for Foot Hills at 1600 hrs on 18 November. These troops came under heavy enemy fire near kilometre stone 33.

The CO, along with the rest of his troops, took the Dirang Dzong - Manda La route on 19 November and on the way some stragglers from other units also joined this column. In the night of 22 November, the column crossed the Rupa Chu and climbed the hill which skirts Shergaon on the left(191). Next morning on 23 November, the column - approximately 300 under Lt Col Avasthi was heavily engaged by enemy MMG and mortar fire(192), even though the enemy had declared unilateral cease-fire. The column was caught unawares, tried to extricate, and in the attempt killed more than a hundred Chinese, but also suffered heavy casualties. Among those killed was the CO of the Battalion.

The precipitate retreat and the manner in which Dirang Dzong was abandoned was perhaps the most humiliating episode of the NEFA campaign.

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THE SE LA DEBACLE CHRONOLOGY

17-18 November 1962

17 November

1030 hrs: Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, Commander 62 Bde, visits Nuranang. Orders Coy 4 Sikh LI to move up, to cover pull back of 4 Garhwal to Se La main positions.

Mid Day: Commander 48 Bde informs GOC 4 Div (A.S. Pathania) of Chinese advance to Thembang and suggests withdrawal of 4 Div to fight at Bomdila.

1500 hrs: 4 Div Signals informs Corps HQ Signals at Tezpur of an advance group to leave at 1630 hrs to prepare Div HQ area behind Bomdila (Tenga Valley).

1630 hrs: Chinese road block between Bomdila and Dirang Dzong intimated to 4 Div HQ, and move to Signal Party to Tenga Valley is cancelled.

1640 hrs: Pathania speaks to BGS IV Corps (Brig K.K. Singh) who refused permission for any withdrawal, as Corps Commander (Kaul) was away in Walong.

1710-1745 hrs: Army Chief Thapar, Army Commander Sen and DMO Palit arrive at Corps HQ and are briefed by K.K. Singh in absence of Kaul. Pathania again rings up, but Thapar and Sen refuse to say yes or no to Pathania's urgent request for permission to withdraw.

1700-1830 hrs: Pathania suggests to Hoshiar Singh withdrawal from Se La the same night. Hoshiar resists. Finally agrees to withdraw next night, i.e. night of 18-19 November.

1830 hrs: Hoshiar Singh informs his battalion Commanders about withdrawal from Se La during night 18-19 November.

2000 hrs:

After Gen Kaul's return from Walong, situation is discussed with Gen Thapar and Gen Sen. Coded signal is issued permitting withdrawal by Pathania but signal stopped before transmission.

2200 hrs:

After further discussions between Kaul, Sen and Thapar, Pathania is informed that he should act on his discretion, hold on for the present and await final orders next morning from Corps HQ.

2230 hrs:

2 Sikh LI deployed at Kye La is ordered to withdraw same night (instead of next night, as planned earlier) to positions behind Se La. Pathania is informed of this by Hoshiar Singh.

2330 hrs:

Learning of withdrawal of 2 Sikh LI CO 1 Sikh also orders withdrawal of his Battalion, and the debacle begins.

November

0300 hrs:

4 Garhwal Rifles from Nuranang and 2 Sikh LI from Kye La reach Se La, closely followed by 1 Sikh, and behind them the Chinese.

0400 hrs:

On learning this, Hoshiar Singh speaks to Pathania: "Something awful has happened. 1 Sikh are withdrawing and Se La Right Defences are gone. I am going up to stop them". Line communication between Bde and Div HQ broke down soon after.

0530 hrs:

Hoshiar Singh returns to Bde HQ after failing to stop the withdrawing troops at Se La; issues orders now for immediate withdrawal of full Bde. Communications with 4 Sikh LI and 7 Mahar are out and orders cannot reach them.

0530 hrs:

Pathania seeks Kaul's permission again, and is permitted to withdraw, in view of loss of Se La.

0800 hrs:

HQ 4 Div pulls out of Dirang Dzong in a hurry. Div Signals informed 4 Corps about 0830 hrs that no staff officer was available, and Signal station was closing down.

OPERATIONS IN BOMDILA SECTOR

(A) Action on Poshing La Axis: Fall of Thembang

In the "Appreciation" prepared by the GOC 4 Inf Div on 28 October, it was visualised that the enemy could push about one Regiment group on a wide hook on the Topgey-Lap-Poshing La approach. To meet this threat, the GOC indicated that at least one battalion must be positioned there immediately, in addition to the two Assam Rifles' Platoons already in Poshing La - Chhangla area. As soon as the troops arrived in Bomdila, a flash signal was sent on 2 November to 5 Guards that a patrol, comprising one officer and a platoon, should leave on 4 November for Chhangla - the Assam Rifles' post location - and from there go on to Topgey. The task of the patrol was to report on suitability of tracks, availability of DZ in the area, watching enemy movement and harassing the enemy(193). So, on 4 November, Capt Amarjit Singh, OC 'B' Coy with a JCO and 30 ORs left for Dirang for further instructions about the task. The patrol, which was given the code name 'PENCIL PAPER', was instructed to prepare defences for a Coy and patrol forward to report enemy movements in area Lap-Topgey. The Coy Commander was to have plans ready for deploying a Battalion Gp. The move of the patrol was delayed due to late arrival of ponies/porters, and the patrol left Dirang on 6 November at 1100 hrs. It reached Tungra on the evening of 7 November and Chhangla at 1700 hrs on 8 November. The ponies/porters, accompanying the column, ran away that night. In the hope that they would get fresh porters/ponies from Bomdila, 'PENCIL PAPER' stayed on at Chhangla on 9 November 1962.

On 10 November, Capt Singh proceeded to Poshing La with a small party to reconnoitre the area for subsequent deployment of a Coy, and returned to Chhangla the same evening. On the same day a JCO with 15 ORs with ponies/porters carrying 15 days' rations and two and a half first line scale of ammunition left Bomdila to join 'PENCIL PAPER'. On 11 November 'PENCIL PAPER' moved to Poshing La to prepare a defended locality for a Coy, and it returned to Chhangla the same evening, leaving behind one JCO with a section. On the same day, the Battalion Cdr ordered to send the remainder of 'B' Coy to join 'PENCIL PAPER' at Poshing La and to establish a post there and patrol forward up to Topgey. A second platoon of 'B' Coy moved on 12 November and the remainder of the Coy on 13 November(194).

On 13 November, Capt Amarjit Singh was able to establish his small force at Poshing La. Four sections of Assam Rifles took positions approximately 5 km behind. Next day, at about 0600 hrs, Capt Singh with a JCO of Assam Rifles and 20 ORs left Poshing La for Topgey. He halted for the night at Topo. Next day i.e., 15 November, when Capt Singh's patrol was advancing from Topo to Topgey, it ran into the enemy force advancing from the opposite direction. The enemy was much superior in number and after a brisk fight it overwhelmed the patrol. Capt Singh and 16 CRs were killed.

The Chinese pushed on rapidly, and at 1530 hrs launched an attack at Poshing La in overwhelming strength. Their assault was supported by mortars and MG fire. The post at Poshing La - which had at that time only 2 JCOs and about 25 ORs (1 JCO and 10 CR of Capt Singh's patrol and 1 JCO and 15 ORs of 10 November patrol) - fell after giving a fight for about one hour. The troops withdrew to Chhangla. The Assam Rifle post, established 1.5 km behind the Poshing La post, had already been vacated.

At about 1930 hrs the same day, the enemy started shelling Chhangla. The Assam Rifles personnel, after passing a brief message regarding the operational situation to their Battalion HQ, destroyed the radio set and abandoned their post. The personnel of 'B' Coy, (5 Guards) who had withdrawn from Poshing La, too, could not hold Chhangla against the mounting pressure of the enemy and withdrew from there. They reached Lagam at about 0330 hrs, 15/16 night where they met the troops of 'B' Coy who had left Bomdila on 12 and 13 November. With a view to halt the enemy, the Coy 2 I/C immediately pushed forward two platoons to occupy the heights at Tungri. These troops were still trying to reach the heights overlooking the northern slope of Tungri when the enemy, who had already reached the top of the feature, started bringing down observed Mortar and MG fire. The two Guards platoons fell back in confusion and disintegrated into small parties.

The track coming down from Poshing La, after crossing Tungri bifurcated. One branch proceeded to Chongdor towards south-west, and the other west-south, to Thembang via Lagam. The track to Thembang was a well-known track. It is estimated that the track - approximately 65 km - could be easily covered in two days if the troops were carried by transport, part of the way, otherwise it would take 3 days (195). By infiltrating through this track, the Chinese could come to the rear of the Indian Army positions on the Bomdila - Se La road. So it was important to guard this track.

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Learning, that the enemy had over-run the Poshing La position, the 48 Bde Commander ordered at 1830 hrs on 15 November that another Coy should leave immediately to establish contact with the enemy and re-capture Poshing La. 'D' coy of 5 Guards under Maj K. Mani was detailed to carry out the task and left for Thembang at 0730 hrs, 16 November. The CO of 5 Guards was also ordered to take the rest of the Battalion and build up at Thembang. One Tp of Mtn Bty was deployed in Rahung village and one Tp of Fd Bty was placed at km 9 in support of 5 Guards(196).

Thembang is about 15 km from Bomdila and about 300 metres above the Dirang Chu. It lies on a plateau in the immediate east of which there is a Nullah which joins the Dirang Chu. In the valley of this Nullah, is situated the village of Sachi(197).

Maj Mani's Coy reached Thembang at 1700 hrs on 16 November. The Battalion also reached Thembang at 0630 hrs, on 17 November as due to non-availability of transport and mules the Battalion could concentrate at km 9 on Bomdila - Dirang road, (from where the track led to Thembang) only at 2000 hrs on 16 November. Due to shortage of mules, additional 3-in mortar ammunition had to be carried by unit personnel.

At that time the Battalion had only three Rifle Coys in addition to remnants of 'B' Coy, who had been driven back by the enemy from the area forward of Lagam. These were formed in a platoon and placed under 'C' Coy to guard the right forward flank of the Battalion defended area. 'C' Coy under Maj R.K. Khanna was disposed to guard the track Pangma - Bomdila. 'A' Coy under Maj Som Dut was allotted left forward flank which adjoined the nullah, south of Thembang 'D' Coy, under Maj Mani, was in depth.

At about 1400 hrs (17 November) a patrol of platoon strength together with FOO was sent under 2/Lt V.K. Gupta as the enemy was reported building up at Pangma. At about 1440 hrs a message was received from the patrol that enemy was contacted. Soon enemy started firing small arms, MMG and mortars on the Battalion area also from the area of Thembang village and the hill in the north.

In the first contact with the enemy, the carrying wireless set of Maj Brij Raj Singh, Arty Cdr, was shot and fell in a Khud, snapping communications between the Battery Commander and guns.

After some time the enemy started forming up in the Nullah south of Thembang, in front of 'A' Coy and 'C' Coy localities, and on the right flank of the battalion area. The three-pronged movement was to encircle the battalion and cut the route of withdrawal. The total enemy strength on the front and both the flanks was estimated between 1,500 to 1,700 by the battalion.

The Chinese launched the three-pronged massive attack with a signal from the very light. The Guards small arms, 2-in and 3-in mortars fired effectively and claimed that at least 500 casualties were inflicted on the enemy. The Field and Mountain guns also played havoc among the attackers massed in the Nullahs, firing over open sights or on instructions conveyed by wireless via the Bde HQ at Bomdila.

Within two hours, 3-in mortar, 2-in mortar and LMGs ammunition had, it is claimed, practically finished by late afternoon. The Bde Commander was apprised of the situation and ordered the battalion to withdraw. At about 1645 hrs the CO of the Battalion Lt Col Jai Singh, ordered the withdrawal in an orderly manner. But due to no suitable ground being available as 'lay back position', in the extremely broken ground, and increasing darkness, all control was lost and the Battalion disintegrated into small parties(198).

The Commander 48 Inf Bde informed the GOC 4 Div at about 1700 hrs that 5 Guards were unable to hold the Chinese advancing on track Poshing La - Thembang, and so he had ordered the Battalion to withdraw. The GOC countermanded the orders issued by the Bde Commander, but nothing could be done to reverse or retrieve the situation as the Battalion had already started withdrawing(199).

The Battalion endeavoured to reach Bomdila the next morning but found the enemy already established at km 9 on Bomdila - Dirang road. The Guards then split up into small parties and started moving towards Tenga Valley and Charduar. A party of two officers and 85 ORs under Maj Mani, however, managed to reach Bomdila the next morning by 0930 hrs. This party, with Maj Mani subsequently withdrew to Tenga Valley alongwith the other personnel of 48 Inf Bde. Lt Col Jai Singh - alongwith his 2 I/C, three officers, 5 JCOs and 70 ORs rejoined the Unit on 29 November at Misamari.

In the battle of Thembang and other encounters, 5 Guards suffered the following casualties(200):-

- (A) Killed - Two Officers, three JCOs and 85 ORs
- (B) Wounded - One Officer, one JCO and 46 ORs
- (C) Taken prisoners - 26 ORs

The manner in which the defence of the Poshing La axis against enemy advance was conducted left much to be desired. The Div Commander was aware of the threat from Poshing La, as is clear from his Appreciation of 28 October, but failed to take timely action to guard this Pass. He did order on 2 November troops to be sent immediately to Poshing La, but it was only after four days, i.e. on 6 November, that some troop moved. Those troops reached Poshing La as late as 13 November. The distance which could have been covered in 3 days was covered in seven days. The supply column which left Bomdila on 10 November could reach there only on 15 November after a lapse of five days, by which time the Chinese had fully entrenched themselves in the area. The other two platoons of 'B' Coy which left Bomdila on 12/13 November were still at Lagam, the first stage of the track on 16 November and could render no help to the troops already sent there. In contrast, the Chinese moved extremely fast, and got behind the Indian troops again and again. It may be possible that they had started infiltrating the thickly forested area even earlier than 15 November, when the Indian troops first encountered them well to the north of Poshing La.

(B) Battle of Bomdila

(a) Troops at Bomdila on 18 November

With the disintegration of 5 Guards after their defeat at Thembang on 17 November, the Chinese were in a position to cross the river any moment and also occupy the Mandala Ridge. In fact, the same evening the enemy cut the L of C and established a road-block on the road Bomdila-Dirang Dzong. The strength of this enemy column was reported to be about 400(201). When the Corps Commander was apprised of this situation, he ordered the Commander 48 Inf Bde at 22 hrs to send a mobile column of two Coys and two tanks to open the road to Dirang Dzong. The Bde Commander protested against that order, saying that he had no extra force, and was not in a position to undertake the task. So the order was cancelled at approximately 2315 hrs the same night. GOC 4 Inf Div again discussed the issue with Cmdr 48 Inf Bde and it was

decided that the latter would make an attempt to clear road Bomdila - Dirang on arrival of reinforcements on 18 November 1962. On night 17/18 November, Cmdr 48 Inf Bde had only six Rifle Coys - with little supporting troops - for the defence of his Sector, as under:-

- i. Three Rifle Coys of 1 Madras; (its fourth Coy had been sent to Dirang Dzong earlier).
- ii. Three Rifle Coys of 1 Sikh LI; (its fourth Coy was at Phudung).

Supporting troops

- iii. One troop of 'B' Sqn 7 Cavalry; (only two tanks were road-worthy)
- iv. One Section of 2(D) Mtn Bty;
- v. One Tp of 88 Fd Bty (its 2nd Tp was with 5 Guards)
- vi. One Pl of 7 Mahar (MMG)

The Chinese column which had established a road-block between Bomdila and Dirang in the evening, hid itself in the thick forests. Their second column was advancing from the west along the Mandala Ridge towards Bomdila. Thus Bomdila was in danger of being attacked from the north as well as the west. Under these conditions, 48 Bde Commander, who was apprehensive of an attack on Bomdila, did not want to deplete his defences by lifting a force of 2 Coys plus for an attack on the enemy in the area of the road-block. However, on the morning of 18 November, 1 Sikh LI sent one platoon-strength patrol to Tusker Camp near km 9, and platoon-strength patrol to Flag Hill to learn about enemy movements and concentration in that area(202).

At about 1040 hrs, 18 November, 48 Inf Bde was asked by the GOC IV Corps to send the mobile column to Dirang to link up with main 4 Inf Div. The troops, consisting of 2 Coys of 1 Sikh LI, two tanks, and a Section of Mtn Guns, were lifted from their defensive positions and formed into a mobile column. The mobile column moved out of Battalion defensive position at about 1115 hrs, leaving the Battalion main defensive position held by only one platoon and Battalion HQ personnel.

(b) Enemy attacks 1 Sikh LI positions

At about 1230 hrs, the Battalion defensive position of 1 Sikh LI was attacked by the Chinese from the direction of Old Bomdila Pass. At that time, only one platoon of 'A' Coy and one section MMG in 'C' Coy locality was in position to defend. As the movement of the enemy in the thick jungle was not clearly visible, the MMG fire was not very effective. However, after severe fighting, the attack was beaten back and the enemy withdrew. In the mean time, 'C' Coy patrol had come in and was rushed to their Coy locality, which had been completely vacant.

At about 1330 hrs the enemy attacked again. The attack was also repulsed with the help of artillery, 3-in Mortar, and MMG fire. After this attack there was a lull in the battle for about half an hour, during which all the casualties were evacuated. Some personnel of 3rd Battalion the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and 377 Fd Coy had arrived by then, and they were ordered to occupy the vacant position of 'B' Coy defensive locality.

The mobile column under command 'C' Coy of 1 Sikh LI with two tanks of 7 Cavalry (No.2 TP of B Sqn) started its advance at 1200 hrs 18 November, to clear the road-block. The column had hardly advanced about 4 km when the enemy opened automatic fire from the ridge on the left of the road. This fire was returned by the Infantry, but the tanks did not open fire, because the enemy was not in sight. The mobile column was ordered back, as it appeared held up by enemy fire. The tanks reversed in the very narrow space with great difficulty. The mobile column did not suffer any casualty during its advance and return(203).

At about 1445 hrs, when the mobile column troops were trying to get back into their defences, the enemy put in a massive attack with approximately 600 to 700 men. The Battalion was now getting surrounded and enemy small arms and MMG fire appeared coming from all directions.

At this crucial stage a thick fog and mist set in and visibility became very poor. With even the elements helping him, the enemy surrounded the 1 Sikh LI position from three sides. By about 1515 hrs, 'A' and 'C' Coys and Battalion HQ were completely over-run. The Battalion pulled back to lower heights and took up a new defensive position. The CO went to the Bde HQ and apprised the Commander with the latest position. By that time, the enemy had gained control

of all the dominating grounds and was firing at Bde HQ and gun positions. All attempts to restore the situation failed, and the 1 Sikh LI fell back and took a defensive position near the School building at Bomdila and remained there upto 0300 hrs on 9 November 1962.

During these operations, 1 Sikh LI suffered 73 casualties, which included 22 killed, 35 wounded and 16 missing/believed killed. The enemy casualties in fighting with the Battalion were reported to be more than 250.

(c) Tanks prevent advance of the enemy from west

The two tanks, which returned to Bomdila along with the mobile column, were ordered by the Bde Commander to be positioned in the Circuit House area to guard all approaches from the west. As the two tanks got in position, heavy enemy fire came from the ridge. The tanks opened up on the enemy positions and prevented any further advance of the enemy. The tank Commander of even the off-road tank put two LMGs under his tank, one guarding the front and the other the rear. The Chinese who had thought Bomdila as virtually captured, were taken by surprise when subjected to firing from the MMGs of the tank, and disappeared into the hills, leaving behind several dead. This action gave the troops some time to organise the defences.

(d) Enemy attacks 1 Madras position

Having failed to advance towards Bomdila town because of the positioning of tanks on that side, the enemy increased intensity of his fire on 1 Madras positions on the right flank. At 1630 hrs, the Chinese were seen forming up on the left flank of the battalion. The Battalion Commander was not in touch with Bde HQ. The troop leader of the 88 Fd Bty and FOO, who were with 1 Madras, had also lost all communication with the gun positions and their HQ. However, the guns had engaged the targets in front by direct laying. But the firing was not effective enough to disrupt the enemy's intended assault. The enemy assaulted 1 Madras position at 1645 hrs and was successful in dislodging the extreme left platoon of the Battalion. At 1655 hrs, the CO informed all Coy Commanders of the situation. A patrol sent out to establish communication failed to make contact with the Battalion HQ. It reported that there was no one in Bde HQ or in Bde Signal Exchange. At about 1730 hrs Commanding Officer gave orders for withdrawal to save the Battalion from complete annihilation. His intention was to join the Bde which he thought had

withdrawn to Tenga Valley. Thinning out of positions started at 2100 hrs and the defences were finally abandoned at 0200 hrs on 19 November 1962(204). By this time, enemy had already come into the position and was exchanging fire with rear parties. The Field guns had to be ferried because there were only three gun-towing vehicles and a 15 Cwt vehicle. No ammunition could be brought back(205).

When the Battalion, after its withdrawal from Bomdila position, was near Tenga Valley on 21 November, it was surrounded by the Chinese. Many of its officers, JCOs and men, - 125 all ranks - were made prisoners, while 120, including one Officer and two JCOs, were reported missing. The few who escaped scattered themselves into small parties, and even destroyed their weapons to save them from being captured by the enemy.

(C) Withdrawal from Bomdila

Side by side with their attack on the left and right flanks of the 48 Inf Bde defended area, the Chinese put in a massive attack on Bomdila at 1500 hrs on 18 November. After the fall of 1 Sikh LI position, the Bde Commander found it impossible to hold on to Bomdila any longer. He had no troops for the defence of Bde HQ, as the two Battalions - 6/8 GR and 3rd Battalion the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles - promised by the Corps Commander as replacement for 5 Guards and the mobile column, had not reached Bomdila by 1600 hrs, 18 November. Only some advance elements of 3rd Battalion the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles had reached Bomdila at 1620 hrs and the main body of the Battalion had been brought to a halt nearly 8 km short of Bomdila bowl. At about 1630 hrs, the Bde Commander decided to pull back to Rupa.

The Bde HQ reached Rupa at 1900 hrs. A check post was established to stop all stragglers and to get them in their Unit Groups again. The Bde Major was sent to Tenga Valley to contact IV Corps on phone. A communication of the Bde HQ with Div HQ was already out. He contacted GSO-1(OPs) IV Corps at 2130 hrs and gave the latest position.

At Bomdila, when the 22 Mtn Regt Commander arrived at the Bde Command post immediately after 1600 hrs, he found it deserted. Neither the Bde Commander nor his staff was there. He heard some one calling the telephone, and on picking up the instrument, found himself connected to BGS IV Corps. The BGS asked for the whereabouts of the Bde Commander. Thereupon the BGS ordered the CO 22 Mtn Regt to take over command of the Brigade in the absence of Bde Commander.

runner made his plan to defend Bomdila with about 100 men of his regiment, two tanks of 7 Cavalry and 1 Madras, if the latter were still intact. He ordered the field battery to manhandle the guns to south of Bomdila and went back to Bde Command Post with a view to contact 1 Madras. But he could not contact the Battalion, and returned to DZ area. There he met the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, whose Battalion was in the process of moving up, and after putting him in full picture of the situation, handed over the command of 48 Bde to him. He also assured the CO of the 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles that fire support would be provided as and when required(206).

At about 2100 hrs, Bde Cmdr returned to Bomdila. There he met the Commanding Officers of the 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and 22 Mtn Regt at the school building at 0230 hrs on 19 November. At the meeting it was felt that unless the new troops had reconnoitred the area, an immediate attack on the enemy was inadvisable. Bde Commander considered the situation and again ordered all troops to withdraw from Bomdila(207). The Bde Cmdr was back in Rupa area at dawn on 19 November. The troops finally left Bomdila at 0515 hrs, 19 November.

Bomdila was thus vacated by 48 Inf Bde and fell to the enemy easily. It is true that there was nothing with the Bde Cmdr to hold it - few troops, no barbed wires, no mines. Out of the three Battalions earmarked for the defence of Bomdila which were supposed to be there all the time, only a platoon of 1 Sikh LI and 3 Coys of 1 Madras were positioned at Bomdila when the Chinese attack came. But the fact remains that the Bde Commander gave orders for withdrawal of troops from Bomdila on the afternoon of 18 November without prior consultation with his Battalion and Supporting Arms Commanders. In this he might have been influenced by coming to know of the withdrawal of HQ 4 Inf Div from Dirang Dzong on 18th morning.

(D) Withdrawal to Foot Hills

The Corps Commander, when he came to know of the withdrawal of troops from Bomdila, sent a special message through Maj Nahar Singh, Signal Officer of Tanker Force, for the Commander 48 Inf Bde saying that in the event of withdrawal from Bomdila, the Rupa position should be held by 48 Inf Bde(208). At that time, the Bde Commander had only troops of 1 Sikh LI and some elements of the 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and 6/8 GR. 1 Sikh LI was ordered to occupy a high ground near Rupa. About 0800 hrs, when

the Battalion was getting ready to move, the Chinese opened up with automatic and MMG fire from all the features around Rupa defile. By that time, troops of 6/8 GR, which had returned to Tenga Valley in the early morning in vehicles, were on their way back to Rupa. The troops were caught in enemy fire in the Rupa gap and started running helter-skelter. At that stage, the Bde Commander, who was present there, again ordered withdrawal along the high ground on either side of the Rupa valley.

The Battalion Commander of 6/8 GR was ordered to position his troops at a narrow defile, approximately 2 km south of Rupa gap, until all Units of the Bde had passed through. The 6/8 GR - less one Coy which was deployed on the northern track beyond Rupa Valley, held the Gap until approximately 1200 hrs on 19 November, when the Bde Commander ordered that the troops should withdraw from the Rupa Gap to Chako to foil a possible Chinese attempt to cut off the entire force there(209).

However, the enemy continued following up the withdrawing troops. The 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, which withdrew from Bomdila directly to Tenga Valley, came under heavy enemy fire from the opposite ridge at about 0900 hrs. Enemy used automatics, 2-in and 3-in mortars and Bren fire. The Battalion Mortar Pl returned the fire. After about half an hour, the Battalion withdrew, still under heavy enemy fire. It suffered heavy casualties and broke up. Some elements withdrew to Chako, while the rest moved down directly to Tezpur(210).

The two tanks of 7 Cavalry acting as rear guard, covered the withdrawal of the troops of 48 Inf Bde from Bomdila to Rupa and from there to Chako. The tanks engaged the advancing enemy between Rupa and Chako and pinned the enemy leading elements to the ground for a while. As the tanks were finding it difficult to keep pace with the Infantry because of steep gradient of the road, one Coy of 6/8 GR marched with them for protection. The tanks reached Chako at 2345 hrs on 19 November(211).

Of the Five Battalions - 1 Sikh LI, 1 Madras, 5 Guards, 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and 6/8 GR - placed under 48 Inf Bde for the defence of Bomdila area, the Bde was left with only three or four Rif Coys of 1 Sikh LI and 6/8 GR after its withdrawal from Bomdila, when it reached Chako by the last light of 19 November(212). Of the other three Battalions, 5 Guards and 3rd Battalion Jammu and Kashmir Rifles had been badly mauled at Thembang and Tenga Valley on 17 and 19 November respectively. Their personnel were withdrawing into small groups to escape enemy ambushes. The third battalion - 1 Madras had lost contact with the Bde HQ.

RESTRICTED

The fresh troops, which were being inducted into NEFA from other parts of the country were still in the process of concentration at Misamari/Tezpur and could not join the troops of 48 Inf Bde for the defence of Chako on the morning of 20 November.

The troops of 1 Sikh LI and 6/8 GR, after their withdrawal reached Chako by approximately 1730 hrs on 19 November, by which time it was quite dark. The Commander 48 Inf Bde had withdrawn from Tenga Valley to Chako with the troops of 6/8 GR.

The CO of 1 Sikh LI informed the Bde Commander that there was approximately one Coy worth of troops with him, and that he had recced positions for other sub-units also. With his advice and help, the two Coys - 'B' and 'C', 3-in Mortar and Battalion HQ of 6/8 GR were sited. In the absence of any digging tools, troops got down to digging their positions with mess tins and bayonets. The men were still busy preparing their trenches when, at about 0245 hrs on 20 November, the position came under heavy enemy MMG and Mortar fire from the surrounding heights. Soon after, the position was attacked at different places along the perimeter. Sikh LI troops, which were positioned on the high ground astride Chako Check post, were the first to come into contact with the enemy. The Sikhs soon had to pull back as their ammunition got exhausted(213). After this the Chinese surrounded the 6/8 GR positions. By 0330 hrs, two major attempts by the enemy to break into 'B' & 'C' Coy positions had been thwarted. But Bn HQ of 6/8 GR was overrun by the enemy by approximately 0345 hrs. In order to physically stop the on-rush, the Mortar dets used their personal weapons in a hand to hand scuffle against an overwhelming number of Chinese. The few remnants of Bn HQ personnel then fell back on nearby Coy's localities and continued to fight from there. Although the troops of 6/8 GR continued to suffer casualties, they held on to their respective positions tenaciously till 0530 hrs(214).

At about 0500 hrs, on 20 November the enemy made a clever move and brought up an anti-tank weapon onto a ridge which could not be effectively engaged by the tank guns because of limitation of their elevation. The Tp Commander then opened the hatches to engage the enemy with the anti-aircraft gun. Crew of the other tank also took similar steps to fight this new menace. The fight lasted about half an hour, and the Tp Commander Jem Siri Chand was wounded while coming out of his tank. Three other crew members were killed. One of the tanks caught fire, most probably due to enemy shelling. The crew then abandoned the tanks and started withdrawing to Foot Hills on foot(215).

Day light was about to break. With the large number of casualties in the defensive positions, the battle by the remnants against the large Chinese force would clearly be futile. Accordingly, at 0530 hrs, the Bn Commander, 6/8 GR ordered Coy-wise withdrawal by cross country routes. Till 1 December 1962, more than 150 all ranks were still missing.

48 Inf Bridge Headquarters arrived at Foot Hills at 0700 hrs on 20 November 1962 ending this sad story of unrelieved gloom.

REVIEW

For the operations in Kameng Frontier Division during the second phase, it is estimated that the Chinese had more than two divisions available at Tawang. But, because of the nature of the terrain, only one division and a regiment group (or brigade) were put into action, and the other division remained at Tawang as a reserve(216). The Chinese plan, as revealed in actual operations, was:-

- (a) One regiment was employed to maintain pressure on covering troops at Nuranang and for strong probing attacks at Se La. One regiment was put in the area Jang to exploit the situation.
- (b) One battalion plus was sent along track Chebra La-Jangle - Bridge 2 which ambushed 62 Inf Bde column between Bridge 2 and Nyukmadong.
- (c) One regiment less one Bn was sent along track Yangyap La-Nyukmadong to join up the column mentioned at (b) coming from the southern side.
- (d) One strong column of a regimental group went along Luguthang-Poshing La-Chhang La-Tungri-Lagam. After Lagam it split into two sub-columns:
 - i. One went south-west to Chongdor and Munna Camp and established a road block west of Munna Camp at Km 31 on night 17/18 November.
 - ii. The other (and probably much bigger sub-column went to Thembang and Bomdila. Elements from this sub-column had established road block at Km 9 north of Bomdila. This sub-column went ahead to Rupa and thereafter broke up into three parties one going to Tenga, the second going to Piri La and Chako and the third to Phudung.

An enemy Division, of about four brigades, thus defeated and destroyed 4 Inf Div of three brigades in defensive positions when normally a successful attack required a numerical superiority of 3:1. The enemy, moreover, had no artillery support, and had been able to carry only mortars and MGs with him over the difficult mountain tracks. Though most of the Indian troops were hurriedly inducted from the plains and thrown into battle without proper acclimatisation or winter equipment, the basic causes of the defeat lay in the areas of leadership and morale.

When the second phase of the operations in Kameng started around 14 November, the gloomy pall of retreat - from Namkha Chu, from Bum La, from Tawang - still lay heavy over the officers and men of 4 Div. The Garhwalis' stout stand at Nuranang and aggressive patrol actions raised their spirits, but the severe mauling suffered by the large fighting patrol of the Sikhs on 16 November again demoralised the troops. There had been persistent rumours that some senior officers favoured retreat from Se La also, and wanted 4 Div to make a stand only at Bomdila. This was true, and those favouring Bomdila included Brig K.K. Singh (BGS, HQ IV Corps), Maj Gen A.S. Pathania himself, and Lt Col Manohar Singh GSO I in HQ 4 Inf Div.

In fact the last named officer is reported to have freely voiced his opinion in favour of retreat, and that the enemy was invincible so much so that Gen Pathania started thinking of getting him replaced immediately, and a chronicler of these operations has suspected even his patriotism(217). In such a climate of retreat and demoralisation, the wildest rumours were believed, and any tactical withdrawal could turn into a rout. And this is what happened at Se La.

The Se La position was exceedingly strong, well-stocked and held by a brigade of five battalions. Troops were first told that Se La would be held even if its L of C was cut. Then on 17th evening they learnt that withdrawal would again start the next night. But within, a few hours they saw 2 Sikh LI being pulled back, their confusion and demoralisation was complete, and the rout began.

Even Gen Pathania, whose personal bravery was beyond all doubt, seems to have fallen a prey to the prophets of doom, and pulled out of Dirang Dzong in frantic haste, when his best chance lay in digging his toes in and firmly rejecting all talk of retreat. His fears were exaggerated, for the enemy could only put up road blocks and could not successfully assault prepared defences due to lack of proper artillery or

armour. At the back of Pathania's mind may have been the persistent thought that the place to fight at was Bomdila, and not Se La or Dirang. He could not perhaps, give of his best in executing a plan in which he did not really have faith.

Retreat from Dirang Dzong was caused by the road blocks established near MS 9 and Munna Camp by the Chinese column advancing on the Poshing La axis. It appears that nearly a brigade moved along this axis, which had never been anticipated by the Indian Commanders, who considered the route practicable only for a few hundred troops. The Guards were, thereafter, sent to block this route, and committed to battle piecemeal. The battalion was thus destroyed and achieved no success. It appears that the Indian Commanders were resorting to the same tactics which had successfully worked in the J & K Operations in 1947-48, without realising that the fight now was not against raiders but against the professional army of one of the major military powers of the world.

This hangover of 1947 was made worse by the purely defensive attitude adopted after the retreat from Tawang. There was no question or thought of recapturing Tawang but only of holding up the Chinese advance at Se La, or even at Bomdila. The all-important initiative, therefore, always remained with the enemy, and he could choose the time and place for his next blow.

If Pathania, Hoshiar Singh, Gurbux Singh and their subordinate officers were guilty of tactical mistakes, their seniors like Lt Gen B.M. Kaul, Lt Gen L.P. Sen and Gen P.N. Thapar proved unequal to the task of stopping the rot. Thapar and Sen refused to give any orders on Pathania's request for permission to withdraw, leaving the decision to Kaul even though he was not present. Kaul, with his severely limited experience of actual fighting, issued orders for moving even Companies and Platoons, and thought that tanks could operate successfully against road blocks in the mountains. On the vital question of withdrawal of 4 Div from Dirang Dzong, Kaul totally failed to impose his will and control events, or even his own subordinate Commanders. By the night of 17-18 November, the Commanders were as badly demoralised as the troops. And battles are lost or won basically in the minds of the Commanders. The debacles at Se La and Bomdila will remain classic examples of this old dictum.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Official Records.
2. Letter from Premier Chou En-Lai to Prime Minister of India (24 October 1962), along with statement of the Chinese Government, 24 October 1962. WHITE PAPER, VIII (October 1962 - January 1963) pp.1-4.
3. From Official Records.
4. Ibid.
5. The main source for the description of ridges/rivers of the Se La - Dirang Dzong and Bomdila Sectors in S.R. Johri's Chinese Invasion of NEFA.
6. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.125.
7. From Official Records.
8. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, p.134.
9. Ibid.
10. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.146.
11. Niranjana Prasad, The Fall of Tawang, pp.129-130.
12. From Official Records.
13. Ibid.
14. Dalvi, J.P., Himalayan Blunder, p.125.
15. From Official Records.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.124.
19. From Official Records.
20. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.93.
21. Ibid., p.148.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p.165.

24. From Official Records.
25. One of those Divs was Chinese crack Division - 55 - which was brought from Sining to Tawang with all its equipment and stores on or about 15 November after covering a distance of approximately 2100 km in eight days. Mullik, B.N., The Chinese Betrayal, p.415.
26. In its assessment, HQ IV Corps had foreseen that "Once the enemy committed the main striking force to the west of the main road, he would continue to make successive threats from the west with a view to intercepting and cutting our road communications". From Official Records.
27. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.124.
28. Detailed plan of deployment of this force was as under:-

ALONG THE MAIN ROAD AXIS

(a) Sela - Senge Area

One Bde Gp of at least five Bns.

(b) Nyukmadong Area

One Bde Gp of at least three Bns.

(c) Bomdila Area

One Bde Gp of at least three Bns.

WESTERN FLANK

Nagakur - Remba Area and Phutang -
Kalaktang Area

At least two Bns.

EASTERN FLANK

Poshing La Area

At least one Bn.

DIVISIONAL RESERVE

One Bde Gp of at least three Bns. The GOC 4 Inf Div also recommended that all the above force be provided with adequate defence stores and administrative backing with the fire support of Div Arty plus five first-line ammunition. From Official Records.

29. From Official Records.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid. An official record, however, erroneously mentions 86 Fd Bty instead of 87 Fd Bty. 87 Fd Bty which remained under CO 4 Garh Rif for direct support to the Bn was withdrawn on 16 November afternoon and put in support of the Bn under the Command of HQ 62 Inf Bde.

33. From Official Records.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.178.
55. From Official Records.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. According to Commander 4 Arty Bde, on 23 October, when he stopped for a while at Bridge III he was horrified to notice a number of people belonging to 4 Garhwal withdrawing towards Se La as against the task assigned to and assured by CO 4 Garhwal, of holding a delaying position for next 72 hrs. To Brig Kalyan Singh that was "a pathetic sight to watch a demoralised, defeated and disorganised army. Men had lost their fighting spirit and sense of shame". Brig Kalyan Singh "immediately put a check post to stop any further withdrawal of the battalion In all over 250 personnel were collected by the morning and marched back to Bridge III and put in a defensive position. At about sunrise Commanding Officer 4 Garhwal also returned but with only 50 men. He reported that he had lost control of his troops during the night He was a bit relieved to find that a part of his battalion was already in action at Bridge III". From Official Records.

Maj Gen B.M. Bhattacharjea, MVC
PVSM(Retd), the then CO 4 Garhwal Rifles
however, gave a different version. Gen
Bhattacharjea, told that as per original order
of withdrawal from Tawang, all the troops were
to proceed to Se La, which was to be a delaying
position. Main defences, however, were to be
concentrated at Bomdila. In pursuance of that
order CO with one Coy was already at Jang. His
battalion was to move towards Se La after all
other elements of 4 Arty Bde had passed through
to Se La. When his two Coys reached embussing
area, not knowing the change in the order, they
found that no transport was available there.
Other troops, not waiting for transport, started
running towards Se La. On seeing this, troops
of those two Coys of his Bn also started running
towards Se La. As per the changed orders his Bn
was to entrench itself around Jang. He
therefore, sent one JCO to call back the troops
of those two companies who were speeding towards
Se La. As a result, the bulk of troops of those
two Coys were brought back to Nuranang. Report
on Interview of Major General B.M.
Bhattacharjea, MVC, PVSM, (Retd), dt 11 December
1987.

60. From Official Records.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid. Maj Gen B.M. Bhattacharjea also narrated same incidents confirming the above attitude of higher authorities. Corps Commander IV Corps did not visualise the enemy coming until the winter snow was over. Once Bhattacharjea told his Bde Cmdr that he had seen Chinese troops moving from Bum La to Tawang side towards the west. When this was brought to the notice of GOC 4 Inf Div by Cmdr 62 Inf Bde, Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, ordered Brig Hoshiar Singh to ask for explanation of OC 4 Garhwal for having made such a report which GOC was not prepared to accept as correct. GOC 4 Inf Div, in his assessment, was so firm that the enemy could not have done that in such a quick time that he was not prepared at all mentally to believe in the correctness of that report which did not correspond to his own appreciation of the enemy's intentions and capabilities.

69. Some official records mention about the dispatch of a 'Special Mission' under Maj H.B. Rai which left for Gersing La at 0830 hrs on 17 November and was supposed to return by last light of 18 November. But, there are no further details as to what happened to the 'Mission'. It is only mentioned that the orders for withdrawal of the Bn to Se La were passed on to all sub units, except the special patrol earlier sent out under Maj Rai who was not in communication with Bn HQ. (From Official Records).

Maj Gen B.M. Bhattacharjea (Retd), the then CO, 4 Garhwal Rifles, however, gave a different version as to how Maj Rai and Sub Aswal of anti-tank platoon and others were captured. He informed that when, in the evening on 17 November, Brigade Commander issued orders for

the withdrawal of the Battalion from the Nuranang area, it was decided that Maj Rai's company was to take up position at a height North of the road to cover the withdrawal of the rest of the Battalion to Se La. It so happened that after the Battalion had passed through the track, Maj Rai's Coy was attacked by the enemy from behind and they were overpowered. Gen Bhattacharjea also gave unhappiness of Rai with him as another reason for circulating this version of his capture for he, as CO 4 Garhwal Rifles, had refused to accept Maj Rai's request to nominate him as 2 I/C of the Bn. (Report on Interview of Maj Gen B.M. Bhattacharjea, MVC, PVSM, (Retd), 11 December 1987.)

70. From Official Records.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid. The enemy attack on the column came at about 0200 hrs. on 16th, according to another report.
77. From Official Records.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid. Nuranang acquired the name of "Jaswant Garh" and the locals have interesting folk tales about the hero.
106. From Official Records.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid. HQ IV Corps had also ordained that "on no account the covering troops were to be sacrificed by delaying their withdrawal in face of superior build up".
110. From Official Records.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. In recognition of the gallant fight put up at Nuranang, the Battalion - 4 Garhwal Rifles - has been permitted by the Army HQ to celebrate NURANANG DAY as a Regimental Day on 17 November every year. From Official Records.

114. Encyclopaedia of Soldiers with Highest Gallantry Awards (Compiled by S.S. Gandhi, 1980).
115. From Official Records.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Interview with Maj Gen M.N. Rawat (Retd), 1 July 1987.
120. Ibid. The information gets corroborated from another source. Capt N.N. Rawat, GSO 3 (Ops), HQ 4 Div, was told at 1100 hrs on 17 November by Maj Narinder Singh GSO 2 (Ops), when the former had left the place with necessary equipment to set up the HQ in new location, to come back as the plan to shift the Div HQ to Tenga Valley had been agreed upon and the colour party to recce and select the Div HQ area in Tenga Valley was to go at 1630 hrs.
121. From Official Records.
122. Ibid. At about 1700 hrs the Chinese having appeared in strength on the right flank of 4 Div defended sector, GOC felt that 62 Bde may not be able to hold the defence for long. It was this subject, which in all likelihood the GOC wanted to discuss with Corps HQ. In his statement, Gen Pathania, informs that in his teleconversation with BGS the former informed the latter that it was absolutely essential to obtain decision since the Cmdr 62 Inf Bde now felt that he could not hold his position much longer. This clearly means that the GOC had already spoken to the Bde Cmdr before he contacted BGS at Corps HQ.
123. From Official Records.
124. Ibid. According to Lt Gen Sen, they arrived in Tezpur at about 1700 hrs.
125. Ibid. BGS IV Corps, informed the Army Chief and the Army Commander about the conversation a little after 1800 hrs.
126. Ibid. This has been corroborated by Brig P. Gill. Brig D.K. Palit, DMO, had also narrated this to Lt Gen Kaul.
127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. According to an official record, "it was felt that 62 Inf Bde may not hold the defences for a long period" and, therefore, "the Bde was asked to withdraw to Dirang". As in other places, in the interview also Gen Pathania asserted that at no point of time did he give clear-cut instructions to 62 Inf Bde to withdraw. He only, 'asked' Brig Hoshiar Singh to be 'prepared with a plan for withdrawal' in case it became necessary. (Interview of Maj Gen A.S. Pathania (Retd), 13 October 1988). But this cannot be accepted on the face of it. A GOC asking his Bde Cmdr around 1800 hrs to prepare a plan of withdrawal of the Bde that night and his emphasis that the plan for withdrawal should be for that very night is virtually an order by Div Cmdr for withdrawal of the Bde. This suggestion that all this did not amount to a clear cut order for actual withdrawal appears simply to be a technical argument in order to provide a cover for the lack, till then, of sanction of the Corps HQ for such an important step.

130. From Official Records.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid. According to Lt Gen L.P. Sen, BGS IV Corps informed them "a little after 1800 hrs" about his conversation with GOC 4 Inf Div.

135. Ibid. According to Lt Gen B.M. Kaul "at about 1800 hrs" GOC 4 Inf Div rang up.

136. Ibid. "At about 1800 hrs" Brig Gill located BGS IV Corps in Ops Room and "from there BGS spoke to GOC".

137. Maj Gen D.K. Palit, (Retd), who then was DMO, stated that around 1900 hrs Lt Gen Kaul returned from Walong. Interview of Maj Gen D.K. Palit, (Retd), 2 November 1987.

138. According to K.K. Singh, B.M. Kaul talked to A.S. Pathania soon after his return to Corps HQ. It gives one to understand that Lt Gen Kaul had already spoken to Maj Gen A.S. Pathania when, at approximately 1900 hrs he gave his first message

to Sig 0 for transmission to GOC 4 Inf Div. Lt Gen Kaul has himself stated that he spoke to A.S. Pathania at about 1945 hrs on return from Walong. Lt Gen Sen has stated that Lt Gen Kaul spoke to Maj Gen Pathania to ascertain the situation after Gen Sen himself had advised that GOC 4 Inf Div being man on the spot should be given discretionary power to take any appropriate action. Gen Sen also stated that B.M. Kaul thereafter spoke to A.S. Pathania and Gurbux Singh on telephone on two or three occasions. From Official Records.

But according to Maj Gen D.K. Palit, (Retd) who was then DMO, at about 2200 hrs, GOC 4 Div rang Corps HQ and then Lt Gen Kaul spoke to him. Interview of Maj Gen D.K. Palit (Retd), 2 November 1987.

139. Gen Kaul has claimed that his conversation with Gen Pathania took place at about 1945 hrs. From Official Records. According to Maj Gen D.K. Palit, (Retd), B.M. Kaul had told A.S. Pathania to hold on to his defence during night and to have another 'Chat' in the morning before he withdrew. Interview of Maj Gen D.K. Palit, (Retd), 2 November 1987.

140. From Official Records. According to Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, Lt Gen B.M. Kaul had told the GOC that he could plan for withdrawal but, that the Corps Commander would give final orders in the morning. In this connection it may be worth mentioning that the advice given to Lt Gen Kaul by Lt Gen Sen was that in a situation like that, Pathania, as the man on the spot, should be given discretionary powers of withdrawal - should he consider it necessary, Gen Sen also told Gen Kaul to order Cmdr 48 Inf Bde to attack and dislodge any road-block laid by the enemy in the Bomdila - Dirang Dzong road.

141. Ibid. At about 1900 hrs, according to Brig P.S. Gill, C Sig 0 IV Corps.

142. Ibid.

143. Maj Gen D.K. Palit, (Retd), who was then DMO, claimed in an interview on 27 October 1987, that when BGS showed him the message permitting withdrawal, he showed it to Gen Kaul disapprovingly but Gen Kaul told that it was not his own decision but of the Army Commander. DMO protested against it to the Chief of Army Staff who then consulted GOC-in-C and Corps Commander and then ordered for the withdrawal of the message. Interview of Maj Gen D.K. Palit (Retd), 2 November 1987.

144. From Official Records. But, according to Lt Gen K.K. Singh (Retd), the message was not fully encoded till the time when its withdrawal was ordered.
145. From Official Records. According to Brig P.S. Gill, the new message was given for transmission to HQ 4 Inf Div at 2245 hrs.
146. From Official Records.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid. Although Gen Pathania does not mention specifically as to when, to be exact, during which teleconversation he informed Brig Hoshiar Singh about Gen Kaul's conditional authorisation for withdrawal. It could not have been done in the first teleconversation which took place before 1800 hrs. Obviously, it was done during the one under reference at 2230 hrs.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid. Maj Gen A.S. Pathania, in his statement, claims to have told only vaguely that "situation at Se La had further deteriorated". Whereafter Lt Gen Kaul left the decision to withdraw at the discretion of the GOC.
153. From Official Records.
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid.
157. Ibid.
158. Ibid.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid.
161. Ibid.

162. Ibid.
163. Ibid.
164. Ibid.
165. Encyclopaedia of soldiers with Highest Gallantry Awards (Compiled by S.S. Gandhi, 1980).
166. From Official Records.
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid.
169. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid.
175. Ibid.
176. Ibid.
177. Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.155.
178. From Official Records.
179. Ibid.
180. Ibid.
181. Ibid.
182. Praval, K.C., The Red Eagles - A History of Fourth Division of India, pp.292-293.
183. From Official Records.
184. Ibid.
185. Ibid.
186. Ibid.
187. Praval, K.C., The Red Eagles - A History of Fourth Division of India, p.293.

- 188- From Official Records.
- 189- Ibid.
- 190- Ibid.
- 191- Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.160.
- 192- From Official Records.
- 193- Ibid.
- 194- Ibid.
- 195- Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, pp.148 and 177.
- 196- From Official Records.
- 197- Johri, S.R., Chinese Invasion of NEFA, p.181.
- 198- From Official Records.
- 199- Ibid.
- 200- Ibid.
- 201- Ibid.
- 202- Ibid.
- 203- Ibid.
- 204- Ibid.
- 205- Ibid.
- 206- Ibid.
- 207- Ibid.
- 208- Ibid.
- 209- Ibid.
- 210- Ibid.
- 211- Ibid.
- 212- Ibid.
- 213- Ibid.
- 214- Ibid.
- 215- Ibid.
- 216- Ibid.
- 217- Saigal, Lt Col, T.R., The Unfought War of 1962 (Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1979).

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CHAPTER - VI

WALONG AND OTHER SECTORS

Besides Kameng, the only area in Arunachal Pradesh witnessing major and intense fighting was Walong in the Lohit Frontier Division. Subansiri and Siang divisions of Arunachal, and the Indo-Tibet border areas in Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh saw little or no fighting. Operations in the Walong sector, therefore, would be described first, while the other sectors would receive brief mention later.

TOPOGRAPHY OF WALONG AREA

Lohit Frontier Division lies in the extreme north-east corner of India. Like other Frontier Divisions of NEFA, this Division too now stands divided into two districts - Dibang Valley and Lohit. As the operations during the conflict were confined to Walong Sector in Lohit District, this topographic description deals only with that area.

In the north, the traditional boundary between India and Tibet follows the watershed between Di Chu in India and Lati Chhu in the Tibet region of China. The tri-junction of India, Burma and China is in the extreme east of the Lohit District, about 8 km north of the Diphu l'ka (Taluk Pass)(1). From the pass itself, a mountain wall, called the Patkoi range, extends to the south-west and then south-east, separating India from Burma(2). In the west of Walong sector there is a mountain range. In the south also unidentified mountain ranges border the sector.

Lohit, which is the prominent river of the District, divided the brigade defended sector into two. The only means of crossing this obstacle of approximately 150 metres was by means of a single steel wire rope spanning the river. Boats could not be used due to the torrential current(3).

Rivers/Nullahs

The main tributary of the Lohit River is the Di Chu. It rises from a point 7 km north of the Diphu Pass. It flows between the mountain ranges and after running westward for about 80 km (50 miles) joins the Lohit river, north of Dichu village. In the middle of its course is the 'Hot Spring', a suitable camping ground for troops on patrol.

The second river - Tho Chu, which emerges from a mountain range along the crest of which runs the Indo-Tibetan boundary, runs eastward and joins the Lohit below Kibithoo.

A Nullah or ravine, Sat Ti, enters Lohit river from the east between Dong Plateau and Dong Spur. A second ravine, the Tamun Ti Nullah, coming from East, enters Lohit near Tinai. The third Nullah Dandi Ti, which too flowing from east to west, enters Lohit River about 5 km south of Walong. Nam Ti (Nullah), flowing from west to east, enters Lohit River north of Walong Camp. Yapak or Yerbi Ti (Nullah) - the fifth one - flowing from west to east, enters Lohit River also 5 km (3 miles) south of Walong.

Though the river bed was at an altitude of about 900 metres, the hills on either side rose steeply up to 5200 to 5500 metres. The sides of the hills were covered with virgin pine forests up to about 3,650 metres and thereafter with other stunted plants. This obstructed both movement and observation. Not even hunters' tracks existed beyond a few hundred metres of the beaten tracks, which generally followed the River lines.

Line of Communication

Regarding the supply line and the transportation of troops, it was only through air. Tezu airfield was the nearest airlift point. There was an airstrip at Walong. But it was so small that the only IAF aircraft which could use it were the Otters, and after 1000 hrs even Otters could not operate due to strong winds(4). A foot-track existed from Tezu to Walong along the Lohit valley, but it was a 14 days' march(5).

A track led from Hayuliang to Kibithoo via Du Pass. From Hayuliang the Du Pass was about 130 km (80 miles). The track from Hayuliang followed the left bank of the river Dau through very dense tropical jungle and undergrowth. The area around the pass was bare rock with precipitous cliffs on both sides of the pass, which was about 21 to 25 metres wide on top, rising suddenly on both sides. Immediately after crossing the pass, there was an oval shape lake called Tho Chu Tuwi, almost 1.5-km long and about 720 to 820 metres wide. The lake fed the Tho Chu river.

Du Pass connected Dau and Tho Chu valleys and dominated both these valleys. The pass normally remained snow-bound from middle of November to middle of May. The track along the Tho Chu followed the river along its left bank, and finally emerged near Kibithoo.

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A track from Walong also led towards Kibithoo, along the right (western) bank of Lohit river. There were many stairways on this track which had to be negotiated before the McMahon Line was reached. Beyond the McMahon Line, the track passed through Tatu and Sama villages to reach Rima, a Tibetan administrative base(6).

Another track from Walong to the international border ran along the left (eastern) bank of the Lohit river. In its lower portion, its gradient was steep. The track passed through Tinai, Dong and Kahao hamlets. Like the western track, it was unsuitable for animal transport. The former could be used for carrying heavy loads with some difficulty but the latter was absolutely unfit for such traffic.

The Indian troops positioned on the hill features around Walong soon coined names for their localities for the convenience of quick and easy identification. West of Walong, at an altitude of approximately 3,350 metres (11,000 ft), was "WEST RIDGE", and further to the west lay the "Mortar Position" at a height of about 3,650 metres (12,000 ft). North of the Mortar Position, and along the crest of the mountain range were located "Tri-junction" (4,175 metres), "Yellow Pimple" (4,025 metres) to its north, and "Green Pimple" (3,840 metres) to the east of Yellow Pimple, dominating and providing full observation of the forward defended localities on both banks of the Lohit river. On the spurs going east from the Yellow Pimple/Green Pimple, there were the "Maha Plateau", "Lachhman Ridge", "Patrol Base", "Mithun" and "Ladders" positions, as shown in the sketch, successively going down in altitude. Across the Lohit, there was "High Plateau" to the north of the Sat Ti and Dong Hill to its south. Dakota Hill lay between Dong Nullah and Tamun Ti and south of Tamun Ti was the "East Ridge" position facing the above-mentioned West Ridge across the river.

TROOP DISPOSITIONS

When the responsibility for the defence of NEFA was handed over to the regular Army at the end of 1959, 5 Inf Bde under 4 Inf Div was made responsible for the Lohit Frontier Division. It was only in July 1961 that 2 Rajput (less 'A' Coy) of 5 Inf Bde stood concentrated at Walong. 'A' Coy with one Tp of 71 Hy Mor Bty of 44 Hy Mor Regt remained at Tezu(7).

In March 1962, 6 Kumaon was ordered to relieve 2 Rajput. The complete operational responsibility of the area was then taken over by 6 Kumaon from 2 Rajput on 21 April(8).

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Even before the handing over of the responsibility for the defence of NEFA to the regular Army, the policing of Lohit Frontier Division, as in the case of other Frontier Divisions, was being done by a battalion (Second) of the Assam Rifles. The three Wings of the 2 Assam Rifles stood deployed as under(9):-

- (a) One Wing in West Lohit Frontier Division for the Dibang Valley.
- (b) 2nd Wing at Hayuliang.
- (c) 3rd Wing at Walong.

With the induction of regular Army troops, the Assam Rifles units came under their operational control. Under 'OP ONKAR', which envisaged setting up of additional posts by Assam Rifles on all possible routes of ingress, a maximum number of eleven new posts were set up in Lohit Frontier Division(10).

When the two Battalions of 62 Inf Bde - 4 Sikh and 2/8 GR - reached Jorhat from Rangarh on 21 September, they were placed under 5 Inf Bde, and 4 Sikh was earmarked for Lohit Frontier Division. More troops were then moved to Kibithoo from Walong and the frequency of patrols to the McMahon Line was increased(11). By the end of September 1962, two Coys and Battalion TAC HQ of 6 Kumaon stood concentrated at Kibithoo(12).

When troops ('A' and 'B' Coys) of 4 Sikh arrived in the sector, the responsibility for the defence of Walong Garrison was taken over by them from 6 Kumaon on 8 October 1962. Its other two Coys - 'C' and 'D' - had been moved to Chabua from Jorhat(13).

For defence purposes, the Lohit Frontier Division was divided into three sub-sectors. The deployment of troops in these three sub-sectors, as on 18 October 1962, was as under:-

Dibang Valley sub-sector(14)

Battalion HQ of 2 Assam Rifles with 13 platoons.

Kibithoo sub-sector

The CO 6 Kumaon was the Sub-Sector Commander with his TAC HQ at Kibithoo. (Battalion HQ with

administrative elements were at Walong).
different Coys were deployed as follows:-

- 'A' Coy - Dichu
- 'B' Coy - East Ridge
- 'C' Coy - Kibithoo
- 'D' Coy - Ladders Area (This Coy completed its move to Thapa DZ on 20 October 1962)

'A' Wing of 2 Assam Rifles, consisting of Wg HQ with six platoons, was also deployed there(15). The six platoons, acting basically as Observation Posts, were located at -

- Jachep - 2 Platoons (One section was at Chu Pass).
- Hot Spring - 1 Platoon and Wing HQ.
- Kibithoo - 2 Platoons
- Tangkhal/Du Dakhru - 1 Platoon

Walong sub-sector(16)

The CO 4 Sikh commanded this sub-sector. Only two Coys - 'A' and 'B' - along with Battalion HQ had arrived there till then. 'A' Coy was in Dong area with 3-in Mortar Section while 'B' Coy was at Mah Plateau, with one Pl at Ladders.

In support(17)

71 Hy Mor Bty of 44 Hy Mor Regt.

As regards the Chinese strength, Intelligence Bureau assessed in September 1962, that out of the nineteen battalions deployed by the Chinese along the NEFA-Tibet border, six battalions were positioned across Lohit Frontier Division(18). The troops had moved forward close to the Indian border and from September 1962 onwards they were observed continuously digging and preparing defensive positions opposite Indian posts(19). According to HQ IV estimate, the Chinese had deployed approximately 10000 Coys of Inf Div in area Shugden - Drowa Gonpa - Tithang, with sub-units at Rima(20).

The Chinese had improved the Drowa Gonpa - Rima road which led to Kibithoo and then to Walong on the Indian side of the border(21). Shugden was on the main Lhasa-Chamdo highway. From Shugden, Rima could be approached by the Chinese through two roads, Shugden - Drowa Gonpa - Rima and Shugden - Tithang - Rima(22).

LOSS OF KIBITHOO

Kibithoo was an Indian army post on the western bank of Lohit river, about 3 km (2 miles) south of the McMahon Line. To the south of this post was the Thapa Ridge, on the southern side of Tho Chu. This ridge was being used as the DZ for the troops there. Across the Lohit from Kibithoo was a feature on the McMahon Line, named McMahon Ridge. The foot track to Hot Spring, Jachep and Chu Pass posts, far to the east, ran from Kibithoo to Dichu over the McMahon Ridge and along the northern bank of Di Chu Nullah. The track to Tangkhal and Du Dakhru posts, towards the west, ran along the southern bank of the Tho Chu Nullah. Approximate time taken to reach Chu Pass from Kibithoo through Dichu, Hot Spring and Jachep was seven days while to Du Dakhru it took only two days from Kibithoo(23).

A reconnaissance patrol sent on 18 October 1962 to a feature - known as Hundred Hill - observed the presence of some enemy soldiers on the feature. When the patrol returned to base on 19 October morning, an AR platoon, which was at that time deployed at Thapa Ridge, was sent to the feature. It was asked to dig defences there with a view to check the Chinese advance to Kibithoo along that approach. On the same day, one platoon of 'A' Coy/6 Kumaon was also sent to take up position on the McMahon Ridge(24), followed by the whole Coy on 21 October. A platoon of 'A' Coy was then sent up along Di Chu Nullah to prevent any enemy advance from Taluk Pass (Diphu La).

On the same night, (i.e. 21 October) at about 2345 hrs, the enemy commenced MMG fire and artillery shelling on the McMahon Ridge from their bunkers, approximately 700 metres, north of Sama Post. Immediately thereafter, the enemy attacked with approximately a battalion group. Accurate firing by the Indian 3-in Mortar Detachment, which at that time was positioned south-west of Kibithoo Ridge, halted the first rush. But before long, replenished in strength, Chinese mounted another fierce attack. The Indian troops, stuck to their position and put down continuous accurate small arms and mortar fire on the Chinese troops.

In this action, approximately 60 Chinese were killed as against four Indian killed, two missing and four wounded, including the Coy Commander. For an outstanding act of gallantry in this action, Nk Bahadur Singh was posthumously awarded Vir Chakra.

In the face of great numerical superiority of the enemy and with no possibility of being reinforced, 'A' Coy and its attached troops were ordered to withdraw from the McMahon Ridge and Di Chu to concentrate at Kibithoo. The troops started withdrawing at 0700 hrs on 22 October.

The Bde Commander arrived at Walong at 0900 hrs to personally review the situation. After a telephonic conversation with the Battalion Commander, orders to cut all the twine rope-ways across the Lohit river at Kibithoo at the earliest were issued. The enemy continued with heavy shelling and used innumerable smoke bombs, which caused dense smoke in the whole area. At 1000 hrs, on 22 October 1962, HQ 5 Inf Bde received orders from IV Corps placing the Bde directly under the Corps. In view of the loss of the Dichu Ridge to the enemy and its superior build up against Kibithoo, the message from HQ IV Corps, among other things ordered(25):-

- i. 4 Sikh and 6 Kumaon were to occupy compact defensive areas with the mutual support north of Walong in such a way as to preclude observed enemy mortar fire on Walong airfield.
- ii. 6 Kumaon to withdraw to new defensive area from Kibithoo preferably after last light 22 October, so as to give time to 4 Sikh to occupy new defences.
- iii. All Assam Rifle posts on the western side to be withdrawn to Hayuliang for protection of the left flank of Walong Garrison.

6 Kumaon received orders of withdrawal at 1600 hrs on 22 October 1962. In the sequence of withdrawal, 'C' Coy was given the task of destroying all stores/rations at Kibithoo and the bridge on Tho Chu. It was also made responsible for taking delaying positions on way back to cover the withdrawal of the Battalion. Kibithoo was finally abandoned at 2100 hrs on 22 October 1962. The Battalion, less 'D' Coy, concentrated at Walong at 1700 hrs on 23 October 1962. 'D' Coy, which was at Ashi Hill, withdrew from the screen position, and took up defences at Walong at 1000 hrs on 25 October(26).

The withdrawal of troops from Kibithoo to Walong alarmed the Army HQ that in a signal(27), on 25 October 1962, it asked the Eastern Command to consider withdrawing bulk of the troops from Subansiri, Siang and Lohit Frontier Divisions. The Command was also asked to consider using full 23 Inf Bde to contain the enemy thrust from Walong.

To augment the force in Lohit Frontier Division, Coys - 'B' and 'D' - of 2/8 GR (the Battalion had been moved to NEFA under 62 Inf Bde) were air-lifted from Tezu and from there to Walong on 25 October. 'D' Coy of the Battalion occupied a defended locality on the western bank of Lohit river (under command 4 Sikh) and 'B' Coy on the eastern bank (under command 4 Sikh, Kumaon)(28).

The enemy in an attempt to achieve a break-through, launched an attack on the Mithun track position in the early hours of 27 October. In the fighting, Sep Kewal Singh of 4 Sikh, gave a superb display of bravery for which he was posthumously awarded MVC, the only MVC awarded for the operations in Lohit Frontier Division(29). The enemy's attack was successfully beaten back with the help of 71 Hy Coy Bty. The MMGs and 3-in Mor from East Bank also supported the Sikhs to foil the enemy attack.

There was a lull in the fighting for the next few days. The situation in Lohit Frontier Division by the end of October 1962 was:-

- (a) The AR posts at Hot Spring, Jachep, Chu Pass, Du Dakhru and Tangkhal had been withdrawn.
- (b) The posts by Dichu Ridge and Kibithoo had been occupied by the enemy after a fight.
- (c) Indian defences at Walong had been attacked twice by the Chinese since 25 October, but without success.

REINFORCEMENTS AND PATROLLING

After the formation of 2 Inf Div to take over operational responsibility in Subansiri, Siang and Lohit Frontier Divisions of NEFA, its GOC, Maj Gen M.S. Pathania, arrived at Walong on 26 October to receive the forward areas(30). With two battalions located at Walong, but without a coordinating HQ located nearby, the new GOC found inherent problems of command and control of troops in the Walong Sector. Accordingly, on 29 October 1962, it was decided that operations in the Walong Sector would be looked after

by an independent Inf Bde. For this purpose, first 181 Inf Bde and finally 11 Inf Bde (then located in Nagaland) was placed under 2 Inf Div(31). The new Bde Commander, Brig N.C. Rawlley, MC, along with his Rover Gp arrived at Walong at 1030 hrs on 31 October. The same day in the evening he called a conference of his COs and told them:

"There was going to be no withdrawal from this place - everybody must get that straight"(32).

On 31 October 1962, the Order-of-Battle of 11 Inf Bde was as follows(33):-

- (a) 6 Kumaon
- (b) 4 Sikh
- (c) Two Coys 2/8 GR (After the decision of 1 November to allot 3/3 GR to 11 Mtn Bde, these two Coys were diverted to Siang Frontier Division).
- (d) One Coy 3/3 GR
- (e) Platoon 6 Mahar MG
- (f) Tp 62 Para Fd Bty
- (g) 71 Hy Mor Bty

After the withdrawal of Indian troops from Kibithoo, the Chinese had occupied positions behind Ashi Hill. Since then it had become a daily routine with the Chinese troops to fire at the Mithun and Ladders positions and also to carry out probing attacks on Indian defences. It was also a daily affair with the Indian troops to repel the enemy attacks forcefully. The Indian firing, it is believed, hurt the Chinese so heavily that on 2 November the local commanders were reported to have sent a message to the rear for permission to withdraw, which was refused(34).

The Chinese fire on the Mithun and Ladder positions was, in fact, a ruse to cover their activities somewhere else. Behind the screen of their firing, the Chinese constructed a track from Ashi Hill to the Green Pimple post and started their build-up unchecked.

On 1 November 1962, 2/Lt P.S. Bhandari, who was occupying an OP of 71 Hy Mor Bty at Maha Plateau, was detailed to go on a wide recce patrol for 3 days

West Ridge to locate the Chinese in the area and, if possible, to engage them by fire. An OP party from 1 Hy Mor Bty and a platoon of Assam Rifles was given to him for the purpose. The patrol moved out on 2 November, and camped for the night just below the crest of West Ridge. Next day, they moved along the ridge, avoiding "Green Pimple", and camped at "Yellow Pimple". This patrol was the first to go to that area, and used these names for the features - named such because of the distinctive colour of the leaves on their slopes. Next morning, i.e. on 3 November, the patrol turned back, via Yellow Pimple and Green Pimple. As the patrol moved up the slope of Green Pimple, the leading men came under heavy enemy automatic and small arms fire. The patrol took position and returned the fire, and later, skirting the Chinese position, returned to its base, though a day late(35). 2/Lt P.S. Bhandari of Regt of Arty and Sub. Jagandhoy Limbu of 2 Assam Rifles earned Vir Chakras for their performance in this episode.

The presence of the enemy on the Green and Yellow Pimples was causing anxiety to the Bde Commander. Green Pimple dominated Lachhman Ridge and Maha Plateau. The approach to Green Pimple was through Tri-junction and Yellow Pimple. Moreover, advance of another 3 km along that Spur by the enemy meant his domination of Walong Airstrip and DZ. The Bde Commander, anticipating the danger from the enemy, determined to dislodge the Chinese from there at the earliest.

'A' Coy, 6 Kumaon, under Capt R.K. Mathur, was sent on 5 November 1962 to clear the enemy from area Green Pimple and then to reconnoitre the route from Green Pimple to Ashi Hill(36). The Company was to get fire support from heavy mortars of 71 Bty and on that day the Bty fired 110 rounds on Green Pimple, Yellow Pimple and left edge of Maha Plateau(37).

The Kumaonis launched the attack on 6 November. The enemy opened fire on the Indian troops with all weapons, but the Coy continued its advance steadily and forced the enemy to vacate its forward defensive positions. Later, however, the Coy Commander pulled back, ostensibly because the ammunition with the Kumaon Coy was running short. The Coy then took defensive positions at a height of 3,350 metres (11,000 ft) in order to check the enemy's advance on to the West Ridge. Capt R.K. Mathur received Vir Chakra for this action(38).

For his next attempt, the Bde Commander selected the Sikhs and their 'D' Coy was given the task to evict the enemy from the Green Pimple. One Coy, 5 Kumaon, was detailed to assist the Sikhs in the task(39).

Tri-junction was secured by two platoons of Kumaon under 2/Lt A.S. Khatri on 12 November, and the Battalion less one Coy and one platoon stood concentrated there by 2000 hrs on 13 November(45).

Position on 14 November

Indian

(a) The position of Indian troops as on 14 November 1962 in the Walong Sector was as follows:-

11 Inf Bde

TAC HQ	Southern slopes of Tri-Junction.
Admn HQ	Walong
<u>6 Kumaon</u>	
Bn TAC HQ less one Coy & one Pl	Tri-Junction
One Coy ('A') & one Pl	West Ridge
3-in Mortar	Mortar Post
Bn Rear HQ	Firm Base(46)
<u>4 Sikh</u>	
Bn HQ	Forward slopes of West Ridge
'A' Coy	Patrol Base
'B' Coy	Depth Position at Ladder's
'C' Coy	Maha Plateau
'D' Coy	High Plateau (On the eastern bank of Lohit River and under command 3/3 GR)
3-in Mortar	Bn Locality.

3/3 GR

This Battalion could concentrate at Walong only in the first week of November 1962. Its troops were deployed as follows(48):-

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|--|
| Bn HQ | - Dakota Hill | } | These locations were south of Sat Ti (Nullah), on the eastern bank of Lohit river. |
| 'A' Coy | - Dong Plateau | } | |
| 'B' Coy less one Pl | - Dong Hill | } | |
| One Pl | - Dong Choti | } | |
| 'C' Coy | - Ladder's under command 4 Sikh (Took over this position from 4 Sikh on 11 November) | | |
| 'D' Coy | - Lachhman Ridge under command 4 Sikh (Took over this position from 'D' Coy/4 Sikh on 11 November) | | |

4 DOGRA(49)

The Battalion's Rover Gp and 'O' Gp under CO reached Walong by air on 9 November 1962. Its 'A' Coy with two platoons of 'B' Coy was at Walong on 13 November.

- 'A' Coy - Was ordered to re-inforce 6 Kumaon at Tri-Junction. One Pl of the Coy was positioned at Mortar position for the protection of Bde TAC HQ.
- 'B' Coy - Moved from Walong at 1600 hrs on 14 November, to position itself at Tri-Junction (two platoons - No.4 & 6, and the third Platoon, No.5, was to be positioned at Firm Base).
- 'D' Coy - When the Coy reached Walong at 1500 hrs on 14 November, it was ordered to proceed to Tri-Junction to re-inforce Kumaon. 'A' Coy, which was at that time at Firm Base and was proceeding to Tri-Junction was asked to act as fighting porters for 'D' Coy and Rover Gp from Firm Base to Tri-Junction.

'C' Coy with
Bn HQ - At Walong

Later, on 15 November 1962, the whole Bn was asked to relieve 6 Kumaon in area Tri-Junction and to take up Bn defensive position there.

MGs

One Platoon of 'B' Coy(50) - Mortar Post, in
6 Mahar (MG) support of 6 Kumaon

Arty

71 Hy Mor Bty/ } Depth position at Ladder's
44 Lt Regt (T) (51) } (with 'B' Coy 4 Sikh)

52 Para FD Bty/
17 Para Fd Regt(52)

'E' Tp Dakota Hill

'F' Tp In support of 4 Sikh Coy at
High Plateau.

None of the Positions occupied by the Indian troops were mutually supportive, and as such each post had to fight an independent battle.

(b) Hayuliang Sector

Considering the terrain and the distance from Rima to Hayuliang and Glei Dakhru to Hayuliang, being 192 km (120 miles) and 120 km (75 miles) respectively, it was felt that the enemy would not be able to build more than a Bn Group in that area, in the near future. Accordingly 4 Assam was ordered to reach Hayuliang to reinforce the four platoons of 2 Assam Rifles in that area latest by 13 November(53).

(c) Northern Lohit F.D.

The enemy had so far made no ingress in that area. However, consequent upon the withdrawal of Assam Rifles posts to their winter locations, the enemy might have occupied some of those posts. As there appeared to be no immediate threat in that area, the sub-units of 2 Assam Rifles were not re-inforced by the induction of any regular troops. The Sector was, therefore, to be held entirely by eleven platoons of 2 Assam Rifles(54).

(B) Chinese

The Chinese after occupying Kibithoo on 22 October 1962, had speedily advanced till checked at Nam Ti (Nullah). They had dug in positions on Ashi Hill. Efforts were then made by them to penetrate the forward Indian defended localities, and since then skirmishes had been going on between the Indian and enemy patrols. By 10 November, the enemy had occupied its defended localities with estimated strength of one Rifle Coy plus. Indian efforts to dislodge the enemy from Green and Yellow Pimples had not met with success.

The distance to Walong from the enemy's base in Rima was not more than 32 km (20 miles) and, as it turned out, the enemy had completed build-up of one Inf Div, fully supported by Arty, south of McMahon Line by 14 November 1962(55).

THE BATTLE FOR WALONG

Indian Attack on Yellow Pimple

After the troops of 6 Kumaon had been concentrated at Tri-Junction, it was decided to launch the attack on Yellow Pimple at 1000 hrs on 14 November. Before the attack, fire support was to be provided as follows(56):-

<u>Timings</u>	<u>Type of fire</u>	<u>Target</u>
(a) 132000 to 132330	Harassing Fire	Yellow Pimple
(b) 140930 to 141000	Preparatory	Yellow Pimple
(c) 140930 to 141000	Counter bombardment	Ashi Hill

Plan for the attack was(57):-

- (a) Attack to commence with two Coys - Ad hoc Coy under Capt Singh on the left and 'B' Coy on the right under Maj Sharma.
- (b) 'C' Coy in reserve on Tri-Junction.
- (c) 'D' Coy to put pressure on Green Pimple from West Ridge by remaining in contact with the enemy. This Coy was to ensure that the enemy positions at Yellow Pimple were not reinforced from Green Pimple.

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At 0900 hrs 14 November, 2/Lt Shyam Chavan and Sub Govind Singh with a platoon of 'C' Coy, were sent to secure forming up place. When this position was threatened by the enemy patrol in forming up place, the time of attack was advanced by 30 minutes. On 15 November at 0930 hrs the assault on Yellow Pimple was launched. 'KALIKA MAI KI JAI', the war cry of the Kumaonis, reverberated in the area, and the Kumaonis charged up the slopes of Yellow Pimple. Unfortunately, the artillery fire was not very effective, and the Indians 3-in Moratrs could not compensate for artillery fire due to very limited ammunition with them(58).

Enemy reacted violently and brought down heavy fire on the advancing Kumaonis. But this did not deter the advancing troops, and the left flank under Capt Singh pushed on to just 20 metres of the enemy bunkers. The right flank was held up 180 metres from the top. Further progress proved difficult as the enemy was well dug-in and was covering every inch of ground in front with a shower of bullets. At about 1200 hrs, two platoons of 'C' Coy, under Sub Govind Singh and Sub Surendra Chand, were rushed to Yellow Pimple as reinforcement(59). Sub Govind Singh decided not to be held up within a few metres of glory and fame. "Where every movement was death, he dashed forward with an LMG to destroy the enemy bunker which was holding up the Indian advance". He was fired upon from another bunker and died on the spot. Right flank troops again made a determined move till they were only about 45 metres from the enemy bunkers(60). The Bde Commander, who had been witnessing the fighting at Yellow Pimple from the forward slopes of Tri-Junction, ordered the Battalion to stick to the ground it had captured and to gradually creep up under the cover of darkness. But during the night, the enemy moved up sufficient reserves, and counter-attacked the assaulting Indian troops with approximately a battalion supported by artillery and mortars. In fierce hand to hand fighting the Indian troops were compelled to fall back on Tri-Junction, due to superior enemy strength and threat to Firm Base(61). Of the approximately 200 men who had gone in the assault in the morning, only 90 returned(62).

Chinese Capture Tri-Junction

After having successfully beaten back the Indian assault on the Yellow Pimple, the Chinese were ready to launch a counter-attack simultaneously on all the locations, stretching from Tri-Junction on the west side of Lohit River to the High Plateau on its eastern bank, supported by 81 mm mortars(63).

The enemy attacked Tri-Junction at 0430 hrs on 15 November. At that time, the strength of the Indian troops at the post was only one Coy, including the troops which had withdrawn from Yellow Pimple. Bitter fighting ensued. For the next two hours, Tri-Junction constantly echoed with the sound of bullets and exploding mortar bombs. Capt Bhatia put up a determined resistance. When the gunner near him was fatally wounded, he himself manned the LMG and emptied magazine after magazine into the advancing enemy. The attack was repulsed, but both Capt Bhatia and 2/Lt Khatri got wounded(64). Both these officers were later honoured with Vir Chakras.

At that stage, the Bde Commander ordered 4 Dogra to reinforce 6 Kumaon at Tri-Junction. But soon the enemy succeeded in cutting off the axis of maintenance - approach between Mortar post and Tri-Junction - which interfered with the movement of Indian reinforcements to Tri-Junction. In spite of this, some troops of 4 Dogra (33 men) were able to arrive there by breaking through the enemy. The arrival of these men raised the hopes and morale of the Kumaonis as they anticipated that the remaining troops of 4 Dogra would be with them any moment. However, no other troops could reach there(65).

During the night 15/16 November, the enemy kept up his assaults on the position in battalion strength. All these successive assaults were repulsed on that night. But it was bitterly cold at Tri-Junction and the troops had no rest. Moreover, the ammunition was running short and the casualties were also steadily increasing.

The enemy, supported by 120 mm mortars, again launched a massive attack at 0730 hrs on 16 November. But this attack, too, did not succeed in over-running Tri-Junction.

Even though repeated enemy attacks at Tri-Junction had been beaten back, his mortars were continuously harassing the Kumaonis. The Battalion had also lost contact with the Bde HQ. The enemy was present all around. The CO realised that as he could neither get reinforcement nor replenishment of ammunition, further resistance would be suicidal. He ordered his troops to disengage themselves from the enemy. Tri-Junction fell to the enemy at 0900 hrs on 16 November(66). The Indian troops were repeatedly ambushed by the enemy on their downward march.

Fall of other Posts

Three Coys of 4 Sikh with Coys of 3/3 GR were holding the defended positions on the western side of the Lohit river. All these posts were subjected to intermittent enemy bombardment throughout the operations.

(a) Patrol Base

'A' Coy 4 Sikh took over the position at Patrol Base from its 'B' Coy on 13 November. The main objective of the Indian troops at the post was to threaten the rear of the Chinese columns stationed at Green Pimple and Yellow Pimple and as such this Post was an eyesore to the enemy. Wherever patrols from the post were out, they came into contact with the enemy patrols. On 13 November, a patrol under Sub Harnam Singh was sent to cut off the enemy's route of supplies to its troops at Green and Yellow Pimples. The patrol came back after inflicting some casualties on a small enemy column, which was reportedly moving from Ashi Hill to Green Pimple(67).

The enemy launched an attack on Patrol Base for the first time at 2100 hrs on 15 November. The Coy Commander asked for artillery fire, and after being vetted by the GOC, 2 Inf Div (who was at Walong on that night), fire came down on the enemy, and the attack was beaten back. 'A' Coy position was attacked again and again, but the enemy was always beaten back, and the position held resolutely. The battle raged furiously the whole night. The ammunition holdings with the Indians were being depleted seriously. To make matters worse, small enemy parties had infiltrated and cut off the maintenance route to the forward Companies(68). The QM Platoon then showed its mettle. Under Capt Inder Jit Kumar, the Platoon fought its way to the forward Companies, and delivered the much-needed ammunition. While performing this task, L/Hav Kirpa Ram, laid down his life. He was awarded a Vir Chakra.

Again, at 0430 hrs on 16 November, the enemy launched another attack at Patrol Base. This time 'A' Coy 4 Sikh could not withstand the enemy pressure and, after obtaining the approval of the Brigade, it was ordered to withdraw to take up position where the Mithun track and the Ladders' track met(69).

(b) Ladders'

At about 0300 hrs on 16 November, Ladders' position, which was being held by 'C' Coy of 3/3 GR under command 4 Sikh, was attacked frontally by a strong Chinese force from Ashi Hill(70). Direct firing weapons from Ashi Hill knocked out all the nine

bunkers then occupied by the Gorkhas, who suffered casualties. Maj N.B. Chand ordered his men to come out into the crawl trenches and to continue engaging the enemy. Capt G.S. Bajaj of 71 Hy Mor Bty shifted its fire to the area in front of Ladders'. However, the situation became critical when small groups of enemy started infiltrating to bring the Indian gun positions under small arms fire.

Coy Commander 3/3 GR requested the Bn HQ 4 Sikh for additional men and ammunition. But the Bn HQ had no reserves. 3/3 GR troops had to continue fighting with the man-power and ammunition that was available with them in the picquet area. The enemy continued firing and shelling. Ultimately, the Coy Cmr, feeling that his ammunition was almost finished, ordered his men to pull out. The troops managed to come out without much casualties, but the Coy Cmr could not(71).

(c) Maha Plateau/Lachhman Ridge/Mithun track

These positions were being held by 'C' Coy of 4 Sikh and 'D' Coy of 3/3 GR, under command 4 Sikh. Like the other posts on the western side of Lohit river, this location was also subjected to intermittent enemy bombardment throughout the day and night of 15 November. After the Chinese had over-run the 'A' Coy 4 Sikh position at Patrol Base by 0530 hrs on 16 November, they advanced on the position held by 'C' Coy 4 Sikh and 'D' Coy 3 GR. Prior to this, the enemy had already infiltrated between Mithun track and Maha Plateau.

The enemy's first attack came at 0530 hrs. Sub Kharak Bahadur Gurung of 3/3 GR ordered his platoon to open fire only when the Chinese were very near, and the attack failed. The Chinese made second attempt to advance at 0630 hrs, but were again pushed back with heavy casualties. In the fighting, Indian troops, too, suffered heavily.

A platoon from 'B' Coy 4 Sikh was sent, under Sub Jaswant Singh, to stop the enemy's advance along Mithun track(72). By the time this reinforcement reached the Plateau, the remnants of 'A' Coy from Patrol Base had also arrived there, which increased the strength of the Indian troops at the track. But after further attacks by the enemy, the Indian troop positions were over-run. Both the Coy Commanders were made PsOW and the troops dispersed.

(d) West Ridge

After the Chinese had rolled over the Indian defences at Tri-Junction, they mounted a frontal attack on West Ridge, which was held by four platoons of 6 Kumaon. The attack did not succeed. Then the Chinese fanned out. The next attack came with an overwhelming superiority of numbers from three sides, aided by Medium Machine Gun fire and heavy artillery bombardment. Since the capture of the position by the enemy would have opened the West Ridge approach to Walong and threatened the troops in the forward defended localities with the likelihood of being cut off, the Coy Commander, Lt Bikram Singh, was asked to deny West Ridge to the enemy till 1100 hrs that day, at all cost(73). He successfully performed this task, and half an hour after the specified time, asked for permission to withdraw as he and his men stood encircled by the enemy. Some of the men - 1 JCO and 17 Other Ranks - managed to break through the Chinese ring, but the rest died fighting till the last, including the Coy Commander, Lt Bikram Singh.

(e) Mortar Position

Troops of 'A' and 'D' Coys of 4 Dogra, under Bn Rover Group, were at Mortar Position by the afternoon of 15 November, on their way to reinforce 6 Kumaon at Tri-Junction. Their move to the destination was very slow, as the route passed through thickly wooded area, and the troops were continuously under enemy's small arm and grenade fire(74). Meanwhile, the Chinese had also been able to infiltrate downwards. The enemy, approximately a battalion strong, opened up with Light Machine Guns, automatic rifles and had grenades. The troops of 4 Dogra held their ground and kept back the enemy till morning of 16 November, despite repeated attacks. But after the enemy had captured Tri-Junction, he concentrated all his troops against Bn Rover Gp and 'A' Coy, and the Dogras soon got encircled. At that stage, the troops learnt of the order for withdrawal. They, therefore, charged through the enemy and headed downward to reach Yapak-Lohit Junction at the earliest.

(f) Fighting on Eastern Bank of Lohit River

Two Coys ('A' and 'B') of 3/3 GR with one ('D') Coy 4 Sikh were deployed there under Bn HQ 3/3 GR. 'D' Coy 4 Sikh, under Lt Palta, was holding the forward-most post at High Plateau.

On 15 November, it was observed that a strong enemy force, approximately Bn plus, had crossed the river from the western to the eastern side. At about

0130 hrs on 16 November, this force attacked the left rear platoon of the Sikh Coy and quickly over-ran it. The Coy Commander collected some men from the remaining platoons and launched a counter-attack(75). During the battle, Lt Palta, the Coy Commander, provided exemplary leadership to his men and displayed personal courage and bravery of a very high order in the face of the enemy, for which he was awarded Vr C posthumously.

After the death of Lt Palta, 2/Lt P.S. Bhandari, the OP Officer, took over the command of the troops. By 0300 hrs, Coy HQ and the right rear platoon had also been over-run. The Sikhs fought with stubbornness and tenacity and lost 36 of their men, including the Coy Commander(76). The remnants held on to their positions supported by Arty and 3-in mortars till 1000 hrs, on 16 November. During the early hours of the day, efforts were made to re-inforce 4 Sikh, but the Gorkhas could not go beyond the southern edge of High Plateau. The Chinese were well established there, and all efforts failed to reach the Sikhs.

WITHDRAWAL FROM WALONG

During night 15/16 November, the enemy supported by mortar and RCL guns had assaulted all the Indian positions stretching from Tri-Junction on the western side to the High Plateau on the eastern side of Lohit river. Indian troops offered stiff resistance, but they had to vacate their positions. The situation at 1100 hrs on 16 November 1962 was(77):-

- (a) Tri-Junction and West Ridge held by troops of 6 Kumaon had been over-run by the enemy. The occupation of the West Ridge gave the enemy observation and small arms fire capability over the Dropping Zone, advanced Landing Ground and Bde HQ at Walong itself.
- (b) Patrol Base, Maha Plateau/Lachhman Ridge and Ladders' posts had been occupied by the enemy.
- (c) Firm Base, held by troops of 4 Dogra, stood surrounded by the enemy.
- (d) High Plateau, held by troops of 4 Sikh, had been captured by the enemy.
- (e) Troops of 3/3 GR holding Dong Plateau, Dong Hill and Dakota Hill stood encircled.

The Bde Commander had witnessed the battle for the capture of Yellow Pimple by his troops on 14 November. He had also seen the enemy counter-attacking the Indian troops on the entire length of the front from the western to the eastern side of the Lohit River, on 15/16 night. The Corps Commander and the Div Commander were at Walong with the Bde Commander from the afternoon of 15 November till they left Walong for Hayuliang by Otter at 1100 hrs on 16 November; while leaving Walong, the Corps Commander instructed 11 Mtn Bde Commander to hold the Defended Sector to the best of his ability. In the event of his position becoming untenable, he was instructed to fall back to an alternative position, and to plan for taking up a series of delaying positions, if that became necessary(78). The GOC IV Corps, confirmed his verbal instructions of withdrawal to Bde Commander 11 Mtn Bde in the evening, through a signal(79).

The enemy had succeeded in securing a foothold both on the western and eastern side of the Lohit river, and had been able to force the Indian troops back from their locations. He was now in a position to shell the Walong landing ground. Out of the four battalions of Indian troops, only four companies (2 Coys of 3/3 GR at Dong Plateau and 2 Coys of 4 Dogra at Bde HQ) were available with the Brigade, which had so far not come into contact with the enemy.

Finding his position untenable, the Bde Commander, at 1100 hrs on 16 November, gave orders for the withdrawal of troops from the forward areas and for the holding of Yapak feature. The decision to withdraw from Walong was taken to save whatever troops were still left.

The withdrawal plan was:-

- (a) All elements of the Brigade, less Infantry battalions, to clear brigade Check Point at Yapak Ti-Lohit River Junction between 1300 hrs and 1600 hrs.
- (b) Infantry battalions to abandon positions at 1700 hrs on 16 November.
- (c) Brigade less 3/3 GR to assemble at Sathi (which probably indicates the place Salti, south of Shet Ti on the western bank of the Lohit).
- (d) 3/3 GR Group (which included one Coy 4 Sikh and two Coys 3/3 GR) on eastern bank, to withdraw along east bank and join the Brigade column at Hawaii.

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- (e) Troops on the Western Flank (troops of 6 Kumaon, 4 Sikh and 4 Dogra) to withdraw along Yapak Ridge.
- (f) Left flank above Dropping Zone to be held by one Coy 4 Dogra, who were to withdraw after 4 Sikh had passed through.
- (g) Firm Base troops to break through the enemy and withdraw via Walong to the Brigade rendezvous.
- (h) One Coy 6 Kumaon plus on ad-hoc Coy 4 Dogra to hold a lay back position at Yapak Ridge until 0500 hours on 17 November.
- (i) All guns to be destroyed/rendered unserviceable after firing all remaining ammunition.

(A) 6 KUMAON/4 DOGRA

The troops at Tri-Junction and Mortar Post had already disintegrated before they received the orders for withdrawal at about 1200 hrs. They had a difficult time coming down to join the Brigade column due to the pressure from the enemy. They moved in small parties and the troops kept on trickling down to Tezu, till 4 December 1962.

6 Kumaon suffered the following casualties throughout the operations in this Sector:

	<u>Officer</u>	<u>JCOs</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>Total</u>
Killed	2	6	110	118
Wounded				113
PsOW	6	5	161	172*

* including 2 NCs(E)

4 Dogra, too, suffered heavy casualties, which included one Officer, 2 JCOs and 107 ORs(80).

(B) 4 SIKH

When the Bde Commander spoke to the Commanding Officer 4 Sikh on wireless a few minutes before 1200 hrs on 16 November, he, it appears, just gave an indication of withdrawal and nothing else. The CO sent his Adjutant to Walong to find out the real situation. Orders to the Coy Commanders for withdrawal were passed on by the Commanding Officer.

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about 1400 hrs. By that time, the enemy had infiltrated, and he ambushed the withdrawing troops. The Battalion withdrew to Tezu after marching for eight days. The 4 Sikh suffered a total of 180 casualties during the operations:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>
Officer	2	1
JCOs	4	4
ORs	76	93

(C) 3/3 GR

The troops of 3/3 GR Group, which were ordered to rejoin the Brigade at Hawaii, could not do so for various reasons. The telephone lines between Bde HQ and the Battalion stood cut, and orders regarding withdrawal were received by them very late. During the withdrawal, they were repeatedly ambushed by the enemy and suffered heavy casualties(81).

In the battle of Walong, 11 Mtn Brigade had fought a defensive battle against heavy odds. It had attacked to gain a formidable feature, viz, Yellow Pimple, and nearly captured it, and finally carried out a planned withdrawal; all of which were without adequate artillery fire support and without administrative cover(82). The troops fought bravely, but being out-numbered and out-weaponed in automatics and ammunition, suffered heavily.

In this battle, 832 personnel were either killed, wounded or found missing. On the other hand, by an orderly withdrawal, about 1,700 troops were saved from being captured by the enemy(83).

The troops which took part in the fighting in Lohit Frontier Division were awarded one Maha Vir Chakra and ten Vir Chakras. The recipients of those awards were(84):-

Maha Vir Chakra

Sepoy Kewal Singh (Posthumous) 4 Sikh
(No.334970)

Vir Chakras

Capt Prem Nath Bhatia 6 Kumaon
(IC-7077)

Capt Ravi Kumar Mathur 6 Kumaon

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(IC-10156)

Capt Balbir Chand Chopra (MS-6455)	AMC
Lt Yog Raj Palta (Posthumous) (IC-11832)	4 Sikh
2/Lt Amar Singh Khatri (IC-12970)	6 Kumaon
2/Lt Pradeep Singh Bhandari (IC-12322)	Arty Regt
Naik Bahadur Singh (Posthumous) (No.4139362)	6 Kumaon
Hav Kirpa Ram (Posthumous) (No.3330962)	4 Sikh
Sub Jagandhoy Limbu	2 Assam Rifles
Rfn Purna Bahadur	2 Assam Rifles

With one third of the troops deployed in the Walong Sector having been killed, wounded or captured, it became necessary to induct more troops in the Lohit Frontier Division to check the advance of the enemy deep into the south of the Division. Orders were issued to induct another Brigade - 82 Inf Bde - with four Bns - 5/5 GR, 3 Grenadiers, 1/1 GR and 1 JG Rifles - into the Lohit Frontier Division. TAC of 82 Inf Bde and advance parties of 3 Grenadiers and 1/1 GR arrived at Chabua on 16 November for their move to Tezu(85). 4 Assam in Hayuliang was asked to perform the role of covering troops. With Hayuliang as the covering position, the new main defended sector in the Eastern Lohit was to be prepared in area Dening-Lohitpur-Tezu under 82 Inf Brigade with its four battalions(86).

REVIEW

In planning these operations, the Chinese had a tricky little problem to solve. The Lohit valley provided the only practicable ingress. At Kibithoo was a narrow gorge, and broadened out only near Walong. The hills to the east of the valley rose steeply from the river bed to a high elevation of more than 4,500 metres. No sizeable force could cross the high range to get behind the Indian positions at Kibithoo and Walong. The hills range to the west of Kibithoo along the McMahon Line was also high and difficult to cross. The bottleneck at Kibithoo therefore, had to be broken through by a front

attack before, a large force could be pushed through to advance deep into India. It was fortunate for the Chinese, therefore, that McMahon Ridge on the east bank of the Lohit was held by only one Coy of Indian troops, and Kibithoo itself was vacated by 6 Kumaon on orders of Headquarters IV Corps without much fighting.

After taking Kibithoo, the Chinese had the option of advancing towards Hayuliang via the Du Pass, which was a shorter route. But in that case, the Indian Brigade at Walong could threaten the flank, and could bottle up the invaders by advancing and recapturing Kibithoo. So, the Chinese were compelled to capture Walong and neutralise the brigade there.

At the start of the operations, the Chinese had a battalion at Rima(87). By the time the hostilities ceased, they had a brigade at Rima, and perhaps another brigade around Ashi Hill area. Field Artillery had also been brought up and moved forward, giving a clear superiority to the Chinese in strength and fire power(88).

After the withdrawal of the Indian troops from Kibithoo on 22 October 1962, the enemy was in a position concentrate more troops to the south of McMahon Line. By 12 November 1962, it was known that the enemy had about one Infantry Division on the Indian side of the McMahon Line with necessary artillery support, and was holding the heights in strength in prepared positions(89). The Bde Commander was aware that he had no reserve troops, which could be moved forward to reinforce the assaulting troops, nor enough artillery fire. But in spite of all this, he committed his troops to an abortive attack on Yellow Pimple on 14 November. By launching an offensive in the face of superior enemy strength and fire power, it is often asserted that the Bde Commander wasted his men and material and enabled the enemy to counter-attack his troops, with full vigour, on the whole front, which resulted in his defeat. In view of the Chinese superiority, it could be said that the decision to launch an offensive on 14 November 1962 by the 11 Mountain Brigade, which had been approved by Div Commander and Corps Commander also on 12 November, was not a tactically sound decision. On the other hand, the Brigade Commander has argued that Yellow Pimple was reported unoccupied, and he had to try and occupy it to prevent the enemy going along the ridge and coming down behind the Brigade positions(90). Mere passive defence was certainly no prescription for victory. In any case, the performance of the Indian Army in the Walong sector was far better than in the Kameng sector.

THE SUBANSIRI FRONTIER DIVISION

TOPOGRAPHY

Subansiri Frontier Division is named after the big river which drains its eastern and northern parts. This Division lies to the east of Kameng Frontier Division. The northern portion of this Division is lined by the great Himalayan Range and in the north-east this Range recedes into Tibet. An offshoot of the Himalayan Range separates it from the Siang Frontier Division in the east. In the south, a narrow belt of Terai merges into the northern plains of Assam(91). This Frontier Division now stands divided into two Administrative districts - Lower and Upper Subansiri.

Lower Subansiri District

Itanagar, which is the capital of present Arunachal Pradesh (erstwhile NEFA) lies in the extreme south of this district. Other important towns of this district are Kimin and Ziro, which were connected by road during 1962, covering a distance of 90 km (55 miles)(92).

A track existed from Ziro to Dharmu, near the Indo-Tibet border covering a distance of approximately 290 km (180 miles). The track ran mostly along the south bank of Kurang, a river, tributary of the Subansiri and cut across numerous smaller tributaries and many intervening ridges. The route from Ziro to Sarli covered a distance of about 208 km (130 miles). From Sarli, Dharmu could be reached by two routes. The shorter one was through the Vatey or Wasi valley, approximately 80 km (50 miles) long, and the longer one through Milli, covered approximately 120 km (74 miles). Sarli was situated on the north bank of Kurung river and a track from this area also led north-east to Takaing(93).

Upper Subansiri District

The Upper Subansiri District comprised mainly of the Longju area and the Subansiri Valley. The Longju area lay in the extreme north-east of the Upper Subansiri District. The prominent villages of this area were Migyitun (in Tibet), Longju, Roi and Maja. On account of its nearness to the international boundary, no landing-ground had been built in the area, though Maja village was being used as a Dropping Zone(94). The nearest landing ground was at Lemeking, a small town approximately 51 km to the south-east of Maja along the track route. Maja, 10 km (6 miles) south of Longju, was 2 days' marching distance from Lemeking(95).

Longju could be reached from Lemeking, Daporijo and also from Menchukha (Siang Frontier Division) by foot-paths passing through dense forests. At places, there were ladder climbs and indigenous suspension bridges which made the journey hazardous and exhausting. The trekking from Lemeking to Longju took three days and nearly the same from Menchukha, but more than a week from Daporijo(96).

Like the Longju region, the Subansiri Valley Region also lacked good communications. Here too tracks were risky and inconvenient. The villages in the valley were Lung (in Tibet), Asaphila, Takaing and Lemeking(97).

A recce of the track from Daporijo to Takaing and then to Maja was carried out by Lt Col K.J.S. Chhatwal, OC 1/5 GR, from 8 March to 29 April 1961. Of the track from Daporijo to Taliha, covering a distance of 41 km (26 miles), the portion upto 27 km (17 miles) was jeepable and the rest of the route was being made fit for a jeep. From Taliha the track went up to Lemeking after covering a distance of 104 km (65 miles). From Lemeking, where a Landing Ground was available the route led to Gelenshiniak, at a distance of 19 km (12 miles). From Gelenshiniak, one track went to Takaing and the other to Maja(98).

About 3 km (2 miles) beyond Takaing, the track crossed Subansiri (Chari Chu). Here the track coming from Lung joined the track from Yume (both places in Tibet). The track to Maja from Gelenshiniak, throughout its distance of about 32 km (20 miles), ran along Tsari Chu and crossed the river many times before reaching Maja.

TROOP BUILD-UP

(A) Indian

Following the flight of Dalai Lama to India in March 1959 and the subsequent influx of refugees from Tibet, it was decided by the Government of India to strengthen the existing out-posts as well as to establish new posts on the Indo-Tibet border. Under this policy, two out-posts were set-up in the Subansiri Frontier Division(99). One at Longju and the other at Takaing. At that time, the 9th Battalion of the Assam Rifles was made responsible for the defence of Subansiri Frontier Division(100).

The setting up of the Assam Rifles post at Longju by India irked the Chinese and in a Note dated 23 June 1959 they accused Indian troops of intrusion and occupation of Migyitun, Samgur Sampo and other places in the Tibetan region of China and their collusion with Tibetan rebel bandits(101).

The allegations made by the Chinese Government were denied by the Indian government in its Note dated 26 June 1959. The Note said that the outpost at Longju, which was south of Migyitun, was on the Indian side of the traditional international border, and that the Tibetans seeking shelter in Indian territory were being given refuge in accordance with the accepted international usage. The Government of India also assured that they would always respect the traditional international frontier between India and the Tibet region of China and expressed hope that Government of People's Republic of China would do the same(102).

Without any provocation from the Indian side, on 25 August 1959, a strong Chinese detachment crossed into Indian territory, south of Migyitun in the Subansiri Frontier Division, and fired at the Indian soldiers stationed at Longju outpost(103). The Chinese force again encircled the post on 26 August 1959, and opened fire on it, which forced the Indian soldiers to abandon the post(104).

The post at Longju was not occupied by the Indian Army after being vacated by the Assam Rifles personnel on 26 August 1959, as a result of the understanding reached between the Prime Ministers of India and China to maintain status quo on the border(105).

When it was decided not to occupy Longju, a post was set up at Maja on 29 August 1959(106).

In November 1959, when 4 Inf Div was moved from Ambala Cantt to NEFA, 1/5 GR (FF) - a Battalion under 5 Inf Bde - was concentrated at Salorighat, on the right bank of river Bhareli, and the area of responsibility of this Battalion was Ziro(107).

With a view to have effective occupation of the entire frontier, it was decided to set up maximum number of AR posts near the border under 'OP ONKAR'. During the period starting from January 1962 to August 1962, the following eight AR posts were set up(108).

<u>Post</u>	<u>Date when set up</u>	
1. Milli	3 March 1962	} Closed } later on } opened at } Vatey.
Vatey	June 1962	

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2. Dharmu 11 January 1962
3. Pagak 25 May 1962
4. Kashongla 17 August 1962
5. Sagamla 16 May 1962
6. Tamala 13 May 1962
7. Potrang 06 April 1962
8. Asaphila 19 June 1962

Later, a post was established at Chimpung La on 16 October.

From May 1962 onwards, 2 J&K Rifles under Lt Col Ramphal Singh, started taking over from 1/5 GR (FF) in the Subansiri Frontier Division. The Unit established its HQ at Daporijo with rear HQ at North Lakhimpur(109).

On 4 October 1962, AHQ ordered IV Corps to reinforce Maja also with one Inf Coy(110). In response to that order from Army HQ, 4 Inf Div informed that the post at Maja could not be reinforced by one Rif Coy because no DZ was available in Maja area which was two days march from Lemeking, the nearest IAF approved DZ. Alternatively, it was suggested that the post at Maja be abandoned and a new post established at Besa Camp, approximately 7 km north of Maja(111).

Considering the enemy's threat on the border, ban on occupation of Longju, which was imposed in August 1959, was removed by the Army Headquarters on 16 November 1962. It also asked the Eastern Command to forward recommendations regarding establishing a post in the area with a view to preventing Chinese re-occupying Longju(112). On 22 October 1962, 5 Inf Bde was placed directly under command IV Corps(113).

On the eve of the Chinese aggression in October 1962, the area of Subansiri Frontier Division, for defence purposes, was divided into two sub-sectors - Kamla Valley sub-sector (Comprising the district of Lower Subansiri) and Subansiri sub-sector (Comprising the district of Upper Subansiri)(119). The Kamla Valley sub-sector was placed under the CO of 9 Assam Rifles with 'A' Wing HQ at Ziro and seven Platoons and four Sections of Assam Rifles personnel. The Battalion had its headquarters at Kimin(115).

Subansiri sub-sector was being looked after by 2 J&K Rifles and the deployment of its Coys was as follows(116):-

Takaing	- One Coy
Lemeking	- Bn TAC HQ with one Coy
Taliha	- One Coy
Daporijo	- Bn HQ with one Coy

Eleven platoons of 9 Assam Rifles with Wing HQ at Takaing were also under the operational command of this unit(117). In support at Daporijo were 69 Hy Mor Bty of 44 Hy Mor Regt(118) and Platoon of 'A' Coy 6 Mahar (MG)(119).

The Bn HQ with 'C' Coy, 69 Hy Mor Bty and Platoon less Sec MMG were ordered to move immediately from Daporijo to Taliha on 22 October 1962. The troops left at 0530 hrs on 23 October 1962 and reached Taliha on 24 October at 1600 hrs(120).

(B) Chinese

Across the border the Chinese had concentrated approximately one battalion each at Sangacholing and Chosam. These battalions were under the command of Regt HQ located at Lhuntse Dzong, which was linked by road to both these places. The Chinese had later on moved more troops into the area, bringing their strength to a full Brigade(121). The troops at Sangacholing posed a threat to Takaing while the troops at Chosam threatened Longju and Maja through Migyitun(122).

Chinese officers were reported to have been visiting Lhuntse Dzong and Sangacholing since July 1962. They had moved their frontier posts quite close to the Indian border. Defence preparations, road construction, storing of supplies and ammunition had been opposite Subansiri Frontier Division in the same way as in the area opposite the Kameng Frontier Division(123).

In fact, from the beginning of 1962, Chinese activities had increased on the border. In January 1962, two Chinese civilian officers, accompanied by one interpreter and two army personnel of the rank of Platoon Commanders, had crossed the border near Longju. They came upto a place known as Rol approximately one km south from Longju towards Maja(124).

On their side of the border, the Chinese had constructed a class 9 road from Tsethang - a fairly large Garrison town and the main logistic base for the Chinese Troops in Western Tibet - to Lhuntse Dzong and then from there to Chosam via Sangacholing. Migyitun on the border stood linked with Chosam through a jeep road. A mule-track existed from Migyitun to Longju on the Indian side of the border(125).

CHINESE ATTACK FORWARD POSTS

While the reports of concentration of Chinese troops across the border were coming in, the Indian posts at Asaphila, Sagamla, Tamala and Potrang were attacked on the morning of 23 October 1962, close on the heels of their massive attack in Kameng Frontier Division, with approximately a battalion group(126). In view of the heavy odds, all the AR personnel and regular army troops in the area were ordered to withdraw to Taliha from forward positions under the orders of IV Corps(127). For the purpose of withdrawal, all the troops were placed under Maj Naidu of 9 Assam Rifles, who had his HQ at Takaing. HQ 5 Inf Bde issued its withdrawal order at 1445 hrs on 23 October 1962, which laid down that(122):-

- (a) All AR and regular Army troops should move from area Takaing to Taliha.
- (b) All troops - regular and AR - located in area Takaing were placed under command Maj A.E. Naidu of 9 Assam Rifles for the completion of the task.
- (c) Personnel located at Sagamla, Tamala and Potrang and en-route were ordered to move direct to Taliha.
- (d) Asaphila post was to concentrate at Takaing by 1800 hrs on 23 October 1962.
- (e) Move ex Takaing was to be in batches, and the move was to commence immediately.
- (f) 2 J&K personnel were to leave Takaing not earlier than 2000 hrs on 23 October.
- (g) Efforts were to be made by the troops to bring back maximum ammunition and all arms.
- (h) Nothing useful was to be left undestroyed.
- (i) All bridges over Subansiri or other rivers/nullahs were to be destroyed.

- (j) If track Maja-Gelenshiniak-Lemeking was found blocked, move was to be through hills on southern bank of Subansiri river.
- (k) One staging section was to be established a few stages ahead of Taliha to supply rations to the withdrawing troops.

In the first enemy attack at Asaphila at about 1450 hrs on 23 October, one JCO and 17 ORs were reported killed/missing in action and the remainder joined Takaing defences around 1800 hrs, where 'B' Coy of 2 J&K Rifles had also arrived. Those troops covered the withdrawal of men from Sagamla, Tamala and Potrang, who reached Takaing on 24 October 1300 hrs(129). Takaing was shelled by the enemy with mortars at 1400 hrs on 24 October before it was abandoned by the Indian troops(130). On 25 October, the Chinese attacked and occupied Takaing(131).

Enemy build up opposite Longju was also reported(132) and the troops at Maja were ordered to withdraw direct to Lemeking(133). Indian troops abandoned Maja at 1500 hrs on 23 October, and it was occupied by the Chinese on 25 October(134). The troops withdrawing from Maja were attacked by the enemy near Reding, 8 km south of Maja(135).

The situation in Subansiri Frontier Division at midnight 28/29 October 1962 was that (a) the personnel of Assam Rifles at Vatey post were asked, on 26 October, to withdraw to Sarli, leaving behind two sections at Milli; (b) the Assam Rifles posts at Kashong La and Chimpung La with their elements from Pagak were ordered, on 26 October, to withdraw to Huri; (c) posts at Sagamla, Tamala and Potrang had been ordered on 22 October, to withdraw; (d) the Indian soldiers at Asaphila, who had been attacked by the Chinese on 23 October, had withdrawn to Taliha through Lemeking; and (e) the Indian soldiers at Maja had been attacked by the Chinese on their withdrawal from Maja at Reding(136). Chinese troops had fired with LMG, 2-in Mortar and Grenades(137).

INDIA STRENGTHENS DEFENCES

Towards the end of October, another Inf Div 2 Inf Div - was formed as already mentioned, to look after the operations in Subansiri, Siang and Lohit Frontier Divisions. The new GOC, Maj Gen M.S. Pathania, accompanied by Cmdr 5 Inf Bde, visited Taliha on 28 October and discussed operational plans for the defences of the area(138). With the induction of more troops in the area in the wake of the formation of a new Inf Div, the operational responsibility of the 5 Inf Bde was confined to the defence of Subansiri and Siang Frontier Division and the whole area was named as sector 1(139).

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On 30 October 1962, GOC 2 Inf Div ordered his Sector Commanders to carry out active and aggressive patrolling in their respective areas of operational responsibility in order to:-

- i. dominate no man's land;
- ii. obtain more information regarding enemy, particularly his likely approach;
- iii. capture prisoners and obtain identification to gain information regarding enemy's future intentions; and
- iv. safeguard against possible enemy infiltration, ambushes and being surprised(140).

The Sector Commanders were further instructed by the GOC 2 Inf Div on 1 November 1962, not to withdraw any troops including AR platoons from any post without prior approval of Div HQ(141). The Bde Commander was also instructed to re-inforce and strengthen Lemeking and the troops withdrawing from Takaing were ordered to return to Lemeking(142).

With the induction of one more Inf Brigade in the area 192 Inf Bde - the operational responsibility and sector boundaries were re-organised and the defence of Subansiri Frontier Division - termed as Sector I - was entrusted to 5 Inf Bde exclusively(143). This re-organisation was to take effect from 13 November 1962(144).

The Commander 5 Inf Bde was also assured that as and when additional troops were available, one more Inf Battalion(145) would be allotted to his Sector, and he was asked to hold, at all costs - Lemeking - Taliha - Sarli and Huri(146). Units were not to be allowed to fight in penny packets any longer. Defences were to be organised on the basis of brigade defended sectors, or where the situation so merited, in battalion defended areas, with artillery support forming an integral part of the defences in either case(147).

All defence sectors were to be built up to a scale of five first line of ammunition and 28 days supplies(148). For ammunition, priority was to be given to artillery ammunition.

Reports were continuously coming in about the Chinese strengthening their defences in the area south of the McMahon Line. They were reported to have constructed new tracks(149). To meet the increasing Chinese threat, one Sec 3-in mortar and one detachment MMG were air-lifted from Taliha to Lemeking in three trips on 14 November 1962(150).

Another Bn - 1/4 GR - which moved to NEFA under 192 Inf Bde - was placed under 5 Inf Bde for the defence of Taliha(151). Bn less 'C' and 'D' Coys of 1/4 GR concentrated at Daporijo by 1630 hrs on 14 November and the 'C' and 'D' Coys reached Daporijo on 15 November. While 'B' Coy left for Taliha at 0600 hrs on 15 November, 'A' Coy, Bn 'O' Gp and all elements of SP Coy and Adm Coy left Daporijo at 0700 hrs on 16 November for Taliha. All these troops reached Taliha by 1630 hrs on 17 November. Due to non-availability of porters, 3-in mortars were carried by the troops. 'Long Ridge' near village Dochak was proposed as site of Bn defence area.

Position of Troops as on 18 November

(a) Indian

HQ 5 Inf Bde
1/4 GR - North Lakhimpur

Bn HQ 1/4 GR with
'C' & 'D' Coys - Daporijo

Bn 'O' Gp, all
elements of SP & Adm
Coys and 'A' & 'B'
Coys of 1/4 GR - Taliha

2 J&K Rifles

Bn HQ 2 J&K Rifles - Taliha
with two Coys

Bn TAC HQ of 2 J&K
Rifles with two Coys - Lemeking

MMG Pl less one Det of
'A' Coy 6 Mahar MG - Taliha

One Det of
6 Mahar MG - Lemeking

Arty

69 Hy Mor Bty of 44
Hy Mor Regt - Taliha

(b) Chinese

HQ IV Corps Op Instruction No.4 issued on 11 November 1962, mentioned that the Chinese probably had a regimental Group in Longju - Maja area. But it was unlikely that they would be able to build up more than a battalion group against Lemeking. So far as the Western Subansiri area was concerned, the enemy was unlikely to make any appreciable headway in that direction because of heavy snow in that area(152).

A straggler of 9 AR - Sepoy Puran Bahadur Limbu - from Maja reported on 16 November that approximately 2,000 Chinese troops were located in area Golenshiniak and that the troops held 2-in Mor, 3-in Mor, Hy Mor, MMG and flame throwers(153).

INDIAN TROOPS WITHDRAW FROM LEMEKING

While positioned at Lemeking, the troops of 2 J&K Rifles continued with their aggressive patrolling. On the other hand, the Chinese kept themselves busy in consolidating their gains made earlier and bringing forward reinforcements. They also moved up further from Rio bridge after having crossed the Subansiri river in Gelenshiniak area. One of the Indian patrols - one platoon of 'D' Coy of 2 J&K Rifles under 2/Lt M.R. Kishore - had contacted the Chinese troops on 4 November, north of river Subansiri. After exchange of fire with the enemy and inflicting some casualties, the patrol had moved back approximately 4 km from the place of the incident, and stayed there(154). The patrol had, later on, reported that the Chinese were constructing bunkers across river Subansiri and covering the Rio bridge by fire. Reports were also coming in that the Chinese were trying to out-flank Lemeking and Taliha.

On 18 November, at 1500 hrs, Chinese troops were seen advancing and approaching the location of the protective patrol, over the main track. When their forward element, about 200 strong, came within view and field of fire, the Indian troops opened up with four Light Machine Guns, 2-in Mortar and Rifles on the enemy. The enemy was apparently surprised and suffered many casualties. The firing continued for about 45 minutes. When the ammunition with the Indian troops had expended, they withdrew to Lemeking in the darkness of the night(155).

As the maintenance of the troops in the forward areas was posing a problem, coupled with heavy pressure from the advancing Chinese troops, the Indian troops were asked to withdraw to road-heads or to Dakota Landing Grounds(156). In pursuance of these orders, the troops at Lemeking/Taliha were told to withdraw to Daporijo and those at Sarli and Huri to Ziro.

On 20 November, HQ 5 Inf Bde issued detailed instructions to its two Bns - 2 J&K Rifles and 1/4 GR - for redeployment of their troops, after withdrawal from forward areas. The instructions were(157):-

- (a) Orderly withdrawal from Lemeking was to commence forthwith by fastest possible pace - both by day and night.
- (b) It was to be ensured that the troops did not get involved in a running fight with the Chinese.
- (c) The Garrison at Taliha was to be held by One Coy supported by Sec 3-inch Mor to cover the withdrawal of troops from Lemeking and then to withdraw to Daporijo.
- (d) After the troops had withdrawn to Daporijo, they were to guard all the approaches to Daporijo.
- (e) All the bridges en-route were to be prepared for demolition/destruction and were to be destroyed after the troops had crossed them.
- (f) Withdrawal was to be kept as secret as possible.
- (g) When abandoning the position, ammunition where possible was to be buried.
- (h) Mortar ammunition was to be rendered unserviceable by defusing.

When Army Headquarters came to know of the orders issued by the Brigade for withdrawal from Taliha to Daporijo, it reversed the orders and issued fresh instructions, which said that "5 Inf Bde will occupy defensive positions in Taliha-Daporijo and Ziro" and Assam Rifles posts "will continue to stay in present locations"(158), as on 21 November 1962.

Thus, as a result of the Chinese aggression, AR posts at the under - mentioned places were closed/withdrawn:-

- (1) Vatey
- (2) Dharmu
- (3) Pagak
- (4) Chimpung La
- (5) Kashong La
- (6) Potrang
- (7) Tamala
- (8) Sagamla

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- (9) Asaphila
- (10) Takaing
- (11) Lemeking
- (12) Maja

The posts at Serial Nos (1) to (5) were not attacked by the Chinese but some stores, equipment, ammunition and rations had to be destroyed at these posts since carriage was not possible due to lack of porters when orders for withdrawal were given (159).

OPERATIONS IN SIANG FRONTIER DIVISION

TOPOGRAPHY

Siang Frontier Division, too, is named after the river which flows through it. The Great Himalayan Range in the north separates this Division from Tibet. Two mountainous barriers separate it from Subansiri Frontier Division in the west and Lohit Frontier Division in the east. The southern part is a plain but it is so thickly forested that it almost stands isolated from Assam. The Division now stands divided into two administrative districts - west and east Siang.

The northern part of this Division, bordering on Tibet, lies in west Siang District with its headquarters at Along. This area is very mountainous and its altitude ranges from 3,650 metres (12,000 ft) to 5,480 metres (18,000 ft). The level of even the river valleys is high. The area is crossed by more than a dozen mountain spurs jutting out of the Himalayan Range from the north-west to the south-east. The main spur separates the waters of two rivers, Siyom and Dihang or Siang (called Tsangpo in Tibet and Brahmaputra in Assam) flowing parallel to it. These rivers are joined by tributaries flowing from the south-west to the north-east and the north-east to the south-west. This criss-crossing of the watersheds has made travelling from one valley to another very difficult. The snow-line in the bordering areas in the north runs at a height of 4,560 metres (15,000 ft) and as such the crests of practically all local watersheds remain covered with perennial snow. The Lo La, Dom La (or Tunga La), Shoka La, Lamdo La, and Lusha La are the well-known passes on the border with Tibet.

Important villages near the border are Gelling, Korbo, Jidu and Tuting in the east and Menchukha in the west.

Tracks

Many tracks came from Tibet to the border villages of Siang Frontier Division. All of them, on their way downward merged with the main tracks which terminated either at Along or Pasighat.

(i) Kepang La - Gelling - Tuting - Pasighat track

A track came through Kepang La to Gelling, which was the first village on the Indian side of the border, approximately 10 km from the McMahon Line. The track then came down to Jidu and Tuting(160). A track coming from Korbo met this track at Jidu. The track coming from Lusha La also met this track at Tuting(161). From Tuting the track came down to Miging, Bomda, Ramsing, Karko, Rigo and Pasighat. This was the main route - also called the Pilgrimage route in the Siang Valley for trade among villages of the valley as well as with the Tibetans. It was also the main route for the villagers of the upper region to come down to Pasighat(162).

(ii) Tuting - Along track

A track came down from Tuting to Along. On its downward march it crossed the watershed between the Siang and the Siyom rivers, and met many paths coming from Shoka La and Tunga La. These paths were merely jungle trails over high mountains and could be used only during dry season. Following the Siyom valley, the main track reached Along, and continued on to hit the Siang again near Pangin.

TROOP BUILD-UP IN THE AREA

(A) Indian

Before the induction of regular troops, the responsibility for the border security was that of the Assam Rifles, which had deployed its 11th Bn in the Siang Frontier Division(163). In June 1959, one Platoon of the Bn stood positioned in Tamadam, 9 km north-west of Lo La. When the Chinese Government lodged a protest(164) against the occupation of Tamada, Indian troops, in October 1959, were withdrawn from Tamadam to Lamang, about 5 km south of Lo La(165) where a Section post had already been established in September 1959(166). Lo La (Pass) was approximately 103 km (64 miles) north-west of Along(167).

In November 1959, when 4 Inf Div took over the responsibility of defending the Indo-Tibetan border NEFA, 5 Inf Bde, with Assam Rifles units under operational control, was assigned the task of Subansiri, Siang and Lohit Frontier Divisions. After initial deployment and subsequent re-shuffle of units in July 1961, 2 Madras and 'A', 'B' and 'C' Wings

11 Assam Rifles remained in Siang Frontier Division for its defence. 2 Madras had its HQ, along with two Coys, at Along and the other two Coys were deployed in Tuting and Menchukha. The rear HQ of the Bn was at North Lakhimpur(168). HQ 11 Assam Rifles and its 'A' Wing were at Along and its 'B' and 'C' Wings were deployed in the Menchukha-Manigong and Pasighat/Tuting areas(169).

In February 1962, for the first time an advance party, consisting of one officer and 12 ORs, was moved from Tuting to Gelling and established a post there on 18 February(170). Gelling was approximately 40 km (25 miles) north-east of Tuting and 10 km (6 miles) south of McMahon Line(171).

Under Op 'ONKAR', new Assam Rifles posts were set up at the following places, by the middle of September 1962(172):-

<u>Summer Location</u>	<u>Winter Location</u>
Lamang	No Change
Henker	No Change
Nayu La	Jorging
Shoka La	-do-
Lamdo La (Nambui Diba)	Sonsi
Lusha La (Maney)	No Change
Hunters' Track (Muglam)	-do-

When troops were moved from Tuting to Gelling, orders were issued to reinforce Tuting by sending troops from Along(173).

With the start of OP 'LEGHORN' in the Kameng Frontier Division in early September 1962, Corps HQ directed 5 Inf Bde, on 20 September, to take all measures to ensure the security of this Sector against Chinese incursions. Cmr 5 Inf Bde was assured that more troops were being sent to his Sector. He was also directed to reinforce Menchukha by one Coy and Tuting by Bn HQ and Coy as early as possible but not later than 10 October 1962(174).

In response to the orders issued by Corps HQ, Rover Gp 2 Madras was established at Tuting on 20 September(175). When 62 Inf Bde moved from Ramgarh to NEFA in September 1962, two of its Bns 2/8 GR and 4 Sikh, were placed under 5 Inf Bde. Of these two Bns, 2/8 GR was earmarked for the defence of Siang Frontier Division.

The border areas in the Siang Frontier Division were divided into three sub-sectors for defence purposes. viz., MENCHUKHA, MANIGONG and TUTING. The deployment of troops in those sub-sectors as well as in Along/Pasighat areas on the eve of the Chinese invasion was as follows(176):-

(a) Menchukha sub-sector CO 2/8 GR (Lt Col D.A. Taylor) was Commander of this sub-sector which was divided into three areas (i) MENCHUKHA (ii) NISANGONG area (iii) LAMANG area. HQ 2/8 GR with 'A' Coy, some elements of 'C' Coy of 2/8 GR, Coy 2 Madras, 'B' Wing of 11 Assam Rifles with 3 Platoons and a sec 3-in mortar and two sec MMG ex 6 Mahar (MG) were distributed in all the areas under this sub-sector.

(b) Manigong sub-sector was placed under command of CO 11 Assam Rifles (Lt Col R.P. Gautam). The troops available to this sub-sector HQ 'B' Sub Wing of 11 Assam Rifles and 3 Platoons, sec 3-in mortar and sec MMG ex 6 Mahar (MG) were deployed in the (i) Manigong and (ii) Tadadege area.

(c) Tuting sub-sector. This sub sector, under the command of CO 2 Madras (Lt Col S.K. Mushran) had, under its jurisdiction, the following areas:-

- i. Tuting town area.
- ii. Gelling area.
- iii. Guyor La - Korbo axis.
- iv. Tinpatta - Jidu axis.
- v. Lusha La axis and
- vi. Jorging axis.

HQ 2 Madras less Coy, HQ 'C' Wing and 'C' Sub Wing 11 Assam Rifles along with 8 Platoons, and 70 Hy Mor Bty ex 44 Hy Mor Regt were deployed to cover all the areas under this sub-sector.

(d) Along/Pasighat: Battalion HQ and HQ 'A' Wing of 11 Assam Rifles along with 4 Platoons were deployed in this area.

All the troops were being maintained by air Kalinga Airways, for which ALGs were available only in Along, MENCHUKHA and Tuting. Ammunition was held on authorised scales, because additional ammunition could not be sent to forward posts due to lack of porters(177).

(B) Chinese

By the end of June 1962, the Chinese had brought under their control Pemako area of Tibet opposite north-eastern part of Siang. They were also reported to have occupied several villages near the border(178). Later, in August 1962, the Chinese troops moved forward close to the Indian border at Tamadam and even entered Lo La. They had re-inforced Nagiti and Nayu and were rapidly constructing roads to the Indian border and parallel to it(179).

The Chinese had constructed some mule tracks through the difficult terrain from Tsela Dzong - their Div HQ - to the border. Temo Gomba was the road head on the north bank of Tsangpo. The road to Temo Gomba branched off from the main Lhasa - Chamdo high-way at Nagiti(180). They also built tracks from Nayu and Milling, which led to group of passes between Longju and Gelling(181).

From the information gained through Tibetan refugees it was clear that some war-like activities were afoot on the Tibetan side of the border. In August 1962, two jawans of Assam Rifles from patrol which had gone to Lo La were found missing. It was believed that they had been taken prisoners by the Chinese to gain information on the Indian defences(182). These activities of the Chinese confirmed other reports(183) that the Chinese would launch an attack sometime in October 1962.

When the hostilities started in October 1962, the Chindes had five battalions deployed opposite Siang Frontier Division. Of these battalions, one each was at Tsela Dzong, Nayu/Milling and Pemako area and the remaining two were on the border(184). These troops posed a direct threat to Manigong and Menchukha in the west and Gelling, Korbo and Tuting in the east of the division(185).

CHINESE ATTACK INDIAN FORWARD POSTS

Menchukha sub-sector

On 21 October 1962, at about 1000 hrs, when a patrol from Lamang to Lo La was near the Pass, it observed about one Coy of the Chinese troops there. The patrol saw an officer, briefing those troops. The patrol took no offensive action but merely withdrew to Lamang and passed back the information. On that very day, the Chinese occupied Lasam - about 45-minute walk from Lamang towards the border(186).

Next day, the AR platoon at Lamang, which consisted of about 30 men, set up an CP between Lamang and Lasam. The enemy, more than 100, advanced from Lasam and attacked Lamang by 1800 hrs on 23 October 1962. Indian troops were forced to open fire on them. Fierce fight continued till 2100 hrs. When the Chinese fired Verey Lights, it showed that the Indian post stood surrounded except from the south. Under orders of IV Corps(187) the AR platoon was asked, on radio, to withdraw to Menchukha. While the troops were withdrawing, there was a fight with the enemy at Pokhar Valley, in which five AR soldiers and three civilian posters were killed. Chinese occupied Lamang while the Indian troops concentrated at Menchukha.

Manigong sub-sector

In this sub-sector, patrols were being organised from Tadadege area to observe Dom La and Gingtung Pass on alternative days. On 20 October, a patrol to Dom La saw two Coys of Chinese troops at the pass. They had destroyed the boundary marker put up by the Indians earlier. The patrol sent a runner back with this information and itself withdrew about a km below Dom La.

On 21 October, on the orders of the sub-sector Commander Jem Rai and 30 men moved from Henkar to occupy Gingtung. When they found the Chinese already on the pass, the patrol did not take any offensive action and withdrew on night 22/23 October. Next day, i.e. on 23 October, a patrol led by CO himself found the enemy digging defences there(188).

Considering the situation in the area, HQ IV Corps ordered, on 23 October, the withdrawal of AR posts at Henkar and Tadadege to Manigong(189). But the orders could not reach the troops and they remained at those posts.

The Chinese attacked Jem Rai's post (on Henkar-Gingtung tr) on 24 October 1962, and pushed back the Indian troops to Henkar. Simultaneously, the post on the Henkar-Dom La tr was also attacked by the Chinese. After some fighting, the troops were ordered to withdraw. Jem Rai's platoon was asked to remain at Papikrong and the rest of the troops were to go to Manigong(190).

By 1930 hrs on 26 October, enemy was able to by-pass Papikrong area and advanced towards Manigong. Manigong was later attacked by the enemy at 0600 hrs on 28 October, and the Indian troops withdrew to Karo by 1800 hrs on 29 October. Later, when the enemy was reported to have withdrawn from Manigong, an attempt was made from Karo to recapture Manigong but failed.

Maj P.A. Rege (IC-3174) of Dogra Regiment, who was commanding the troops in this sub-sector as 2 I/C 11 Assam Rifles, was awarded Vr C for his role during the whole action.

Tuting sub-sector

In the Tuting sub sector, only the Indian post at Lamdo La was attacked by the Chinese in October 1962. No.5 platoon of 11 Assam Rifles was deployed at Dilerrock (two stages below the pass) with the patrol base at Nambui Diba (one stage below the pass) and with an OP at the pass under L/Nk Hasta Bahadur Gurung. At 1500 hrs on 24 October 1962, the Chinese attacked the OP with approximately one Coy(191). Three ORs were killed and two wounded. L/Nk Hasta Bahadur Gurung and Rfn Baji Ram Thapa were awarded Vr C for their gallant action and bravery. After this incident, troops at Lamdo La, Nayu La and Shoka La were ordered to withdraw to Jorging. Later on the troops at Jorging were ordered to withdraw to Tuting after destroying stores and equipment there(192).

On 26 October, the troops at Lusha La (AR platoon No.13) were ordered to fall back to Ogong due to heavy snowfall at Lusha La. This platoon reached Ogong on 3 November 1962.

Thus, by the end of October 1962, the Chinese had ingressed upto Lamang (Menchukha sub-sector), Manigong (Manigong sub-sector) and Jorging (Tuting sub-sector) in the Siang Frontier Division(193).

INDIA STRENGTHENS DEFENCES

The new GOC of 2 Inf Div, along with the Brigade Commander arrived at Tuting on 28 October 1962(194). The next day, the Corps Commander also visited Tuting. As a result of the discussions held during that visit, Maj Dikshit, Coy Cmr of 2 Madras, with a Section was sent to Chondrak with orders to halt further withdrawal of Jorging troops and to organise defences at Chondark. Construction of defences at Pango was also started and a party was sent to recce for a position where a section could be deployed to cover different tracks from Ogong. The next day, 70 Hy Mor Bty of 44 Hy Mor Regt fired some rounds for registration of targets in front of the main defensive position at Tuting(193). Maj Gen M.S. Pathania, GOC, 2 Inf Div, after reconnaissance of the forward areas, ordered the Sector/sub-Sector commanders to carry out aggressive patrolling and not to withdraw any troops, including Assam Rifles, from any post without his prior approval(196).

On 5 November, 5 Inf Bde was ordered to establish a firm base at Karoroti, south of Manigong, and send recon patrols to locate and keep contact with the enemy. Withdrawal of forces on mere information about the presence of the enemy was ruled out. If, however, forced by enemy action, troops could withdraw to Tato or Pangri, as the situation warranted. 5 Inf Bde was also ordered to send a strong self-contained fighting patrol ex Menchukha to Tato to establish a firm base there. At the same time, IV Corps was requested to place more Otters at Along and Tezu to induct more troops at Menchukha at a very high priority in view of the enemy moves in the area of Lungthey and Tato(197).

The Corps Commander, after his visit to the forward areas of this Sector was of the view that as the enemy was building up in strength against Menchukha, he was likely to isolate the Indian troops there(198). Some elements of 2/8 GR were air-lifted to Menchukha from Along and Walong on 10 November 1962(199). Consequent upon the induction of one more Inf Bde under 2 Inf Div, the defence of Siang Frontier Division was made the responsibility of that Inf Bde - 192 Bde.

The Corps Commander, in his OP Inst. No.4 dated 11 November 1962, mentioned that the enemy was closing the ring around Menchukha by a double flanking movement through Dom La - Henkar - Manigong and via Lo La - Lamang. As the ingress into that sector was easy, the enemy would soon be in a position to either directly invest Menchukha or cut off its ground line of communications via Tato or both. There being no Indian troops between Along and Menchukha, the enemy had the option even to by-pass Menchukha and head for Along. It was also estimated that the enemy was able to muster approximately a regimental group for this task(200). Still, GOC 2 Div was directed to hold Gelling - Tuting - Menchukha and Along, at all costs. Units were not to be allowed to fight in penny pockets any longer. Defences were to be organised on the basis of brigade defended sectors, or, where the situation so merited, in battalion defended areas with artillery support forming an integral part of defences in either case.

192 Inf Bde, which had been ordered at the end of October to move (ex 23 Inf Div) with its two battalions to NEFA, could assume the operational responsibility in Siang Frontier Division only on 12 November 1962, when its HQ were air-lifted from Chabua to Along(201). Its two Bns - 1/4 GR and Dogra - were, however, inducted into Subansiri area.

Lohit Frontier Divisions respectively. In Siang Frontier Division, 192 Inf Bde, had under command 2 Madras and 2/8 GR at that time.

The Bde Commander made some changes in the operational plans, one of which was the division of his area of responsibility into two sub-sectors i.e., Menchukha and Tuting, instead of the existing three sub-sectors of Menchukha, Manigong and Tuting(202).

The orbat and location position of the troops deployed in Siang Frontier Division on 16 November 1962(203) was as follows:-

Along

HQ 192 Infantry Brigade with 2 Coys 2/8 GR ('B' and 'D' which after being flown out of Walong, had concentrated at Along by 16 November)(204).

- HQ 11 Assam Rifles with one platoon

(a) Menchukha sub-sector

Bn HQ 2/8 GR with 2 Coys

1 Coy 2 Madras with 3-in Mor platoon

Section MMG 'A' Coy 6 Mahar (MG)

'B' Wing of 11 Assam Rifles with 6 Platoons and section MMG.

(b) Tuting sub-sector

Bn HQ 2 Madras with 3 Coys

2 Pls 'A' Coy 6 Mahar (MG) less section

10 Pls of 11 Assam Rifles

Arty

70 Hy Mor Bty

Chinese were also concentrating their forces more and more opposite Manigong/Menchukha. Reports were being received from the locals that the enemy was digging on the Ridge, south of Manigong. One Machine gun/anti-aircraft gun had been seen by Indian supply aircraft on 9 November 1962, on the School Ridge. Unconfirmed reports indicated that approximately 240 enemy troops were seen moving from Naigong to Gasheng. It was concluded that the Chinese had concentrated a full battalion in Manigong.

TROOPS WITHDRAWN FROM MENCHUKHA

A column of approximately two Coys of Chinese troops appeared over a kilometre north-west of the Nisangong defences on tr Yarlung - Menchukha on 17 November. The jawans engaged the enemy with MMG and 3-in mortars(205). The enemy retaliated with 60-mm mortar fire. The fire continued for about an hour. Thereafter the enemy retreated towards Yarlung and was seen digging defences about 725 metres away from the Indian post(206).

The Bde Commander flew into Menchukha at 1000 hrs to study the situation there(207). The defence plan was discussed by the Bn Commander with the Bde Commander and it was felt that troops, located in Menchukha area, were far too few to deny Menchukha to the enemy(208). Bde Commander ordered 2/8 GR to keep the enemy engaged opposite Nisangong(209). Further induction into Menchukha of 2/8 GR troops, which were concentrated at Along, however, could not be continued due to poor flying conditions. The Bde Commander then flew to Chabua in the afternoon to meet the GOC 2 Inf Div there in response to the signal received by him from Div HQ. While Bde Commander was at Chabua, he received orders directly from IV Corps. The order stopped the movement of two Coys of 2/8 GR from Along to Menchukha and asked the Bde Commander to withdraw his troops from Menchukha for the defence of Along. This withdrawal of troops from Menchukha was to start immediately, by night. Men with light weapons were to march back while heavy weapons were to be air-lifted(210).

In the same signal given by GSO-1, 2 Inf Div HQ, endorsed for information, to the Div Commander (who was at that time at Lohitpur), the Div HQ mentioned:-

"Withdrawal from MENCHUKHA without giving fight no recommended (.) events in WALONG should not unduly influence us in other sectors (.) submit you take up again with Corps Comdr(.)"(211).

In accordance with the orders of IV Corps received by the Bde Commander, he issued orders to the Commanding Officer 2/8 GR for a 'fighting withdrawal' of Gorkha and attached troops to Tato on night 18/19 and 19/20 November 1962(212).

On 18 November, the Bde Cmdr again visited Menchukha. Considering the enemy concentration vis-a-vis Indian strength, it was again felt both the Bde Commander and the Bn Commander that the position of Menchukha was untenable. So

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Withdrawal of the troops was to be effected as per orders. While withdrawing, the troops were to hold an intermediate position at Rego(213).

The beginning of withdrawal of Menchukha troops had just been made when the Chinese started shelling 2 Madras Coy position at Saung at 1645 hrs. The enemy was engaged by mortars. Intermittent firing continued till 2200 hrs. It became apparent that the enemy was trying to encircle Menchukha during the night 18/19 November. The CO 2/8 GR spoke to BM, 192 Inf Bde, at 1715 hrs, on wireless and informed him that in view of the latest enemy threat, he might have to pull out his troops on night 18/19 November instead of night 19/20 November, as earlier planned. Wireless contact between Bn 2/8 GR and Bde HQ was lost on night 18/19 November at 0300 hrs(214).

After having informed the BM, 192 Inf Bde, the CO 2/8 GR decided that for withdrawal of troops, a hunters' track, leading to south of Tato, should be followed. Lt Col D.A. Taylor, CO, with 35 men went out with a civilian surveyor to find an easy track. That party never joined the main party again. The main party under Maj S.N. Dar continued downward(215). But on 20 November, the main party led by Maj Dar was scattered by an enemy ambush on track Menchukha-Tato. The party had to abandon the original route of withdrawal and took a more hazardous track over snow-clad pass to Tagin-Taliha-Daporijo. Some of the troops reached Tato by 0900 hrs on 21 November. By that time, the Chinese had also reached there and the Indian troops marched down to Yapuk and were there by 0700 hrs on 22 November(216).

Unfortunately, the withdrawal started slightly un-coordinated. Men carried no rations and in some cases protection against severe cold was inadequate. Route taken to Tagin was very difficult, sparsely used even by locals. It rained and snowed throughout. Most of the men got exhausted and fell victim to frost-bite. Lt Col Taylor, CO, the Adjt Capt Ghosh and RMO Lt Sharma - all of 2/8 GR and Maj Pimple of 2 Madras died of exhaustion. Total casualties of 2/8 GR were 3 Officers and 39 ORs. Two Officers and 10 ORs were made PsOW(217). Out of the total force of 13 Officers, 18 JCOs and 826 ORs and NCsE at Menchukha, 8 Officers, 4 JCOs and 150 ORs and NCsE were reported to be either killed/missing or taken as prisoners of war(218).

The Bde Commander, 192 Inf Bde, on his first visit to Menchukha on 13 November, after taking over the operational responsibility of the Siang Frontier Division, had represented to the Div and Corps Commanders (who were present on that day at Menchukha) for early induction of more troops there. He also pleaded that as Arty fire support was not sufficient, a complete Hy Mor Bty be inducted into the area. Due to over-all shortage of troops, neither of these requests was acceded to. When on 17 November, for the first time, the enemy contacted the Indian troops in Menchukha area, the Sub-sector Commander (OC, 2/8 GR) and the Bde Commander felt that the Indian troops were positively far too weak to deny Menchukha to the enemy. But the enemy column, which had contacted the Indian troops at Nisangong on 17 November, had a strength of approximately 200 only. Against this, the Indian forces in Menchukha Garrison numbered more than 800 regular troops plus AR platoons(219). It appears that the Commanders just lost the heart to give a fight to the enemy before withdrawing. They thought it prudent and safe to withdraw before the enemy could encircle them. The Bde Commander, when he met the Corps Commander on 17 November, perhaps expressed his inability to defend the Menchukha Garrison with the troops there. The Corps Commander, influenced by the events in the Walong Sector (where the Indian troops had suffered badly only a day before), seemed to have yielded to Bde Commander's request and agreed to the withdrawal of troops of Menchukha Garrison.

It seems strange that while taking the decision to withdraw the troops from Menchukha, the GOC 2 Inf Div and his staff were not adequately consulted. This is evident from the signal sent by GSO-1, 2 Inf Div to his Commander in which he requested the latter to take up the matter regarding the withdrawal of troops from Menchukha with the Corps Commander(220).

TUTING ABANDONED

On 19 November 1962, at 1530 hrs approximately two Coys of enemy troops contacted the Kepang post(221). At that time, one platoon 2 Madras AR troops was to the east of the Madras. Some Chinese had also been laid in front of the defences. The Chinese launched the attack from right of Kepang and the troops at the pass retreated to Gelling. The place found(226) deserted, as the Indian troops there had already withdrawn to Tuting(222).

RESTRICTED

Even before the Indian troops had been contacted by the enemy at Kepang La on 19 November, the Commander 192 Inf Bde had asked CO 2 Madras at 1450 hrs to move his troops from Tuting. He was informed that heavy weapons, e.g. 4.2-in Mors, MMGs, WSs eqpt - would be flown out from Tuting and for this he was asked to hold the airfield up to last light 20 November for air-lifts. He was also asked to make use of darkness for moving his troops for the first two nights(223).

It seems the troops at Tuting started withdrawing at 0300 hrs 19/20 November(224) night although the CO, 2 Madras had been specifically asked to hold the Landing Ground till last light of 20 November. When all the troops in Tuting area had crossed over the Siang bridge to Jidu area on the evening of 20 November, the bridge was destroyed(225).

As in the case of withdrawal from Menchukha, here too the Bde Commander was apprehensive about the ability of his troops to defend Tuting, once the enemy attacked. Hence, at 1450 hrs on 19 November, even before the enemy contacted the forward Indian post at Kepang La at 1530 hrs that day, the Garrison at Tuting had been ordered to withdraw. Once the troops had received the withdrawal order, they started moving down even though they had been asked to hold the airfield up to last light 20 November so as to evacuate the heavy equipment. Instead, heavy equipment, like 4.2-in mortars, was destroyed(226).

INDIAN TROOPS STAY AT ALONG

While the troops were falling back from forward areas, 2 Inf Div asked 192 Inf Bde to concentrate at Pasighat. 11 Assam Rifles was made responsible for the defence of Along and also to assist in the withdrawal of the units.

Army HQ reacted immediately to these orders of 2 Inf Div and, instead, ordered 192 Inf Bde to occupy defensive positions around Along. The AR posts were asked to stay on where they were at that time(227).

After the Cease-fire, 192 Inf Bde was asked to re-occupy Tuting with AR troops if it was un-occupied by the enemy. A platoon of 11 Assam Rifles occupied it on 25 November(228).

Thus ended the operations in the Siang Frontier Division.

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Mana, Niti and Tun Jun Passes were also approachable only by mule tracks, which all converged at Joshimath on the Alknanda branch of the Ganga. The Mana village was approximately at equal distance from Joshimath and Mana Pass, the total distance from Joshimath to the Pass being about 100 km. From Joshimath, a track going up the Dhauli Ganga led to Niti Pass as well as Tun Jun La. At the important village of Malari, the track to Tun Jun La branched off to the right to go up the Girithi Ganga which joined the Dhauli Ganga near-by. While Niti village was the last inhabitant place on the track to Niti Pass, the important staging points were Rim Kin and Ghamsali on the track leading to the Tun Jun La. The Kungribingri and Darma Passes were accessible only from Milam village over extremely difficult mule tracks. Lipu Lekh Pass was crossed by the track from Pithoragarh, passing through Jibti and Garbyang. The Lipu Lekh Pass was the tri-junction of the international borders of India, Nepal and Tibet, in the West-Central region of the Central Sector of the border.

The Tibetan region opposite Himachal Pradesh and U.P. border stood least consolidated by the Chinese till 1959. In end 1959, the Chinese inducted some engineer troops in the region for road-building, so as to extend their roads/tracks upto the main passes on the border. Approaches from Gartok or other centres to many of the passes on the border were approximately 160 km (100 miles) over difficult country and across several rivers. Efforts were being made by the Chinese to construct a pucca road from Gartok to Shipki La. The alignment of this road was the same as the old Indo-Tibet trade route. A road branched off from the Gartok-Shipki La road to Tolingmath, which was being converted into an important military station. Feeder tracks from Tolingmath to Mana and Niti passes existed.

Taklakot in Tibet opposite Lipu Lekh Pass in the east stood connected with Parkha, which was on the main highway coming from Gargunsa (GAR DZONG) (234).

The boundary throughout the West-Central region lay along the main watershed between the Spiti River and the Pare Chu, between the tributaries of the Satluj and between the Ganges and the upper Satluj basins. In this region, the Chinese alignment also conformed for the most part to the traditional Indian alignment. Only in four areas did it diverge from the watershed to include certain pockets of Indian territory in Tibet - the Spiti area (Chuva and Chuje), Shipki Pass, the Nelang-Jadhang area (Sang and Tsungsha), Bara Hoti (wu-je), Sangcha Malla and Laphthal(235).

The Chinese claim was that in the Spiti valley the boundary ran along the Karitha nullah, west of Kaurik, while in the Shipki La area (Kinnaur district) it should be 7 km (4 miles) west of Shipki La. In the Nelang-Jadhang area, the Chinese claimed that the boundary lay along the Himalayan range and not the watershed, and as such these two villages, which lay between the main Himalayan range and the watershed, belonged to them. The distance between the Indian border and the one claimed by China was about 31 km (19 miles). Similarly, in the Bara Hoti area, Tun Jun La was the natural dividing line between the catchment areas of the rivers Dhauli Ganga and the Satluj. But the Chinese claimed not only the Bara Hoti plain but also a large stretch of territory including Girthi valley and Niti valley. The Bara Hoti question was discussed between the officials of the two Governments in 1955 and again in April-June 1958, when both the Governments reiterated their view-points(236). To other areas of dispute in this region, neither side attached much importance.

DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS

(A) Indian

The then DMI, Army HQ, in September 1959, had recommended that as Shipki La provided an easy access to the Chinese for entry into Himachal Pradesh, it should be held by approximately a Coy, with the battalion base at Rampur(237). But, the arrangement under which the policing of the border in the area was being done by five companies of Provincial police - two coys from Punjab and three coys from Himachal Pradesh continued till October 1962. In addition to its normal weapons, each Police coy was to be equipped with four LMGs and three 2-in mortars(238). The police posts near the border were at Kaurik and Shipki La, with some posts were in the rear to check the enemy's penetration along Namgia-Sumdo axis(239).

However, in November 1959, HQ Western Command recommended that, till the regular army was deployed on the border, a Sector HQ in the area, under a Lt Col, with a small staff, working directly under HQ WC, should be established to co-ordinate the activities of the Police companies from two different States - Punjab and Himachal Pradesh(240). It was also decided that till then the five Police companies, deployed on the border, would be organised on the same basis as their counterparts in an inf battalion, and the area was given the name of 'Sugar Sector'(241). For operation purposes, Sugar Sector was placed directly under HQ WC(242).

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As the GOC-in-C, Western Command, was not satisfied with the deployment of Police Force for the protection of the border, he, in July 1960, again recommended that he would need two regular Infantry Battalions, with a Bde HQ to control them. The troops were to be deployed as under(243):-

Lahul & Spiti area (which then was part of Punjab)

- (i) Two coys on the Kaurik Pass
- (ii) One coy on the minor passes to the north of Kaurik.
- (iii) One coy as reserve

Kinnaur area

- (i) Two coys on Shipki Pass
- (ii) One coy on the minor passes to the north of Shipki La
- (iii) One coy as a reserve.

The Western Command's proposal was not agreed to but it was asked to earmark an inf bn, ex 17 Inf Div, which could be deployed in Sugar Sector in case of an emergency(244). Consequently, to begin with 2 JAT, then 4 J&K Rif and again, in January 1962 3 Sikh was as earmarked for the purpose(245).

At a discussion held under the chairmanship of the Defence Minister on 25 June 1961, GOC-in-C, Western Command again stated that he was not satisfied with the arrangements for the protection of Shipki La by the Provincial Police force and stressed that a regular battalion should be deployed there(246). But it was only on 21 October 1962 (after the Chinese had launched an all-out invasion in the Eastern and Western Sectors of the border) that the movement of a regular infantry battalion, viz; 9 Madras, (ex 48 Inf Bde) from Ambala Cantt, to ther Sugar Sector was undertaken(247). Bn TAC HQ arrived at Puh on 29 October. The troops of Madras were gradually deployed at Shipki La, Khabo and Kaurik in the beginning of November. A new Bn Commander Lt Col C.R.S Murthy took over the command of the Battalion on 11 November 1962 at Puh(248).

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In October 1959, the Government decided that the responsibility for the defence of the Indo-Tibet border in UP would be taken over by the Army, with the Special Police force already deployed there under its control(249). At that time, out of the six coys of the Police Force sanctioned for the task (against the minimum requirement of eight coys), only five coys actually stood deployed on the border(250). They were instructed to be as near the frontier as possible and where it was not possible for them to stay on in the forward posts during the winter, they were to reach there as soon as it was physically possible after the winter. Even though the military personnel were not deployed on the border earlier, the troops positioned at Almora were carrying on patrolling activities towards Indo-Tibet border with a view to keep watch on the enemy activities in the area and also to strengthen the morale of the local people(251). 8 Dogra, ex 9 Inf Bde, carried out a number of difficult reconnaissances along the border in the winter of 1959 and summer of 1960(252).

In July 1960, HQ Eastcom intimated that if the Police force at the border posts were to be replaced by army personnel, an Inf Bde Gp with five battalions would be their minimum requirement. Out of these five battalions, two were to replace the Special Police coys deployed on the various posts along the border(253). In the same month, 9 Inf Bde, ex-20 Inf Div (with three Bns 8 Dogra, 14 Rajput and 4 Maratha), was placed under command HQ U.P. area(254). The Bde HQ was located at Lucknow. The deployment of the Brigade in the hill region was not agreed to as it would have been against the directive of the Prime Minister which had asked to locate main forces in areas where they could be easily supported logistically and from where they could be moved forward to battle locations when required(255).

In March 1961, the area under the operational jurisdiction of 9 Inf Bde was given the nick-name of 'TRI-SHUL'(256) Sector and in July, same year, 9 Inf Bde was redesignated as 9 Inf Bde Gp(257).

When, in April 1961, it was decided to set up an all-weather post at Rim Kin, at the fringe of Bari Hoti Plain, the 9 Inf Bde provided administrative backing to the Special Task Force in setting up the post(258). The post was temporarily withdrawn in September 1961 as winter accommodation for the troops could not be constructed there(259). The Special Police Force, as deployed, was divided into four sectors, in addition to its HQ at Moradabad. From the West, the first sector was being maintained from Uttarkashi and controlled the posts of Pulamsumda and

Nelang. Second sector was being administered from Joshimath and controlled the posts at Kyunglung, Jimarsain, Ghastoli and Rata Kona in Joshimath - Bara Hoti and Joshimath - Mana areas. Further east, the third sector was Milam which controlled the posts at Sangcha Malla, Lauka, Laphthal and Dung. The last sector Askot-controlled the posts at Kalapani, Kothi and Dawe(260). During winter months, men from forward posts used to withdraw to the rear and were deployed at Uttarkashi, Nelang, Joshimath, Mana, Malari, Milam, Askot and Garbyang(261).

In February 1962, Army HQ decided that an Army post be re-established at Rim Kin in the vicinity of Bara Hoti as early as possible and HQ Eastern Command was also asked to see that no more than one battalion of 9 Inf Bde Gp should be deployed in an 'operational area' at any time(262). The post at Rim Kin was established on 20 April 1962 with a platoon strength of troops of 14 Rajput, under Capt R.S. Taragi. When in September 1962, 8 Dogra took over the responsibility for Joshimath Sector from 14 Rajput, one platoon of 8 Dogra, under Capt Sagar Singh, relieved the troops of 14 Rajput at Rim Kin(263). The other troops of 8 Dogra were deployed at Harsil, Joshimath and Chhiyalekh. This Bn had also stationed detachments at Malari, Srinagar, Bhatwari, Uttarkashi, Sirkha, Dharchul and Jumagwar(264). The remaining two Battalions of the Bde Gp, viz., 14 Rajput and 4 Maratha, were at their permanent locations at Lucknow and Ranikhet respectively(265).

(B) Chinese

When India established a post at Rim Kin in April 1961, Chinese reacted by sending their troops at regular intervals to the Bara Hoti area. At one time, they came up to Sarkya, about 15 km north of Bara Hoti(266).

The enemy was reported to have deployed five Battalions against this region of the border(267). Their Div HQ was reported to be at Gar Dzong, which was on the main Gartok-Rudok highway. The troops were located at Tashigong (opposite Shipki La), Tholingmath (opposite Mana Pass), and Taklakot (opposite Lipu Lekh Pass). The Chinese had developed Dunkar into an important staging post for moving supplies from Gartok and Gargunsa (Gar Dzong), to Tholingmath. This had enabled them to maintain their troops properly in the region, opposite Mana Pass(268). They had also constructed tracks from Tholingmath to the Indian border, which led to Thag La, Mana Pass, Niti Pass and Tun Jun La. The enemy had also moved troops close to the border at Nu (east of Shipki La and north of Thag La on the Gartok-Shipki La track) and Sarang, about 12 km north of Thag La(269).

During the last week of October 1962, some movement on the part of the Chinese troops near the border was reported. The troop movement showed that the enemy was advancing in strength into the area, south of southern Ladakh and north of Himachal Pradesh, which had so far been thinly held by them. Their movement posed a threat to the disputed areas near Kaurik Pass and Shipki La(270). But the mountainous terrain and the onset of winter, coupled with other tactical and strategic factors, perhaps checked the enemy from launching any attack in this region of the border.

EAST-CENTRAL REGION

Topography

The east-central region of the Indo-Tibet boundary covered the Kingdom of Sikkim. Sikkim had Nepal to its west, Tibetan Plateau to its north and the Chumbi Valley of Tibet and the Kingdom of Bhutan to its east. To the south of Sikkim lay the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. As in the west-central region, the northern half of Sikkim was extremely rugged and mountainous, with very sparse population. The southern half had steep mountain ranges and deep valleys cut by the Tista and its tributaries, flowing from north to south.

The Sikkim Tibet boundary was about 225 Km long(271). Along the northern and north-eastern sector of this boundary there were several very high and difficult passes leading into Tibet, the most important pass being Kongra La. Its importance lay in the fact that the Chinese base at Khamba Dzong was only about 32 Km from it, and Khamba Dzong was connected with Lhasa through a motorable road. But the extremely difficult area of northern Sikkim, snow bound for approximately 5 months of the year, made it uninviting route for any invader from the north. The mule tracks from Kongra La and the other northern passes converged on the area of Lachen and Lachung, and then passed through the vital bottle-neck of Chungthang on the Tista river. Following the Tista, the track passed through Mangan before reaching the capital Gangtok and the all weather road system of India. A jeep-track existed from Gangtok to Chungthang, and the distance from Gangtok to Kongra La was estimated to be about 190 Km(272). But an invader was expected to take a whole month to reach Gangtok from the northern passes, if there was even weak military opposition(273).

On Sikkim's eastern border with the Chumbi Valley, there were a number of important passes, only about 4000 Metres (13,000 ft) high. Tangkar La was

important because it was connected with Yatung in the Chumbi Valley through a jeepable road but the route from Tangkar La had to pass through Lachung and Chungthang bottle-neck. Further south along the eastern border lay Cho La, Natu La and Jelep La. The Natu La carried the old Gangtok Lhasa trade route and was only about 55 Km from Gangtok by a jeepable track(274). Jelep La had tracks leading to Gangtok as well as Kalimpong in West Bengal.

On the Indian side, projects were in hand for improvement of the roads and tracks in Sikkim, under the name of Operation 'Dragon' sanctioned in 1960. From the rail head of Siliguri there was a good Class 9 road to Tista and a Class 5 road from Tista to Gangtok(275). Because of these roads it was appreciated an invader could reach Gangtok in about 4 days from Natu La and Jelep La(276).

On the Tibetan side in the Chumbi Valley, the Chinese had much improved system of communication. Yatung, at a height of 3,350 m (11,000 ft), which was about 18 km (11 miles) from the Indian border, stood connected with Gyantse, through Phari Dzong, Tunk and Kala by a motorable road. This road touched the Indian road system at Natu La. From the Yatung - Gyantse road, a number of feeder roads took off towards northern and north-eastern Sikkim. From Kala, a road led to Khamba Dzong, north of Kongra La. This road ran north of Sikkim border.

DISPOSITION OF TROOPS

(A) Indian

In November 1959, when 4 Inf Div was moved to Assam to take up the responsibility for the northern border from Sikkim to Burma, 11 Inf Bde was detailed to look after the Sikkim-Tibet border(277). In February 1961, 11 Inf Bde HQ with one Bn - 17 MADRAS - was moved to Naga Hills(278) and the responsibility was given to 165 Inf Bde Gp. The bde had its HQ at Jalapahar. The area under the operational jurisdiction of 165 Inf Bde Gp was nick-named 'RAJHANS'. At that time, two Bns of 11 Inf Bde - 7 PUNJAB and 3/9 GR - remained deployed in Sikkim. While troops of 7 PUNJAB were deployed on the eastern border facing Chumbi Valley, the troops of 3/9 GR were in the north. In May 1962, 3 JAT of 165 Inf Bde relieved 7 PUNJAB.

When reports came of concentration of Chinese troops in the Chumbi Valley, HQ 165 Inf Bde Gp was ordered, towards the end of September, 1962, to move to Gangtok immediately. Its Bns - 14 DOGRA and 3 JAT, each supported by a battery of Mtn guns or Hvy mortars, were ordered to occupy battle positions at Jelep La

and Natu La respectively(279). 165 Inf established its TAC HQ at Gangtok on 28 September 1962. Troops were deployed, both in the north and east, on all the forward posts. 36 (M) Hy Mor Bde, which was also moved to Sikkim along with 165 Inf Bde, established its HQ at Gangtok. Its two Btys - 33 (M) and 35 (M) - were concentrated at Kopu and Sherabthang respectively. 3 JAT also established its TAC HQ at Sherabthang(280). One more Bn - 5/1: GR - was inducted into the area from Cooch Behar (now called Koch Bihar).

When IV Corps was formed on 4 October 1962 it was made responsible for the defence of Sikkim border also(281).

Considering the situation arising out of the Chinese offensive all along the Ladakh and NEFA border, and enemy's activities in the Chubitang area, 20 Inf Div was ordered to move its HQ and Div troops from Ranchi to Siliguri Rangpo area. Two more Inf Bdes - 66 and 202 - were ordered to move to Sikkim from Dinapore and Calcutta respectively. To give some relief to IV Corps, the responsibility for the defence of Sikkim was again entrusted to XXXIII Corps(282).

On 10 November 1962, 20 Inf Div issued an order (released to the Brigades on 13 November 1962) which divided the Div defensive zone into four sectors, viz., 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'(283).

Sector 'A'

Area north of Gangtok and including Gangtok formed sector 'A'. The Sector covered the major tracks coming through North Sikkim and through Tangkar La, leading to Gangtok. The responsibility for the defence of this sector was given to 66 Inf Bde, (raised at Dinapore during August 1962), which moved into Sikkim with 16 MADRAS, 1 MARATHA and 1 DOGRA, on 27 October 1962. It moved its HQ to White Memorial Hall, Gangtok on 16 November 1962(284).

Sector 'B'

The task of the Commander of sector 'B', which was placed under 165 Inf Bde, was to deny to the enemy the approaches from Tibet through Cho La and Natu La passes in the east.

Sector 'C'

202 Inf Bde, which moved into Sikkim at the end of October with its three Bns - 15 PUNJAB, 14 DOGRA and 4 GUARDS, was made responsible for the defence of 'C' sector. This sector included approaches from Tibet through Jelep La, Batang La, Doka La and other minor passes.

Sector 'D'

This sector, which included remaining territory of Sikkim, was placed under OC 47 LAA Regt. His task was to destroy minor Chinese infiltration into the sector and to be prepared to reinforce other sectors with the available resources, if necessary(285).

A new code-name 'OP FALCON' in place of 'OP RAJHANS' was given to the task of 20 Inf Div in Sikkim, on 10 November 1962.

The new orbat of the Indian troops in Sikkim as on 10 November 1962, was(286):-

Sector 'A'

66 Inf Bde with HQ at Gangtok, had

3/9 GR (had been there since 1960)

1 Maratha

Under Command

One Bty of 82 Hy Mor Regt

One Pl 433 Fd Coy

One Pl D Coy 6 Mahar MG (Borders)

In direct sp

15 Fd Regt

433 Fd Coy less one Pl

Sector 'B'

165 Inf Bde with HQ at Karponang, had

16 Madras (ex 66 Inf Bde)

1 Dogra (ex 66 Inf Bde)

3 Jat

5/11 GR

Under Command

35 Hy Mor Bty/36 Hy Mor Regt

D Coy less one Pl 6 Mahar MG (Borders)

One Pl 7 Mahar MG (Borders)

In direct sp

C Sqn 8 Cav less one Tp

18 Fd Regt

Sector 'C'

202 Inf Bde with HQ at Kopup, had

4 Guards

15 Punjab

14 Dogra

Under Command

33 Hy Mor Bty/36 Hy Mor Regt

'W' Coy 1 Mahar MG

In direct sp

One Tp C Sqn 8 Cav

5 Mtn Bty

92 FD Bty/4 Fd Regt

82 Hy Mor Regt less one Bty

Sector 'D'

47 LAA Regt with troops not allotted to Sectors 'A', 'B' and 'C'

All the Inf Bdes were instructed to organise active patrolling within their respective def sectors so as to keep careful watch on enemy activities and to prevent infiltration. Overhead protection was to be provided for all troops. All supplies and stores were to be stocked in dug-in shelters for protection against snow and shell splinters. Wire and AP mines were to be laid at suitable places in defended localities. All defence works were to be completed

by 30 November. Engineer units in the defended sectors were to assist in construction of defence works.

HQ 20 Inf Div also moved from Burdang to Gangtok on 16 November 1962(287).

(B) Chinese

In September 1961, Chinese had only three battalions in Chumbi Valley, facing Eastern Sikkim. By May 1962, the strength of the force had been raised to nine battalions, out of which three stood deployed at Khamba Dzong, facing northern Sikkim, and six in the Chumbi Valley(288).

In November 1962, the enemy was reported to have deployed one Inf Div plus two Regiments, supported by artillery and mortars, in the Khamba Dzong and the Chumbi Valley areas of Tibet. The known locations of Chinese troops were(289):-

- i. Div HQ and one Regt - Thankarfu Valley -
area Yatung
- ii. One Regt - Yatung - area
Chubitang
- iii. One Regt - area north - east of
Yatung
- iv. One Regt - area Phari Dzong
- v. One Regt - area Khamba Dzong,
with one Bn in area
north of Kongra La.

The Chinese had constructed roads/tracks up to the border in the Chumbi Valley and as such were in a position to mount surprise attacks at points of their choosing along this part of the border. They had also developed airfields in the Tuna Plains and Yatung. The airfield in the Tuna Plains was reported to be capable of taking fighter aircraft. Considering the overall Chinese forces in Tibet, and bearing in mind that Chumbi valley was connected up to Yatung by a 5-ton road, it was estimated that they were in a position to concentrate three to four Inf Divisions in the Chumbi Valley for an offensive in Sikkim.

The terrain in the northern Sikkim being highly mountainous, which for about five months in a year remained snow-bound, the Chinese could indulge in only probing attacks from that side in November 1962. They were in a much better position to advance to Gangtok and beyond through Natu La and Jelep La. Accordingly, they had deployed more troops i.e., one Inf Div plus, in the Chumbi Valley as against one Inf Bde in the north.

Although there was no disputed area on Sikkim-Tibet border, it was apprehended that enemy could still attack and penetrate into Sikkim in order to threaten the strategic Siliguri area. The vital task of the Indian troops deployed in Sikkim, therefore, was to prevent any threat to the Siliguri area by the enemy through south-east Sikkim. That area, better known as the Siliguri Corridor, was indeed a narrow strip between Chumbi Valley and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and its loss would have severed entirely the land communication between Assam and the rest of India. India had inducted three Infantry Brigades in Sikkim, of which two were on the eastern border, and had located strong defences close to the south-eastern border.

The deployment of two Inf Bdes, with sufficient artillery support, opposite the Chumbi Valley border, it seems, dissuaded the Chinese from launching any offensive in Sikkim simultaneously with their invasion in the western and eastern sectors. This sector, therefore, remained tense but dormant.

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RESTRICTED

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CHAPTER VII

FIGHTING IN LADAKH

THE TERRAIN AND CLIMATE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SLIDE TOWARDS ARMED CLASH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EVOLUTION OF INDIAN PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHINESE FORCES : DEPLOYMENT & PLANS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D.B.O. SUB SECTOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHANGCHENMO AND GALWAN SUB SECTOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHUSHUL SUB SECTOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE INDUS VALLEY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE LULL : 28 OCTOBER - 18 NOVEMBER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BATTLE OF CHUSHUL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSION AND COMMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the end one can only quote Carl Von Clausewitz,

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

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Over the years due to the efforts of Army and Civil authorities a large number of trees have been planted in the Ladakh region and the situation is much different than what existed in 1962. The massive tree plantation has had an excellent effect on the ecology of the region, including increased availability of oxygen and increased rainfall.

2. A road link to Leh from Srinagar was finally completed only in August 1962. The section from Kargil to Leh was still unsettled and prone to landslides. Zojila pass closed around October and only opened in June.

3. At the time of Sino Indian conflict in 1962, only Chushul and Indus Valley sub-sectors were connected with motorable road. The rest of the important places were connected by mule tracks. The following time and space chart shows the difficulties in communication.

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

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

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

5. From Official Records.

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

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

27. From Official Records.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

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

31. From Official Records.

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

33. Ibid.

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

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

36. From Official Records.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER - VIII

ROLE OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE

The role of the Indian Air Force in the conflict is significant in more ways than one. On the one hand, the paucity of road communications on the Indian side of the border was such that the deployment, maintenance and even the very survival of ground forces was dependent on air supply. This was specially true of Ladakh, as right upto August 1962, Leh was still not connected by a road(1). In NEFA, the build up of forces in Thagla Ridge area or deployment of Assam Rifles posts in OP ONKAR & LEGHORN(2) was conditional on logistic support by the transport fleet of the air force and Kalinga Airways. The understanding of the conflict is therefore possible only with thorough appreciation of the role of air power. Another aspect that comes up in any discussion is the non-use of close air support, or the offensive air weapon, by both sides. Though mainly in the realm of speculation, what could have happened had air power been used in support of the ground troops throws up interesting possibilities. In fact this is a famous 'If' of recent Indian military history and well deserves some discussion.

AIR TRANSPORT SITUATION

The Transport Fleet

The mainstay of the air force transport fleet in 1962 were Dakotas and Packet C-119 aircraft. AN-12s were inducted in the Indian Air Force only in 1961 and were insignificant in numbers. The IAF also had a squadron of piston-engined Ilushin-14 planes of Russian origin. Dakotas and Packets were also piston engined aircraft and had an operational height ceiling of around 4500 metres (about 15000 feet). This was a grave handicap in operating in the Himalyas, as even some of the passes are over 5500 metres high. The flying thus, had perforce, to be confined to the valleys, and the aircraft had to avoid the high peaks, specially in foggy weather. Since these aircraft were not pressurized, the pilots carried oxygen cylinders. Even cold presented a problem. The pilots had to fly wearing bulky clothing. As the aircraft were unable to fly over the peaks, the routes had to be carefully selected and scrupulously followed. This meant that for a long flight from Srinagar to Leh and back the aircraft followed the same route, leading to monotony and extra flying fatigue(3)

There was practically a total absence of any kind of ground support facilities for safe landing. There were no radars, and the only radio link

available at Leh had a range of barely 16 km (10 miles). All the factors combined made for barely one sortie per day per aircraft. Weather presented a formidable problem, as the fickleness of mountain weather made any kind of long range forecast difficult. Often Srinagar, the take off point, would be basking in the sun, but Zoji La Pass would be badly clouded. In this case the aircraft could not take off, and the waiting Army Jawans would wonder if the IAF was serious about flying.

The approach to many a landing strip or dropping zone was difficult and narrow. The airstrips were mostly kutcha surfaces, and suitable sites were difficult to find. In the Ladakh sector, landing strips fit for Dakotas and Packets were available at Leh, Kargil, Chushul, Thoise and DBO(4). In NEFA area, these were at Walong, Along, and Tezu. DBO was at the height of about 5000 metres or 16000 ft. Technically neither the Dakotas nor the Packets were meant to either land or take off from airfields so high. The transport fleet of the Indian Air Force operated in the Himalayas in defiance of nature as well as designed technical capabilities of their machines. The fact that these operations were still carried out is a tribute to the skill and dedication to duty of the pilots and engineers of IAF and Kalinga transport fleets.

These air transport fleets in 1960s were primarily based on Dakotas (DC-3) which were old and derated. The IAF transport fleet received a shot in the arm when HAL, Bangalore, in collaboration with a US Company (Steward Davis) developed a Jet Pack for Packet C-119 aircraft(5). This involved fitting of a jet engine on the tail of the Packet aircraft to assist it with extra boost for take off, and proved a great boon in high altitude areas.

The first test flight of the modified Packet took place on 9 June 1961. By June 1962 it was ready for operational trials in Ladakh after a series of tests were completed. History was created when Sqn Ldr (later Air Marshal) CS Raje landed his Packet at the newly constructed air strip at Daulat Beg Oldi on 23 July 1962(6).

The IAF air transport fleet received a further boost when 44 Squadron was formed with turbo prop Antonov-12 aircraft of Russian origin in Chandigarh on 31 March 61(7). The difference can be seen when one compares the AN-12 with a Packet or Dakota. Instead of a 2-1/2 hour trip to Leh from Srinagar, an AN-12 could reach Leh in half of that time. And AN-12 had no need to fly along the valleys, as it was capable of

flying even with full load, at heights greater than the Himalayan range.

The IAF transport fleet in 1962 consisted of(8):

(a) Dakotas	-	95
(b) Packets	-	51
(c) AN-12	-	07
(d) IL-14	-	23
(e) Others	-	24
(f) Super Constellation	-	06

	Total	206

High Level Decisions and Co-ordination

The Sino-Indian dispute originated in clandestine occupation of Aksai Chin area by the Chinese. In the initial years, from 1959 to 1962, the attention was thus focussed primarily on Ladakh area. In the eastern segment of the Himalayan border (defined in McMahon Line) the forward areas continued to be manned by Assam Rifles till 1961. The air supply to these isolated posts was being carried out by the Kalinga Airways, a private airline owned by Mr. Biju Patnaik. The airways used Dakotas and its pilots were very experienced, and continued to perform their tasks right through the conflict.

As the 'Forward Policy' came into operation, a meeting was held in the Defence Minister's room on 26 May 1960, with both the COAS and CAS attending(9). The Defence Minister directed Army and Air Force to find suitable sites for additional air strips near posts and to carry out assessment of aerial supply in order to establish new posts. The Indian govt. was careful not to escalate the tensions and, on instructions from the Prime Minister issued on 20 October 1960, a restriction was put on flying near the border(10). The Air Force was not to fly recce or fighter sorties within a 24 km (15 mile) belt from the border. This was not applicable to transport aircraft, which could fly right upto the border. They were, of course, not to cross into Chinese territory on any account. These instructions were adhered to scrupulously. In December 1961 as the Army was establishing additional posts, there was an urgent request to waive this condition. The Defence Minister

agreed to give clearance to specific flights, but no blanket authorisation was given. 106 Squadron equipped with Canberra aircraft and fitted with cameras carried out these tasks. Initially the missions were primarily for mapping purposes. As the active operations started, these became recce missions to find out the deployment and strength of the Chinese. Most of these missions were in Aksai Chin, Tawang, Sela and Walong areas. During the period 13 October to 11 November 1962, the Canberras flew 22 photo recce missions, flying nearly 50 hours(11). Apart from these missions there were no strategic missions carried out that were controlled at the highest level. The issue of offensive air support, or the lack of it, has been discussed separately at the end of the chapter.

Transport air support was organised on theatre basis, with the Air HQ only controlling allotment of resources. In the West, No 1 Operational Group was in overall control, and was located at Palam, New Delhi. In addition, AOC J&K and the Tactical Air Centre attached with XV Corps at Srinagar also co-ordinated the efforts(12). The Dakotas and Il-14s were based at Srinagar and flew mainly to Leh. The Packets were based at Pathankot and Jammu, and flew mainly to Chushul. The AN-12 Sqn was based at Chandigarh and supplied Leh and Chushul. The Army HQ laid down priorities and most decisions were taken in joint conferences held periodically(13).

In the East, HQ Eastern Air Command co-ordinated the air supply effort. During the hectic period of operations the AOC, AVM Jaswant Singh, had based himself at Tezpur(14). The Packets were based at Tezpur while Dakotas operated from Guwahati. Some Packets were also based at Jorhat. The Otters were mainly used to supply the Walong brigade and Army posts in Siang, Subansari and Lohit Sectors. As noted earlier, Kalinga Airways continued to supply Assam Rifles posts. In addition, the IAF Dakotas had been carrying out supply drops to posts in Nagaland, where nearly two brigades of the Army were deployed in small penny packets to fight the Naga insurgents.

Often the requirements of Eastern and Western theatres clashed. In such cases the Army HQ laid down the priorities in consultation with the Air HQ.

TRANSPORT AIR SUPPORT IN LADAKH

As seen in earlier chapters, Ladakh had no road link right upto August 1962 and not only requirements of the Army but even the civilians were met by the air force. The major airfields or landing grounds in use

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in Ladakh were Leh, Chushul and Thoise. The DBO landing ground built with great effort was fit only for emergencies. South of Chushul, Fukche in Indus Valley also had an air strip. The airfield at Leh, due to restricted length of runway, could take only Dakotas and Packets. Chushul could take all kinds of aircraft including AN-12, but the surface of the runway made it frequently unserviceable(15). Even the airfield repair material had to be air lifted to Ladakh. The responsibility to provide transport air support to Ladakh was shared by 42 Sqn (Ilushin-14), 43 Sqn (Dakotas), 19 Sqn (Packets) and 44 Sqn (AN-12s). In addition, there were some Dakotas and Packets of 11 and 12 Sqn located at Srinagar & Jammu. 1 Wing, which was based at Srinagar, was in overall command. The Ilushin & Packet Sqn had full compliment of 14 operational aircraft, while the Dakota Sqn had 8 and 44 Sqn had 7 AN-12s(16).

In 1961, as the forward policy led to establishment of new posts in DEO and Changchenmo area, the load on the Air Force increased considerably. In September 1961, the Air Force intimated XI Corps that it planned to withdraw the Dakotas from Srinagar(17). Since Sultan Chushku had no suitable dropping zone for Packet aircraft, the Air Force pleaded inability to further continue supplying this post. This posed a problem, and ultimately Sultan Chushku had to be held with reduced strength and supplied by land from Murgo. This in a way exemplified the critical role of air supply.

The air supply and casualty evacuation received a boost when 107 Helicopter Unit (equipped with Russian made MI-4 helicopters) was moved to Leh on 13 May 1961(18). The MI-4 helicopter could carry 4-6 passengers and was capable of high altitude flying. After the Chinese surrounded Galwan post on 4 July 1962, it was exclusively maintained by MI-4 helicopters. A record of sorts was created when in October 1962, right under the nose of the Chinese, the 1/8 GR company was replaced at Galwan by a company of 5 Jat(19).

Despite all efforts, there was a shortfall in airlift, and the Army's plan of inducting five battalions in Ladakh by 1962 could not be fulfilled. The total airlift had to be divided into allotment for maintenance and induction of troops, maintenance stores for airfields and border roads(20). As a typical example, the 2500 tonnes airlift available between April-May 1961 were divided as under:

(a)	Troop induction	500 tonnes
(b)	Improvement of airfields	1500 tonnes
(c)	Road construction	500 tonnes

In June 1962 the issue came to a head as tensions mounted. While the Army required a total of 44000 tonnes to be lifted by the end 1962, the airlift capability was half of that i.e. 21,600 tonnes. Thus, despite all efforts, at the start of the 1962 conflict there were only four bn in Ladakh(21).

The highlight of transport operations in the West was the airlift of two troops (8 tanks) of ANX-13 tanks of 20 Lancers. On 21 October, as the news of use of tanks by Chinese in their attack on Sirijap post was received, one troop of ANX tanks was ordered to be moved to Chandigarh. On 22 October trials were carried out to load tanks in AN-12 aircraft, but it resulted in damage to the floor of one aircraft, and the trial was abandoned. In the meanwhile a second troop was also ordered to Chandigarh.

The problem was that the AN-12 ramp was too steep. The tank tracks slipped over the aluminum floor. The tank had to be loaded smoothly and without a jerk. The ingenuity of Army Engineers and Air Force technicians soon found a solution. A ramp to load the tank was quickly constructed. The aircraft floor was strengthened with wooden planks. Trials on 24 October were successful.

One problem still remained. The Air Force insisted that tank gun be dismantled to save weight, which was un-acceptable to Army. To solve the problem the pilots took off with reduced fuel, taking grave risk. Since the aircraft at Chushul had to keep its engines running, the unloading had to be done within 15 minutes. Even this was accomplished. On 25 October 1962, in early morning mist, six AN-12 rose majestically in the sky and delivered the tanks at Chushul without any mishap. Next day a second troop was airlifted to Chushul. Two batteries of 13 Field were similarly airlifted to Chushul. The contribution of this epic feat in defence of Chushul was indeed immense(22).

Lack of adequate transport capacity had been the main bottleneck in build up of Army strength in Ladakh in 1960 & 1961. However, as tensions mounted in 1962, the transport wing of the IAF made Herculean efforts to rise to the occasion. Packets, otherwise ill-equipped to fly at night in mountains, even

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carried out twilight drop at Tsogatsalu and Phobran on 23 and 24 October 1962(23).

The following two tables give an indication of the splendid effort of the IAF transport units:

FLYING HOURS

<u>Aug 1962</u>	<u>Sep 1962</u>	<u>Oct 1962</u>	<u>Nov 1962</u>
1289	1179	2557	3263

(This included AN-12s, Packets, Dakotas, IL-14s and MI-4 helicopters)(24)

LOADS CARRIED BY AN-12s

<u>July 1962</u>	<u>Aug 1962</u>	<u>Sep 1962</u>	<u>Oct 1962</u>	<u>Nov 1962</u>
574.2	460.4	366.7	1427.3	1965.7

(This data pertains to only 44 Sqn IAF based at Chandigarh)(25)

Partly the increase was due to the generally better weather conditions that obtained in J&K from October onwards. Yet there is no doubt that the Air Force, during the crucial months of October and November stretched its men and machines to the limit. A point can come up as to why this kind of effort could not be mounted 'prior' to October 1962(26). The answer to this is partly technical, and partly psychological. The emergency effort mounted by the Air Force in October-November 1962 was possible only by postponing crucial periodic overhaul and maintenance. This kind of effort could be sustained for a short period only. In addition, after this effort, for months together a large part of the transport fleet became unserviceable. In sustained supply operations this would have led to a breakdown. Secondly, it must be kept in mind that right till September 1962, the government and Army HQ still believed that no serious fighting with the Chinese was likely. It was but natural that this feeling permeated to the Air Force as well.

In October-November the transport fleet of the IAF delivered nearly 9,639 tonnes of supplies in Ladakh(27). The IAF could justifiably claim that it had a significant contribution to stabilization of ground situation in Ladakh.

AIR TRANSPORT ON THE EASTERN FRONT

In the east, the need for air supply was as critical as in the west. Soon after Independence, the

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Government of India started extending administration to the NEFA area bordering Tibet as well as Burma. At that time, except for NEFA, the rest of the area was under the jurisdiction of Assam Government. The main problem faced in those early years of independence was to bring the isolated tribes into the national mainstream. The manning of the borders as well as policing of the area was responsibility of Assam Rifles. It was a para-military force, officered by the Army, but under the operational control of Assam Govt. The State Government was also responsible for administering this force.

As early as December 1950, Mr. N.K. Rustomji, an IPS officer (who was later Adviser to the Governor of Assam) had proposed that in view of the changed situation (Chinese occupation of Tibet) an army brigade should be inducted in the area (28). He suggested development of Dibrugarh and Jorhat as air bases. He visualized that in a case of active operations across the northern border (with Tibet) air supply would be of critical importance. The development of road communications was likely to take a long time. Air supply was also necessary for supporting the screen of Assam Rifles posts, while the main force remained in the Brahmaputra Valley. Mr. Rustomji made a strong case for establishment of air bases, landing strips and dropping zones in the area even for peace time, as the areas often got cut off due to natural calamities. The inaccessibility of the area also meant lack of intelligence. Thus aerial access was the prime need and he made a forceful plea to create the necessary infrastructure. It is impossible to know (from the available records) what impact if any, this well thought out assessment had on the development and deployment of air power in the east.

The development of airfields and air bases in the east received a fillip as a result of revolt by the Naga tribesmen. The Army was deployed to contain the insurgency. As the posts were isolated and without road communications, air supply became the sole means of their maintenance. Chabua, Jorhat and Guwahati were developed as transport air bases in 1960-61.

In response to rising tension on Indo-Tibetan border, 20 Wing IAF was raised at Bagdogra to look after Sikkim, and 11 Wing at Tezpur. These became fully operational only in September/October 1962, just prior to and during the Sino-Indian conflict (29). Essentially the burden of transport air support fell on 48 Sqn (Packets) based at Guwahati and 59 Sqn (Otters) and 49 Sqn (Dakotas) based near Jorhat. In

In addition, two Dakotas from 11 Sqn based in Barrackpur were also stationed at Guwahati during the conflict. On an average the Dakota Sqns had 7/8 aircraft, while the Otter Sqn had a strength of 12. Only Packets of 48 Sqn had full strength of 16 (including 2 reserves). The serviceability varied from a low of 30% to a high of 70%(30). Chabua was the main base for air supply to eastern parts of NEFA, and Guwahati for the Kameng area.

As a sequel to the Chinese incursions in the Thagla Ridge area, tensions came to a boil along the McMahon Line in Kameng Frontier division of NEFA. To assess the air supply situation and help speed up Army build up in Nanka Chu valley, a meeting was held in the Defence Minister's room at New Delhi on 6 September 1962(31). This was attended by both the Air and the Army Chiefs. At the meeting a decision was taken that air supply to forward posts of Assam Rifles would be immediately taken over by the Air Force. It was also decided that by March 1963, the supply operations by Kalinga Airways be completely phased out. This decision was taken apparently due to apprehensions that in case of active conflict a civil airways might not prove reliable. The Air Force Chief pleaded that the existing airfleet needed augmenting if this task was to be achieved. The Defence Minister agreed to purchase of two additional aircrafts (Caribous) for this purpose.

Even without the additional responsibility of supplying Assam Rifles, the daily requirement of the Army alone worked out to approximately 1000 tonnes a month(32). This requirement did not take into account the additional needs due to induction of 62 and 68 brigades in Kameng Frontier area as well as forward stocking of 7 Mtn Brigade beyond Tawang. The total Army requirement worked out, in the changed circumstances, to about 2,200 tonnes per month, while the Air Force had the lift capability of barely 1200 to 1300 tonnes a month(33). Even this tonnage, it was accepted, could not reach the troops, as 25% to 30% would be lost in the air drops in the steep jungle-clad mountains of NEFA.

The reality of inadequate Air Force capacity forced the Government to continue with the operations of Kalinga Airways even after 10 September 1962. On 28 October 1962, the Army Headquarter (Military Operations Directorate) wrote to the Ministry of Defence that the air supply and load allotment between IAF and Kalinga Airways should be decided by IAF, Army, Inspector General of Assam Rifles and Kalinga

Airways in a joint consultation(34). The aging Dakotas of Kalinga Airways thus continued their supply missions during the conflict and well into 1964.

Soon, a new problem cropped up; shortage of supply dropping equipment (SDE) e.g. Parachutes, skid boards & lashings. The priority of air supply shifted to east after formation of IV Corps and arrival of Gen Kaul. The Military Operations Directorate on 5 October 1962, revised the Sector-wise allotment of SDE as under:-(35)

	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
(a) Eastern Command	8000	2000	2000
(b) Western Command	NIL	6000	6000

The tempo of air supply to NEFA quickened further when on 8 October 1962 the Chief of Air Staff ordered Eastern Air Command to form 1 Operational Group at Tezpur, to control all IAF activity in NEFA(36). Visualizing Chinese air threat to forward airfields at Tezpur, Guwahati and Jorhat, certain air defence resources were also deployed. The prodding from the top had the desired results and the IAF operated nearly 3 sorties per aircraft per day, and by 23 October 1962 was prepared to drop nearly 200 tonnes daily(37). The crisis atmosphere generated by Chinese attack made the air force flog the men and machines to the limit of their endurance. During the conflict itself, adequate ammunition and supplies were dropped at Se La to stock the brigade position for 15 days.

A squadron of Otters (59 Squadron) as well as 105 and 110 Helicopter Units (HU) carried out daring landings on unprepared surfaces in NEFA to deliver supplies to the Army. The Otter's inducted an entire brigade (11 Infantry Brigade) from Tezu to Walong. The squadron which was mainly operating from Jorhat, moved a detachment of two Otters to Tezu on 28 September 1962. During the conflict the Otters flew 982 hours, and air-lifted 414 tonnes of supplies, and 2083 troops(38). The aircraft on return journeys from Walong evacuated casualties, thus saving many valuable lives. This did contribute significantly to the raising of morale of the Walong garrison. Helicopter units, then very small in numbers, performed equally well. The 105 HU with just 3 Bell 2 Sikorsky S-55 and two Alouette helicopters flew 55 hours, dropped 14.6 tonnes of supplies and rescued 13 personnel(39).

The 105 HU was operating in the Namkha Chu area. On 20 October, Sqn Ldr A.S. Williams took this

helicopter to Tsangdhar as there was no news from Sqn Ldr Sehgal. On seeing the enemy in occupation of Tsangdhar feature, Williams turned back but his helicopter was shot at by the Chinese. He managed to force land his "Chopper" close to Zimithang, and was rescued by a MI-4 helicopter. His own helicopter had to be written off. In the meanwhile, the third helicopter at Zimithang was lost when on return from a sortie, it came under Chinese fire. In the chaos of withdrawal, the aircrew and ground staff had to make their way back on foot for three days. The 105 HU thus suffered a loss of three valuable helicopters. In November 1962, the unit received freshly arrived two Alouette III helicopters and continued to support the Se La and Dirang garrisons. The helicopter pilots showed exemplary courage in undertaking "impossible" tasks, often landing with help of a mere torch light on difficult mountain tops to rescue the wounded(40).

The story of 110 HU, raised only in September 1962, was equally heroic. This unit operated the bigger and better MI-4 helicopter(41). In a short time the unit had attained a fully combat-ready status through intensive training. The unit mainly operated from Tezpur and carried out sorties in Tawang Sector. A detachment of 3 helicopters was sent to Walong Sector on 26 October 1962. There, these machines helped the Otters in the army build up at Walong. As a result of day and night efforts in October and November the Unit carried out an average of 3 sorties per day per pilot and lifted 16000 lbs of load daily. On 22 October 1962 alone, the helicopters flew 62 sorties from Tawang and rescued 176 women and children from the clutches of the invaders. Once the withdrawal of ground troops commenced, the helicopters dropped rations for withdrawing columns and picked up the wounded. Many an Armyman owes his life to the brave and untiring helicopter pilots of the IAF. During the supply missions, one helicopter was shot down in Walong on 16 November. The crew managed to escape alongwith the Army. The unit during the operations carried 180,000 lb of supplies, 1700 personnel and flew a record 650 hrs: a record in which any unit could take justifiable pride(42).

In response to frantic appeals for air supply, made by Lt Gen Kaul, the CAS suggested pooling of civil airlines resources under Kalinga Airways(43). Possibility of using foreign pilots on Air India (the national carrier) and diverting the Indian crews to IAF was also considered seriously. At that point, however, it was a case of too little and too late, as the ground situation in NEFA worsened. The reason for these reverses have been dealt with adequately in earlier chapters.

The air supply effort in NEFA suffered from several drawbacks. The biggest problem was the very few suitable dropping zones in the narrow valleys of NEFA. This meant that a large tonnage was lost, as the stores fell into deep ravines. The narrow valleys and high peaks forced a para drop from greater heights. This affected the accuracy of the drop and dispersed the stores over a large area. The fickle mountain weather in those parts meant that there would be 'bunching' of drops on a clear day. As the dropped supplies had to be man-handled over difficult terrain, it often transpired that even though the IAF had fulfilled its targets, it was days before the supplies actually reached the troops.

The transport air support operations had all the hallmarks of a hastily planned venture. The basic decisions were taken barely a month before, and resources were in at the last moment. There is a similarity here with what was happening on the ground.

NO OFFENSIVE AIR SUPPORT

Air Strengths and Deployment

Ever since the experience of Second World War, it has been axiomatic that the use of fighter and bomber aircraft in support of ground troops was an integral part of all wars. On the eve of the 1962 conflict both China and India had fairly large air forces. The Chinese are estimated to have had about 1500 frontline aircraft while the Indian Air Force had 559 Fighter and Fighter Bombers. One noteworthy feature of 1962 conflict is that while on the Indian side there was at least air transport activity, on the Chinese side there was complete absence of any flights. In the early 50s when the Chinese moved against the Tibetans, there were reports of use of aircraft to bomb and strafe the Tibetan resistance strongholds, but in 1962 the Chinese Air Force as well as IAF fighters and bombers, were conspicuous by their absence.

The table below gives the estimated balance of forces in the air.

PEOPLES LIBERATION AIR FORCE OF CHINA (PLAF) (44)

<u>FIGHTERS</u>		<u>BOMBERS</u>	
MiG 15s & MiG 17s	1350	Ilushin 28	500-600
MiG 19s	150	<u>Transport aircraft</u>	
		Ilushin 14s	
	<u>1500</u>	and some others	300-400

INDIAN AIR FORCE (FIGHTERS & FIGHTER BOMBERS ONLY)(45)

<u>FIGHTERS</u>		<u>BOMBERS</u>	
Dragons (Toofani)	57	Hunters	140
Vampires	224	Mysteres	105
Gnats	33	Total	559

The bulk of the Indian Air Force strength was based on the airfields of Punjab in the west. However, at the time of conflict, there was a considerable fighter strength in the east as well. This strength included two squadrons each of Toofanis and Vampires as well as a detachment of Hunters, a front line aircraft of the time(46). These were located in Tezpur, Chabua, Jorhat and Bagdogra. In addition, nearly two squadrons of Hunters were also available nearby at the air base at Klaikunda. Photo recce missions were also being carried out from Tezpur by Canberra bombers specially fitted for the role, though they were never based there. The infrastructural facilities for the Air Force in the east were thus adequate enough, should the need have arisen. Since a large fleet of the Allied Air Forces were based in Assam and Bengal during the Second World War, there were many air strips in the area. The veterans of the Burma campaign, where most of the Royal Indian Air Force pilots were first blooded in combat, also had good experience of close support of the ground troops in jungle terrain. In that sense the Indian Air Force by training and equipment was a tactical air force, well suited for the role of support of the ground forces.

The bulk of the Chinese Air Force was deployed on China's eastern sea board and against Formosa, where Chiang Kai-Shek and his air force were regarded as the primary threat to Chinese security. Besides, the massive US air power based in Japan, South Korea and Philippines was also a potential danger. The PLAF at that time consisted of mostly obsolescent aircraft like MiG 15 and 17. Only the MiG 19 was comparable to Hunter of the IAF in terms of performance. The Chinese faced a major problem due to lack of infrastructure in Tibet. While no firm information is available about the exact state of the logistics backing in 1962, the data available for even later years show that the Chinese did not have adequate facilities to conduct sustained operations from these airfields.

In addition to the formidable problem of infrastructure, the geography of the area was for

once, also unfavourable to the Chinese. Most of the airfields were located on the high Tibetan plateau. The high altitude meant that the aircraft required much longer runway and consumed much more fuel on take off. This reduced the effective range of the aircraft. In addition the lift off weight was also reduced, and thus the effective bomb load that could be carried was less. The Chinese air force did not have any mid-air refuelling facility. The Indian air-fields, on the other hand, were located at sea level and faced none of the disadvantages faced by the Chinese.

The "intelligence review" made by the Army Headquarters (and also addressed to Air Headquarters) had some idea of the location of Chinese airfields as known then. The air-fields that could be used against Indian targets in the west were Khotan (ht 1380 M) and Kashgar (ht 1290 M). The airfields that could be used for operations in the east were Jeykundo (3800 M), Chamdo (3230 M), Nachu (4500 M) and Kunming (2080 M) (47). Airfields were also reportedly coming up at Yatung and Tuna Plains.

Proposals and Decisions

As the tension grew on the Indo-Tibetan border during 1959, some efforts were made to assess the Chinese air threat. In July 1959 it was learnt that the Chinese had constructed a large number of airfields and landing grounds in Tibet(48). These facts were confirmed by the Army Headquarters. However, the Air Headquarters does not appear to have conducted any indepth study(49).

In the absence of any professional indepth and competent technical analysis of the Chinese threat and Indian counters, the spontaneous predominant feeling was that the Chinese enjoyed great superiority in the air, based on a sketchy information about their overall strength. Little thought seems to have been given to the force that the Chinese were capable of bringing to bear along the Indo-Tibetan border. The Operational Instruction No. 26, issued to Western Command (Appendix IV) as well as war game 'Sheel' carried out in Shimla (refer to Chapter on Fighting in Ladakh) clearly reflect this dominant feeling.

In the Western Sector, as the crisis at Galwan post (where the Chinese had surrounded an isolated Indian detachment on 4 July 1962) deepened, HQ XV Corps requested Western Command that, in order to boost the morale of troops, Indian Air Force should fly over these posts(50). It appears that the SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) were activated and air support communications were established between Leh and No. 1 Operational Group at Palam on 18 September 1962(51). On 19 October 1962, Air Support Signal Units established communication network, first with Adampur and later with Halwara airfields. The fighter/bomber aircraft at these locations were put on operational alert for flying air support missions to Ladakh. As the fighting on ground intensified and Indian Army had paucity of Artillery (guns) while the Chinese enjoyed virtual supremacy, HQ XV Corps on 31 October 1962, requested Western Command for provision of close air support(52). The Corps Commander felt that in the open and flat areas of Ladakh, offensive air support would greatly assist him. Accordingly he urged the Army Commander, Western Command, to take up the matter of air support with the government.

The situation in the east (NEFA) was even more desperate. The Government of India decision to evict the Chinese from their encroachment in Kameng Frontier Division (Thag La Ridge area) was conveyed to Eastern and Western Commands by the Army Headquarters by a signal on 22 September 1962(53). The reality on ground in the Namkha Chu valley, where 7 Brigade was expected to achieve this goal of evicting the Chinese, was different. The total fire support to this brigade consisted of two Para Field gun (75 mm) air dropped at Tsangdhar. Out of these two guns, one had got damaged. In any case the guns did not have the range to engage the Chinese on Thag La Ridge. The IV Corps Commander who had meanwhile gone to the spot sent a signal on 9 September 1962, requesting government approval for use of IAF Fighter aircraft(54). The signal went on: "Use of close air support be considered should this be necessary in our assault on the enemy position." A more desperate signal from IV Corps Commander on 7 October 1962, mentioned the possibility of a Chinese offensive and stressed that he had no resources to meet this. He recommended that "all air & military resources" should be marshalled to restore the situation(55).

Army HQ turned down the IV Corps request of 9 September on 11 September 1962. The Signal categorically stated that close air support would not be used. A signal sent to IV Corps on 7 October reveals the basic reason for denial of this

permission. "Use of offensive air support not to our advantage" was the key phrase. Army HQ pointed out that the Chinese were bound to retaliate, and this would interfere with Indian transport aircraft flights on which they were solely dependent. Similar signal was sent to Western Command as well. This logic was further expanded during the briefing in the Ops Room. It was stated that from their airfields in Tibet (about which it was acknowledged that Indians had no precise information) the Chinese could bomb vital centres of communication, population and industry. The acceptance of this line of reasoning was reflected in IV Corps Operational Instruction dated 5 November 1962(57). The Corps accepted that the risk of Chinese interference with own supply was not worth it. In the meanwhile, however, the only concession made to these persistent requests for offensive air support was that the IAF in both east and west was placed on alert, to be able to come to support of Army at short notice. A proviso was added that sanction for this would only be given in 'extreme emergency'.

There is no accurate or authentic documentation of the thinking that was behind this decision to desist from use of offensive air support. Air Marshal H.C. Dewan (Retd), the then Director of Operations at the Air HQ has recounted that he had sent a note to Chief of Air Staff about the use of offensive air support(58). His main conclusion was that the terrain in the area of operations, specially NEFA, being heavily jungle-covered, close air support would be difficult and could have very little effect on dispersed infantry. Since there was no possibility of large concentration of tanks or vehicles in these areas, there were no worthwhile targets for the Air Force. His note further stated that since Indian troops were critically dependent on air supply, it was best not to provoke the Chinese. Referring to the large size of the Chinese air force, he made a point that while China could easily replenish her losses, India could not. He also mentioned that Pakistan's attitude was a question mark, and the IAF resources had to be kept in the west to deal with this threat. The note concluded by referring to international repercussions of this, as the whole world would know that India had 'escalated' the conflict(59). This would deprive India of international public sympathy which was otherwise with it as a victim of aggression. Most of these considerations were equally applicable to Ladakh.

The Air Marshal also recounted that Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, discussed this issue after the conflict was underway. The Defence Minister was probably in favour of full use of the IAF, as

revealed by Prof J.K.Galbraith, the then US Ambassador to India(60). However, it appears that in the light of the weighty professional opinion of Air HQ, the political leadership did not think it wise to use the Air Force in the offensive role.

It also appears that the US Ambassador, who frequently met the top Indian leaders during the Sino-Indian conflict, tilted the balance in favour of non-use of the Air Force. In his account of these events, he opines that while Indian cities in the Gangetic plains and industries around Calcutta would be destroyed by the Chinese, Indian aircraft could at the most reach Tibet. There were no worthwhile targets there. He also buttressed his arguments by saying that air power was useless against infantry in jungles, as US had found out in Korea. The Ambassador also mentions that on 19 November 1962, the Indians sought US fighter planes to protect Indian cities while the IAF was used tactically against the Chinese. Gailbraith felt that the Indians were not sufficiently aware of the dangers of this course, and in any case it was not possible to execute it quickly(61).

The Chinese Air Threat

For the eastern sector, the Chinese had six airfields in and around Tibet during 1962 operations. Zinning, Lanchous and Kunming air bases were located too far away from the international border to have any bearing on the ground battle. Nachu, though closest to the battle zone, was situated at an altitude of 4500 metres, hence was unfit for fighter/bomber operations. Jyekundo (elevation 3800 M) and Chamdo (altitude 3230 M) were fit for MiG -19 operations against NEFA area, though with pay-load reduced by as much as 2000 kgs. Therefore, these aircraft could be effective in the area with cannon only, whereas IL-28 could carry a bomb load of 3000 kgs. It is assessed that a squadron each of MiG-19 and IL-28 could have been operated from these bases. Cities like Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Guwahati, Shillong and Kohima were within the reach of IL-28 aircraft, which could drop about 45,000 kgs. of bomb load per day. Hence the PLAF with reduced capability could have little influence on the ground battle.

It need hardly be mentioned that the strike range of a fighter or bomber aircraft is dependent on the flight profile - whether high or low flying on approach to and departure from the target. In turn the flight profile must be governed by the terrain and air defence environment, particularly early warning radar. In the Indo-Tibet border areas, in the east as well as the west, in 1962, the air defence environment

was rudimentary or non-existent by modern standards. Therefore, the radii of action of Chinese war planes operating from the high altitude airfield in Tibet may be worked out as follows:-

Type of aircraft	Weapons	Profile	Radius of action	Remarks
IL-28	3000 Kgs(bombs) plus 4x23 mm cannons	Hi-Lo-Hi	700 Km	2 sorties/day
MiG 19	2x250 Kgs(bomb) plus 3x30 mm cannons	"	365 km	3 sorties/day

The Indian Capability

Comparatively, Indian Air Force was equipped with better and more modern aircraft like Hunters, Mysteres, and Canberra bombers. These fighter bombers could have been deployed at all the available airfields in the Assam Valley, and they could reach targets restricted to their radii of action as shown on the sketch map. Further these planes would have carried their full armament load, since the air bases were situated at almost sea level (Runway altitudes varying from 70-150 metres). Assuming that the IAF could, in addition to the Vampires, and Toofanis already deployed in the theatre, deploy four squadrons of Hunters and two of Canberras, in the eastern sector the force was capable of delivering 144000 kgs of bomb-load by Hunters and 192000 kgs by the Canberras. Hence, the IAF could carry greater punch and cause considerable damage to the Chinese forming up/concentration areas, lines of communication, etc. Lhasa city was within the reach of both fighters and bombers of the IAF. The bombers could strike almost all airfields in Tibet and the cities of Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, etc., in the west.

Radii of action for IAF aircraft are tabulated below:-

Type of aircraft	Weapons	Profile	Radius of action	Remarks
Canberra	8000 lbs (bombs)	Hi-Lo-Hi	830 km	2 sorties/day
Hunter	2x1000 lbs (bombs) plus 4x30 mm guns	"	445 km	3 sorties/day

It might be appropriate to mention that though no threat was perceived from the Chinese, the IAF had deployed a few fighter squadrons equipped with Vampires and Toofanis in the Assam Valley. These fighters were deployed mainly for carrying out anti-insurgency role. No formalised training or suitable tactics were evolved to meet the threat in the mountainous/hilly terrain of NEFA. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the fighter pilots were ready, confident and capable to carry out operations in these environment.

It is felt that during Chinese conflict, had the IAF been used offensively specially in NEFA, the outcome of the one-sided war might have been different. As can be seen from the above Table, the Chinese airfields were so far from battle zone that aircraft had to operate at extreme ranges with reduced weapon loads. The Indian Air Force on the other hand could dominate the entire battle zone from comparatively close-by air bases, and with better and more modern war planes.

The bomber force, operating in air defence free environment (PLAF did not have early warning or Ground Control Interception (GCI) Radars) would have, by carrying out strikes on the airfields, denied the use of these few airbases to the enemy. The fighters Hunters and Mysteres were ideally suited to carry out deep and battle-field interdiction, whereas the Vampires could have been used to provide close air support where feasible. Deployment of Hunters in the east would admittedly have weakened the force levels in west against Pakistan, but air power can be projected very quickly in any direction on call. In the west itself, the fighters were capable of supporting Chushul from Adampur and Halwara bases. This would have enabled them to be used against Pakistan as well if the need arose.

Hence, it is felt that use of air power by India could have favourably influenced the course of events. IV Corps as well as Western Command had requested for offensive air support, which was turned down. On the other hand with 2-3 airfields in operation in Tibet and with meagre infrastructure the Chinese were not capable of either countering the IAF or posing a worthwhile threat to cities in the plains. Further, the fact that 5 Inf Div was moved from Indo-Pak border gives credence to the fact that in the overall scenario then prevailing, an attack from Pakistan was unlikely, and a sizeable portion of IAF fighters/bombers could have been used/deployed against the invaders in the Ladakh as well as Arunachal sectors.

CONCLUSION

The Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 was an incremental war that gradually escalated from border skirmishes to full blown conflict. The desire and expectation on the Indian side right upto 20 October 1962 was to limit its scope and intensity. The role of Indian Air Force in this first bloody Conflict between two Asian giants was a limited one. Transport air support proved crucial, as the whole success of 'the forward policy' depended upon it. Yet the transport resources were clearly inadequate for the task, as seen from slower than planned build-up in Ladakh. In NEFA during the conflict major effort was made to drop desired tonnages. But here the nature of the terrain (in Namkha Chu) meant a loss of any thing upto 60% of the dropped equipment.

Besides the weather, supply dropping equipment (SDE) and parachutes proved another bottleneck. Unlike in other areas, these could not be retrieved and re-used. However, at Walong and in Chushul, the transport support proved invaluable in helping the ground troops to fight a battle on somewhat better terms with the Chinese. The Otters in Walong and Packets and AN-12s in Chushul performed great feats. The crucial air lift of AMX-13 tanks and 25 Pdr guns to Chushul may well have saved the day in Ladakh.

The issue of offensive air support is a contentious one. The advice given in 1962 by Air HQ lacked depth and was perhaps unduly pessimistic. The role played by a foreign ambassador (U.S.) appears to have been crucial and negative to the outcome of fighting. This might or might not have been part of a larger US design to get India under its fold, as nearly happened in the aftermath of 1962 debacle.

The conclusions about threat to Indian cities were much exaggerated and the same data when analysed today has yielded different conclusions namely, India had an edge in the air. Recently a defence analyst has noted that at that time the Chinese Air Force was virtually grounded due to the dispute with Soviet Union, leading to shortages of spares(62). The Soviet Union also tilted the transport balance in favour of India through its supply of the then top of the shelf AN-12s and MI-4s.

The over-riding impression on ground fighting in NEFA, where the real debacle took place, is that loss of morale was the primary factor. In case the Indians had used the Air Force while Chinese could not, it would certainly have raised Indian morale. In

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In addition, the slower moving aircraft were certainly capable of bombing mountain passes and causing landslides. While the Infantry columns could still move, they would be without artillery or even logistic support. In Ladakh, the long Chinese vehicular columns that moved with impunity would have certainly fallen prey to the IAF. The exact outcome in the case of use of offensive air support remains in the realm of speculation, but speculation founded on careful analysis does point out this to have been possibly one of the major mistakes of this ill-fated war (63).

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The road Srinagar to Kargil had existed for a number of years. The link between Kargil and Leh was partially completed in early 1962, but regular convoys started only by August 1962. From Official Records.
2. OP ONKAR & LEGHORN have been fully described in Chapter dealing with ground fighting in NEFA.
3. Lal, P.C., Air Chief Marshal (Retd), 'My Years with the IAF' (Lancer International, New Delhi 1986) pp.97-120.
4. From Official Records.
5. Lal, P.C., Air Chief Marshal (Retd), 'My Years with the IAF' (Lancer International, New Delhi 1986), p.99.
6. From Official Records.
7. Lal, P.C., Air Chief Marshal (Retd), 'My Years with the IAF' (Lancer International, New Delhi 1986), p.100. Also From Official Records.
8. From Official Records.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. From Official Records. Monthly Co-ord Meetings between IAF and Army were held regularly and notes kept in official records from 30 June 1961 onwards, which was possibly the first meeting. Conferences were also held in New Delhi. Important Co-ord Conferences were held on following dates :-
 - (a) 25 February 1962.
 - (b) 11 May 1962. A discussion about Air maintenance held at Srinagar in which the Defence Minister also participated.
 - (c) 30 July 1962. Conference on Air induction attended by GOC XV Corps and AVM Pinto of No.1 Operational Group.
13. From Official Records.

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14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. It was mentioned that due to heavy traffic Chushul Airfield may go out of order and asked 3 Himalayan Div to think of alternatives.
16. From Official Records.
17. Ibid. In March 1960, as part of phasing out of Dakotas, 43 Sqn received orders to move out from Jammu and Kashmir and merge with 48 Sqn. These orders were soon changed and the Sqn shifted back to Jammu and Kashmir from Barrackpore.
18. From Official Records.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. Army HQ wrote to Western Command, on 28 February 1961, suggesting the priorities in view of shortfall in Airlift.
21. Refer to Chapter VII on Fighting in Ladakh.
22. From Official Records.
23. From Official Records. The data is incomplete and approximate.
24. From Official Records.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid. This was the observation by AOC-in-C Eastern Command.
34. From Official Records.
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid. It was proposed to pool in 8 Dakota from Non-Schedule airlines for the supply drop operations. In its signal Army HQ informed Eastern Command about Government decision to engage Foreign Pilots for Air India and side step the Indian Pilots to IAF.
44. Military Balance, 1962-63 (London 1963, 1155).
Also From Official Records.
45. From Official Records.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Interview with Air Marshal H.C. Dewan (Retd) on 4 May 1988.
50. From Official Records.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. 'Escalation' is a much misunderstood phrase.

is neither automatic nor across the board. It should have been possible to use fighters within the Indian territory and putting the onus of escalation on Chinese in case they extended the fighting by attacking rear areas. There is a perceptible lack of clear strategic thinking in Indian Government at that time.

60. Galbraith, J.K., Ambassador's Journal (H. Hamilton, London, 1969), pp.445-486.
61. Ibid.
62. K. Subrahmanyam in 'Hindu' dated 22 August 1989. Quoted from article, 'Why No National Security Council'. Also, Asian Recorder, February 26 - March 4, 1963. A defector pilot from PLAAF had talked of shortage of pilots and low level of training.
63. The analysis of Chinese and Indian Air Force capabilities is based on research carried out by Air Commodore O.P. Sharma, VM (Retd).

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CHAPTER - IX

CEASE-FIRE AND THE AFTERMATH

CEASE-FIRE : 21 November 1962

The dawn of 20 November 1962 was the blackest in the military history of independent India. The nation appeared to be in peril. The age old belief in the impregnability of the Himalayan barrier stood shattered. The Chinese were sweeping aside the Indian Army positions with ease. It seemed that nothing could stop their victorious march into India.

In Ladakh, in their last attack, the Chinese pushed back Indian forces from hills overlooking the Chushul airfield. A little to the south of Chushul, the Chinese capture of Rezangla, meant that the land link between Chushul and Leh was in danger of being severed. Chushul airfield itself was under the shadow of Chinese guns deployed on Gurung and Magar hills. The situation of 114 Brigade defending Chushul, was indeed precarious.

The situation in Ladakh had some redeeming features also. Through energetic action and milking the formations deployed in J & K facing Pakistan, an additional two brigade worth of troops were deployed on approaches to Leh. The Chinese had also not attempted to gain any more territory either in the DEO sector or in Indus Valley sector. It appeared that the Chinese were content to reach their 1960 claim line and advance no further. In any case any further advance to Leh was blocked by strong forces and would have been both time consuming and costly.

The withdrawal from Chushul was an orderly affair. In the forward positions on both Gurung hill and Magar hill, all stockpiled stores and ammunition were either evacuated or destroyed. All the 25 pounder guns were withdrawn intact by the gallant Sikhs of 13 Field Regiment. Only one machine gun and one recoil-less gun were lost as a result of enemy shelling. Two tanks that developed mechanical trouble were destroyed in the area of Chushul airfield. The other four AMX-13 tanks of 20 Lancers withdrew to safety and were fully battle worthy(1).

The Chinese appeared to have suffered heavy casualties in their attacks on the eastern defences of

Chushul. They did not interfere with the withdrawing Indians. In any case, the Chinese, by reaching the 1960 claim line, had made sure that Indians could not pose any worthwhile threat to their Aksai Chin highway. The possible launch pads in DBO, Demchok and Chushul areas were firmly under Chinese domination. On the other hand, Leh, still another 70-100 km to the West, was militarily clearly out of Chinese grasp. The loss of territory notwithstanding, Indian Army was standing its ground. It was a military reverse, but not a rout.

National and international attention was focussed more on fighting in Kameng Division of NEFA. The situation here was disastrous. At 0300 hrs on 20 November, the last semblance of defence at Chaku, a high point on road from Bomdila to Tezpur, was overrun by the Chinese. It was hardly a defence, as only the withdrawing remnants of 3 Sikh LI, 3 JAK Rifles and 6/8 GR were hastily deployed there(2).

There was no news about or contact with HQ 4 Mtn Div. The 4 Mountain Division, once pride of Indian Army that had won laurels in Italy fighting against the Germans in Second World War, had virtually ceased to exist as a fighting force. After the fall of Se La and Bomdila, all command and control was lost. Battalions had dis-integrated into small parties, heading for the foot hills and plains beyond. Many of these withdrawing troops were wounded and sick. The disarray and confusion had infected the rear areas also. There were no precise estimates about either the casualties or missing men. The magnitude of disaster could be gauged by the fact that even on 30 November, full ten days after the fall of Bomdila, a total of 119 Officers, 143 JCOs and 5431 Jawans were listed as missing believed killed(3).

Chaku on the road to Tezpur was the last defence in Kameng area. Once Chaku fell, there was no obstacle between the Chinese and the Corps Headquarters at Tezpur. Seeing the alarming situation and developing threat to Tezpur, Army Headquarters decided to airlift, 5 Infantry Division from Punjab. The division's task was to defend Tezpur. On 19 November, an advance party of the divisional headquarters, one brigade headquarters and one Infantry battalion flew in(4). The troops quickly dug in for the defence of Tezpur airfield as first priority.

On 20 November the situation at Tezpur went completely out of control. An advance party of IV Corps Headquarters left for Gauhati as first step of withdrawal. In an atmosphere thick with rumour and

beset with panic, this opened the floodgates. The civilian administration lost its nerve. The District Magistrate, the head of the district administration, left for Gauhati. Prison was thrown open and criminals were released. The district treasury office started burning currency to prevent its falling into Chinese hands. A pall of thick smoke hung over the city as government offices got busy in burning documents. By nightfall, Tezpur was a ghost city. The collapse of law and order was complete.

Panic stricken people in thousands crossed the Brahmaputra to get to the southern shore and safety. Tezpur airfield was full of clamouring people, among them many foreigners working in tea gardens, begging for an air lift. The remaining elements of IV Corps Headquarters were scheduled to leave by rail for Gauhati at 7 PM on 20 November. The plan had to be abandoned as the rail staff had fled and no trains were running between Tezpur and Gauhati(5).

The Prime Minister addressed the nation on All India Radio the same evening. This was indeed the lowest watermark of Indian morale. "Huge Chinese Armies have been marching in northern part of NEFA. We have had reverses in Walong, Se La and today Bomdila, a small town in NEFA has also fallen. We shall not rest till the invader goes out of India or is pushed out. I want to make that clear to all of you and specially our country-men in Assam to whom our heart goes out at this moment"(6).

The situation in other sectors of NEFA was equally bad. In Subansiri Division troops were asked to withdraw from Limeking on night 19/20 November. In Siang division, Mechuka and Tuting positions were ordered to be abandoned the same night. This wholesale withdrawal in Eastern NEFA was triggered by the reverses in Walong sector. After the abortive attempt to retake Tri-Junction failed, the defenders got unbalanced. Till then Walong was tenaciously holding out. The Walong brigade commenced its withdrawal on 16 November, initially to Hayuliang and then to Ledo in Brahmaputra valley. The withdrawal was difficult and many jawans and officers perished on high mountain passes. It is however to the eternal credit of all of them that this withdrawal did not turn into a rout. Troops withdrew as organized bodies under their leaders. The effect on military situation was grim. For a moment, before defences could be re-organized, nothing stood between the Chinese and the oil fields of Digboi and Tinsukia(7).

The Peking radio announcement in the early hours of 21 November declaring a unilateral cease-fire from mid-night 21/22 November came as a surprise! Strictly in military terms it was an understandable and logical

decision. As winter had already set, the Chinese would have found it extremely difficult to maintain the forces across the snow bound Himalayan passes. Having reached the plains of Assam, any further advance would have meant facing Indian Army that had tanks and heavy guns. The Chinese could at best muster light guns and mortars. Induction of Chinese tanks was a physical impossibility. The Chinese cease-fire proposal also mentioned the Chinese intention to immediately start withdrawal from the captured territory. The Chinese were apparently worried about the safety of their forces operating at the end of a tenuous line of communication.

In both NEFA and Ladakh, the induction of fresh Indian forces was going on at a feverish pace. By the time cease-fire came, in place of just one infantry brigade in Ladakh there was a complete division, 3 Himalayan Division, a newly raised formation had its headquarters in Leh. In addition, it also had 70 and 163 Infantry Brigades, besides 114 Brigade and three battalions of J & K Militia (later to be converted into Ladakh Scouts). In NEFA area, 5 and 23 Infantry Divisions were inducted, bringing IV Corps to its full strength. Besides the meagre IAF fleet, a squadron of C-130 Hercules aircraft of the US Air Force played a major role in this strategic airlift.

The official response to the Chinese cease-fire and withdrawal proposal was cautious. Army Headquarters sent a signal on 21 November 1962 at 1400 hrs informing the formations about the Chinese proposals(8). The troops were asked to be vigilant despite the cease-fire. Formations were asked to carry out normal patrolling activities. They were however instructed not to carry out any 'provocative actions'. The government thus, without formally accepting the cease-fire nevertheless had accepted it de-facto.

In NEFA area, the scene of major fighting, events continued to move at a fast pace. In Tezpur itself, IV Corps Headquarters that had reached Gauhati on 21 November, was asked to immediately return to Tezpur(9). Though the Corps Headquarters had moved to Gauhati, the Corps Commander, BM Kaul had continued to remain in Tezpur with a skeleton staff. All the available air transport resources and the few helicopters that were available, were utilised to spot the stragglers streaming into Assam Plains. The pilots did yeomen service, dropping food packets and evacuating seriously wounded and sick men. The pilots flew under trying conditions and bad weather. The tireless work of the helicopter pilots saved many valuable lives.

Major changes were also taking place in the Army command structure(10). On 19 November, General PN Thapar asked for and was granted leave preparatory to pre-mature retirement. On 20 November, JN Chaudhari, an Armoured Corps officer then in Southern Command, took over as the new Chief of Army Staff. On 30 November, Lt Gen BM Kaul, Commander of the ill-fated IV Corps, was transferred to XI Corps in Punjab. Kaul was to subsequently resign. Lt Gen SHFJ Manekshaw (who was to later become the first Field Marshal of the Indian Army) an officer of Gorkha regiment and winner of Military Cross during Second World War, took charge of the NEFA front on 1 December 1962. In the Ladakh theatre no changes were made in the command structure.

In less than two days Manekshaw had a measure of the situation facing his Corps. In characteristically professional manner he went about deploying the newly inducted troops. His orders to the troops were clear cut and military-like, in refreshing contrast from Kaul's long winded and often ambiguous instructions. IV Corps had three Infantry Divisions and an additional brigade to defend NEFA.

In the Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA the Chinese had reached upto a line generally in area joining Kalaktang and Chaku. Both these places are on the foot hills. Some small patrols of Chinese were believed to be operating south of this line also, though the information on this score was of uncertain authenticity. The Indians estimated that the Chinese had around two division worth of troops in this area. Opposing this, IV Corps had a division that was supported by nearly one and half regiment of tanks (nearly 60 tanks). The infantry element was deployed in the area around Misamari with the task of defending rail and road link that lay on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra and was the life line of Assam. The task for armour was to take offensive action to destroy any Chinese who ventured into the plains(11).

To the east of 5th Division, 181 Infantry Brigade covered the gap between Kameng and Subansiri areas. The brigade was deployed in area of Charduar. One squadron of tanks supported the brigade. To the east, right upto Ziro, was 2 Infantry Division. This division continued to occupy more or less its original zone. A brigade of this division held Baporijo, Ziro and Kimin with approximately a battalion each. The rest of the division continued to hold Juting, Kaying and Along. A screen position to delay the enemy continued to be based on Hlayuliang(12).

The NEFA defence were further strengthened when 23 Infantry Division moved out of Nagaland in last week of November, though division had only one brigade with it. It was deployed at Tamalpur, Bhairbkund and Udalgiri. In addition, a squadron of Armour was also deployed here. This force also had the task to act as reserve to restore adverse situation in other sectors(13).

The deployment of this formidable force under a resolute and professional commander like Manekshaw made the imminent threat to Assam recede. Manekshaw made a careful study of the road communication and the capacity of Chinese to induct and support additional forces. The Napoleonic saying that Armies march on their stomachs is even more true in the mountains. As there were virtually no local resources available, logistics and capacity to deliver ammunition, food and spares was the most critical factor on which the future course of operations depended. Manekshaw appreciated that the Chinese had the capacity, at the maximum level, to deliver around 400 tonnes per day upto Tenga Valley. This estimate was for fair weather. The condition of road beyond Tenga through the foot hills was much worse. This road passed through thick tropical forests and was subject to very heavy rains - rains that caused frequent landslides and disrupted communications. He estimated that the Chinese at the most could move about 250 tonnes per day beyond Tenga into Assam plains. Based on this estimate, he visualized that the worst Chinese threat would be of around two divisions. He was therefore confident that he had the forces available with him sufficient to destroy the lightly armed Chinese, should they venture into Assam plains. The Chinese did not advance into Assam plains but instead commenced their withdrawal as per schedule(14).

CASUALTIES

Cease-fire did not however mean the end of fighting. The ordeal of the withdrawing troops continued for many more days. The biting cold was made much worse by all pervading hunger. Many men crossed over into Bhutan through uncharted terrain and snow filled passes. Many headed directly for the foot hills and Assam plains in search of safety. Weather was not the only enemy, the Chinese, despite their announcement of unilateral cease-fire, continued to ambush and fire on the withdrawing Indians.

On 22 November, the first day of cease-fire, a group of Indians just south of Dirang Dzong was fired upon with machine guns and mortars. At about 10.00 hrs the same day, another ambush took place near

Lagala Gompa, 13 km south of Dirang Dzong. In this incident about 300 Indian soldiers were fired upon by the Chinese. In the prevailing confusion, no accurate estimate of casualties could be made, but these were very heavy. A worse fate awaited a group of unarmed road workers of Border Roads Organisation. Chinese opened fire on these hapless workers near Phuting, south of Dirang Dzong. There were very few survivors(15)

The treacherous firing on withdrawing Indians did not cease on 23 November also. A group of Indian stragglers was ambushed near Shergaon. The firing that began at around 1500 hrs, lasted for a full two hours. The Chinese machine guns fell silent only when darkness came. Such incidents continued to take place right upto 26 November 1962. The fate of Brigadier Hoshiyar Singh, Commander of 62 Brigade, was in a sense typical of what happened to many soldiers(16). All contact with him was lost after 18 November. Like thousands of others, he too was trying to make it to the foot hills by taking to jungle tracks in an effort to avoid the Chinese. The first news of his fate came to light when some of the men of his party of 50 soldiers managed to reach Tezpur on 10 December. According to them their party led by Hoshiyar Singh was ambushed by the Chinese on 27 November, full six days after cease-fire, in area of Tenga. The brigadier was wounded and probably taken prisoner by the Chinese. Since the Chinese did not announce his name among the prisoners, it was surmised that he was shot dead by the Chinese. A news report to this effect was put out by PTI on 14 December.

Reacting to this report, the Chinese claimed that Brig. Hoshiyar Singh was killed in a clash near Putung near a bridge over Panchapani river. The Chinese claimed that his body was discovered much later, and exact date of his death is not known to them as the situation was fluid(17). Circumstantial evidence thus clearly shows that he was indeed killed well after the cease-fire(18).

In 2 Division sector the situation was equally bad. On 16 November at 1215 hrs, last message was received from Walong. The Operator spoke of heavy firing. Soon thereafter the brigade started withdrawing. On 17 November 1962 Brigade received direct orders, from IV Corps, to withdraw troops deployed at Mechuka. On 17 November GOC IV Corps and 2 Div traced the withdrawing column from a helicopter. The 11 Brigade commander declined the offer of helilift and withdrew along with his troops. After three days march the brigade reached Hayuliang. 3/3 GR, a battalion on the east bank of Lohit, was

completely out of touch with the brigade. To ease the difficulties of withdrawing troops, IAF helicopters carried out drops of food packets. The Gorkhas took nearly a month to reach the plains. 2/6 GR and a company of 2 Madras deployed at Mechuka commenced their withdrawal on 19/20 November, as already narrated. As the troops reached Rego, enroute to Along, they found the Chinese already there. Having left the prepared positions in Mechuka, the troops were caught in between the Chinese at these two places. The Gorkhas under Lt Col Taylor then tried to go cross country across a 14000 ft high pass. Inadequately clothed and lacking food, nearly 162 all ranks perished including Taylor(19).

There is no precise estimate of casualties. The reasons for this state of affairs are many. In the first instance, the induction of troops in NEFA was a most dis-organised affair. Units were being thrown into battle as they arrived, with little regard for normal military chain of command or the unit/formation affiliations. In addition, once the withdrawal began, the 4 Mountain Division broke up into small groups who went their own way. Most personnel were accounted under the catch all military phrase of 'missing believed killed'. The exact number of wounded or dead emerged nearly a year later. Precisely how many died due to enemy action and how many due to cold will never be known. Many soldiers who were wounded in battle, died en route. The terrain of operations, specially in NEFA, being full of inaccessible jungles and mountains, many dead bodies could never be recovered.

In Ladakh, another problem cropped up. The majority of battlefields where the dead soldiers were lying, fell within the Chinese '1960 claim line'. Indian government was reluctant to violate this 'de-facto' cease-fire line. It was many months later that many of the dead bodies were collected and cremated with full honours. In the Namkha Chu area of NEFA, skeletons were spotted as late as 1987/88(20).

In addition to these difficulties, there appears to have been an effort to downplay the magnitude of the human tragedy. On 12 December 1962, Nehru informed the Rajya Sabha that in the Sino-Indian conflict the Army suffered the loss of 197 killed, which included 11 officers, 13 JCOs, and 173 jawans. A total of 291 all ranks were wounded in battle. A full 6277 persons were still un-accounted for(21).

The Chinese Red Cross informed their Indian counterpart on 26 December 1962 that China had taken

3895 all ranks as prisoners. As per their earlier announcement after the battle of Thagla ridge, they had taken a total of 1131 prisoners(22). The figure did not include 703 sick and wounded soldiers handed over by the Chinese earlier in first and second week of December(23). The authoritative estimate of total casualties suffered by the Army was published in 1966. According to this report, the Indian Army suffered a total of 2,616 casualties (including killed and seriously wounded). Out of these 875 were directly attributed to enemy action. The rest were due to variety of causes like weather and accidents(24). The price paid by the Indian Army was heavy in deed. The Indian Army did not take any Chinese prisoner.

No reliable estimates of the casualties suffered by the Chinese are available. In case of fighting in Ladakh the Army Headquarters had asked the Western Command to make a rough estimate. The units were asked to keep in mind own strength deployed, attacking strength and number of assaults launched and their duration. The study was conducted sector wise. In the DBO sector, it was estimated that the Chinese launched a total of 11 attacks. The total strength (divided into small penny packets) of defences was approximately two companies. The units estimated that in these attacks the Chinese suffered upto 500-600 casualties. The estimates appear to be on the high side as the posts lacked defensive arty fire support. It is also a fact that these posts in most cases were not occupying dominating heights.

In Chang Chenmo & Chushul sector, 14-15 coy strength attacks were launched by the Chinese. Many of their attacks were launched in broad day light. In addition, in battle of Chushul atleast, the Indian forces had some arty & tank fire support. The defences were comparatively better prepared and tactically sited. The formations estimated the Chinese casualties at around 1300. A more conservative estimate might be around 500-600. The Chinese were similarly estimated to have lost around 600-700 men in the Indus Valley sector. According to the Western Command, the Chinese overall losses amounted to 2500 casualties, nearly five times the Indian losses(25). This amounts to almost a brigade worth of Chinese casualties. Keeping in view the overall Chinese strength in this sector i.e. a division plus a regiment (brigade), this appears to be a high figure. However the Chinese are likely to have suffered at least 1000 casualties. Some idea of the ferocity of Indian resistance could be got from the fact that the Chinese took very few prisoners. Galwan post and Razangla, Indian casualties were very

heavy. In case of a successful attack this ipso facto means heavy losses for the victor as well. Till the time the Chinese bring out their official version, this would remain in the realm of speculation.

THE CHINESE WITHDRAWAL AND INDIAN FOLLOW UP:

The cease-fire proposals made by the Chinese on 21 November 1962 also gave out their plan to quickly withdraw from the captured territory. The issue probably was an urgent one as the Chinese could not maintain their troops in such large numbers through the winter, specially in NEFA. The Chinese in their lengthy note repeated their 24 October proposal, for both sides to withdraw 20 km from line of control all along the frontier. This would keep the Chinese still in occupation of Aksai Chin area in Ladakh sector. Both sides should respect the line of actual control and undertake not to cross it and negotiations should again commence. India had rejected these proposals as it meant China keeping the fruits of her aggression.

After accusing the Indian government of aggression and blaming it for the current conflict, the Chinese made two major unilateral decisions:

- (a) Beginning from 00.00 hrs on 22 November 1962 the Chinese frontier guards will cease-fire along the entire Sino-Indian border.
- (b) Beginning from 1 December 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to the position 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control which existed between China and India on 7 November 1962.

In the Eastern Sector, the Chinese promised to withdraw 20 km behind the McMahon line into their own territory. The Chinese also declared their intention to set up check posts in the vacated zone (between line of actual control and 20 km zone, on its own side).

The Chinese proposals while seemingly very reasonable and generous, also contained a number of 'conditions' for India to fulfill. In a nut-shell, these 'conditions' were -

- (a) Indian troops should take no offensive action against the withdrawing Chinese.
- (b) Indian troops should also remain 20 km away from McMahon Line in the East and line of actual control in Ladakh and middle sectors.

(c) Indians should not re-occupy Namkha Chu positions in NEFA or Chip Chap, Galwan, Pengong Tso and Demchok areas in Ladakh.

The Chinese note made it clear that should India not follow the above 'conditions' China "reserve the right to strike back in self-defence"(26). China thus managed to retain the areas vital to her in Ladakh and safeguard her over-extended troops in NEFA while they withdrew.

The Indian response to the Chinese withdrawal was very cautious. It was decided that the Civilian administration should be gradually extended to the area. The IB was also to establish check posts in the vacated areas. The re-induction of the Army was not planned in the immediate future. The problems connected with re-occupation of NEFA were discussed at an informal meeting in Ministry of Defence on 7 December 1962(27). Besides a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, the meeting was also attended by a representative of External Affairs Ministry, since the NEFA administration was being controlled by it. It was decided at this meeting that political officers would go back to Ziro, Daporijo, Along and Pasighat, Roing and Tezu. These were divisional headquarters and skeleton staff had continued to function there. Sub-Divisional officers were to proceed to their places later. The main problems visualized concerned the likelihood of Chinese cells left behind and their subversive activities. IB officers were asked to keep a careful watch over the situation.

In the west, in Ladakh sector, Western Command was ordered not to send patrols across the 1960 Chinese claim line, which coincided with the outermost limit of Chinese occupation in 1962(28). Following policy similar to the one being implemented in NEFA, IB posts were already established at Phobrang, Dungtse and Koyul. It was also decided to send parties to posts earlier vacated in the central sub-sector i.e. Hot Springs and Tsogatsalu. In the southern Indus Valley sector, posts at Hanle, Zarsar and Chumar had not withdrawn and were ordered to continue in their location.

On 1 December 1962, Army HQ informed IV Corps, Tezpur about the Chinese intention to hand over sick and wounded prisoners of war at Dirang Dzong. The Indian Red Cross was asked to make the necessary arrangements for their reception. In the meanwhile Colonel Luthra, Advisor to Assam Governor, volunteered to organize civilian search parties to locate and help Indian Army stragglers(29). He was

given the go ahead signal. In the meanwhile, some withdrawing soldiers of 1 Sikh LI reported on 2 December that the Chinese had indeed vacated Chaku area. The Peking Radio also broadcast on 6/7 December that the Chinese had vacated Chaku which they called Yingko Pass.

The civilian rescue team concentrated its work initially in the foothills. Between 7 & 10 December from area of Kalaktang 48 Jawans were traced and rescued(30). On 11 December civilian administration was re-established at Bomdila. The Chinese had vacated Bomdila around 5/6 December. On 12 December, the Chinese handed over two officers and 16 Jawans who were sick and wounded, at Mechuka. The returnees belonged to 2/8 GR and 2 Madras. It then became known that 27 other prisoners were taken back to China. The returned sick soldiers confirmed that while attempting to cross over a snow bound pass, Lt Col D Taylor and three other officers were lost in snow and died of exhaustion and cold. Their bodies were never found. The Chinese handed over 77 sick and wounded at Dirang Dzong and 26 men at Walong. The injured and sick were quickly evacuated to rear hospitals(31).

The Chinese utilised the occasion to take full propaganda advantage. They handed over arms and equipment to the village chiefs before vacating the captured area. Chinese left Mechuka, Walong and Tawang around 21/22 December and went back to their side of McMahon Line. All equipment of any value was taken away. Before handing over arms, the Chinese made sure that only unserviceable and damaged equipment was handed back. The whole exercise was a propaganda ploy to show Chinese generosity.

The Chinese handed back 117 vehicles of all types. After some minor repairs these were made roadworthy. It was a different story when it came to arms. Out of 21 guns (25 pounders) most had either cracked barrels or were without sights. The Chinese also handed back 41 three-inch mortars, 16 medium machine guns, 200 light machine guns and 2193 small arms that included 303 rifles and sten guns. It was indeed a humiliating experience for the Indian Army. The large quantity of arms handed over by the Chinese only showed the magnitude of Indian defeat; probably that was the Chinese intention(32).

The problem in Ladakh was of a different nature. Here there were no stragglers or missing personnel but an emotional problem of Indian dead bodies still lying on the battlefields. The areas were, by and large, behind the 1960 claim line of the Chinese and so out of bounds(33).

As the Indian civil administration teams moved into various posts, a clearer picture emerged. On 12 February 1963, an Indian Army patrol visited Rezangla, the scene of fierce fighting in November 1962(34). Major Shaitan Singh, winner of the nation's highest gallantry award - the Param Vir Chakra - had died here. His body was discovered by the patrol just outside his bunker. He had received eight bullets and was still clutching his sten gun. In the intense cold of Ladakh the body was well preserved even two months after death. A grateful nation gave a fitting farewell to Shaitan Singh. His body was flown to his native village Bansar in Jodhpur district on 19 February 1963 and he was cremated with full military honours. Village Bansar was named after this hero of Rezangla.

Subsequently, Brigadier TN Raina, commander of 114 Brigade, himself went to Rezangla and Gurung hill with a large party to collect the dead. Rezangla had 96 dead bodies, (of 13 Kumaon) and Gurung hill, 26 dead bodies mainly of 2/8 Gorkhas. Evidence of heavy fighting was not lacking. The Chinese had used heavy artillery and rockets to destroy the bunkers. Shell craters of 160 mm heavy mortar were also clearly visible. A large number of used bandages were scattered on the hillside. There were also tell tale blood marks, evidence of ferocity of fighting as well as an indicator of heavy casualties suffered by the Chinese. Five bodies buried by the Chinese had wooden posts with inscriptions in Chinese and English "The Corpses of Indian Invaders"(35).

Both Gurung Hill and Rezangla were very close to the 1960 claim line and did not pose a major problem in organising search and collection of dead bodies. In March 1963, Western Command wrote to Army Headquarters saying that nearly 190 personnel are still missing from various posts in DBO sector, Changchenmo and Indus valley sub sectors(36). Most of these areas were 8-16 km inside the Chinese claim line. Any move by Indian Army personnel in these areas was likely to be construed as 'provocation' by the Chinese. Western Command therefore urged Army HQ to take up this matter with the Chinese government. It was pointed out that even during the second world war, it was common practice to permit each other to collect the dead through mutual consent.

On 3 April 1963, the Indian Red Cross approached their Chinese counterpart(37). After a delay of nearly three weeks, the Chinese reply was received on 29 April. The Chinese turned down the Indian request on ground that the dead bodies were properly buried

and there was no need to send any Indian parties into the disputed areas. But since Indians do not bury but cremate their dead, the issue was again taken up with the Chinese in May 1963. Finally the Chinese in a reply on 13 August agreed to carry out cremation and hand over ashes to Indian Red Cross(38). The Indian Red Cross intimated their Chinese counterpart that Indian representatives would like to be present during the cremation to carry out certain religious ceremonies. This was not acceptable to the Chinese and on 15 August 1963, they cancelled the arrangements. The text of the Chinese Red Cross Society's cable is quoted below.

"Your August 14 telegram received (regarding presence of Indian representatives during cremation). Our Aug 13 telegram clearly stated that collection and cremation of dead bodies of Indian military personnel would be exclusively Chinese responsibility. Chinese authorities categorically refuse your societies attempt to send people to interfere - Chinese govt has told us to halt our work of collecting and cremating the dead".

The Chinese foreign ministry repeated the above objection in a memo dated 16 September 1963. The Chinese accused the Indian government that it was trying to lay claim to these territories through this device. The Chinese claimed that the Indians who died at their posts were 'invaders' and not defending their 'motherland'(39)

This petty minded Chinese response to humanitarian requests showed the depths to which the erstwhile 'Bhai' (brother) had sunk. It also showed the extreme sensitivity of the Chinese to any Indians moves in Ladakh sector. The war was over, but the war fears and debris continued to dot the border areas.

A NATION AROUSED :

National Resurgence

It was a gloomy winter. The military humiliation had made deep wounds on the Indian psyche. Yet, paradoxically, it was also India's finest hour. The response of the people in this hour of national peril can be described in just one word - magnificent. The popular reaction to this national disaster was a mixture of emotions - there was a sense of bewilderment and also anger. The dominant mood of the nation was one of determination, determination to fight on till the last Chinese had been thrown out.

The sense of bewilderment is easily understandable if seen in the background of the earlier talk of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai. The nation was indeed at a loss to understand the motive behind Chinese aggression. The surprise was also on another count, the successive reverses suffered in NEFA. The media build up prior to the conflict had raised people's expectations. Most newspapers fostered the impression that while in Ladakh Indian Army was at a distinct disadvantage, in NEFA, the Chinese would be quickly 'thrown out' of the Indian territory. Gen Kaul's appointment to take up the assignment, raising of a new corps at Tezpur and brave talk at political level had all raised the expectation of a swift victory. In the event, instead of victories, it was constant withdrawals. In NEFA, the Chinese captured huge territory, advanced nearly two hundred km and almost reached the Assam plains. The media, uniformly naive on military matters, depicted even tactical moves as routs. Mere place names like Tsangle, Dhola or Tsengejong, in popular imagination, conjured up visions of villages and towns being lost. The overall effect was devastating, for citizens were more uninformed than even the media about defence matters.

As the stories of shortages of all kinds and lack of preparation filtered back, there was a rising wave of anger. The anger was directed against the politicians who had kept the armed forces thus woefully equipped. Military secrecy kept the lid on command and other failures and the military saved itself from public wrath.

On another plane the anger of the people was directed against the Chinese. Chinese aggression of 1962 often was described as 'The Chinese betrayal' or a stab in the back. The war, in words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of India, became one for Dharma (Righteousness). The Indian reaction was understandable, as right upto 20 October 1962, the Chinese were always perceived as fellow Asians and friends. The marching Chinese armies destroyed this feeling of Asian solidarity and a 5000 years peace between India and China. Rightly or wrongly, henceforth the Chinaman's image in Indian mind was to remain that of an ungrateful and treacherous people. In a sense China had paid a very heavy price for its military victory.

The Indian Parliament, as the highest body representing the will of the Indian people, solemnly resolved -

"With hope and faith, this house affirms the

firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India, however long and hard the struggle may be."

The resolution that was moved on 8 November, was passed unanimously on 14 November 1962. In addition to expressing its firm resolve to take back the lost territories, the Parliament also noted the fact that China had invaded Indian territory in spite of the friendly gestures on part of India. The parliament also paid tributes to the brave Jawans who laid down their lives in defence of the country(40).

Artists, poets and India's thriving movie industry all contributed to raising the peoples morale. There was an all round surge of patriotism, such as never seen before. The national mood was not aggressive but one of quiet determination. None could forget the humiliating military defeat. Poet Pradeep (Sharma) was inspired to write his immortal song, 'Aai Mere watan ke logon.....(Oh the people of my land.....). The song went on to remind the people never to forget the Indian blood that was shed on the Himalayas. The men who died on the Himalayan heights were not Sikhs, Marathas or Gorkhas but just simply Indians, the song went on. A moving song that brings tears to many an Indian eye even to-date. Set to a soulful tune by a master music director (Ramchandra Chitalkar) it was sung with emotion in the golden voice of Lata Mangeshkar(41) at an all party public meeting on 26 January 1963 in New Delhi. As the song ended there was a hushed silence. Many gave full vent to their feelings of grief mixed with anger. Nehru broke down completely and cried like a small child.

The Indian peoples' response was overwhelming. As if in a flash all the internal bickerings and fights ceased. The nation was consumed with just one desire 'Fight to Finish'. An elderly couple on 23 October 1962 had trekked about 16 km (10 miles) from a village near Delhi. The old man with tattered clothes demanded to see the Prime Minister. The security guards at Teen Murti House, the PM's official residence, mistook the bundle of papers the old man was clutching in his hands, as some petition. The old man's reply brought tears to the sentry's eyes. The couple had brought papers donating their entire property for National Defence Fund. School children collected their pocket money and sent it for buying guns. Indian woman's love of gold is age old and a legend. Yet the Chinese aggression saw the some women freely donating their gold ornaments. In a few cases even the most sacred of a married woman's possessions, 'the Mangalshutra', was donated(42).

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In Rajasthan 250 families from village Bardhana Khurd decided to send one son from each family into the Army. In Assam, 10,000 students from local colleges gathered outside the recruitment office demanding to be enrolled in the Army to fight the Chinese. A successful lawyer from Akola in Maharashtra, gave up his practice and joined Artillery, the very arm in which his younger brother had died fighting the Chinese at Walong. Thousands lined outside hospitals to donate blood. Students and teachers alike signed pledges in their own blood vowing to fight to the last for the defence of motherland.

The State of Punjab, with its martial traditions and contribution to the armed forces; was in the forefront of contributions to the national defence fund(43)

The industrial workers voluntarily agreed to put a moratorium on strikes. The employers on their part gave a pledge to increase production and also volunteered not have lock-outs. The immediate effect was that the port workers of Goa, electricity workers at Delhi and at paper mills of Sripur, called off their strike unconditionally. The man days lost in industry came down sharply and there was total industrial peace.

The Dravida Munetra Kazagam party of Tamil Nadu, which had spearheaded an almost secessionist campaign since 1960 suspended its agitation(44). The party was responding to a groundswell of public opinion that forced all petty disputes to be discarded in favour of national unity. Such was the overwhelming response that the National Integration Council on 1 November 1962 decided to adjourn without debate, as there was no need anymore. Soon thereafter the council was actually dissolved.

A rough indication of the kind of response can be had from the fact that when a supplementary demand of Rs.95 crores (in addition to the defence budget of around Rs.350 crores) was put up before Parliament in early 1963, the full amount was already with the government through voluntary contributions(45). It is indeed not possible to recount even a part of the sacrifices offered by the people. It would be unfair to list some and not others. These examples have been cited only to give an idea of the depth and spread of this tremendous national response. The nation is resolved to pay any price to preserve its freedom.

The Political Fallout

A momentous event like the Sino-Indian border conflict was bound to have a domestic political fallout. The diminution of Nehru's stature was one direct result. Nehru had steadfastly argued for peace ever since 1959 as tensions grew on the border. In October 1959, for the first time since independence, Praja Socialist Party organised a demonstration outside his residence demanding his resignation. Later, in August 1963 the first ever motion of no-confidence was tabled against his government. Nehru was not a mere PM but an institution in himself. For 15 years he not only won elections for his party but also ruled the hearts of his countrymen. Seen in this light, it was indeed a trauma for the great leader. In a year's time he suffered a stroke and ultimately died on 27 May 1964, barely 21 months after the border war. The fortunes of Congress Party, which had held undisputed sway over the Indian polity till then, also suffered a set back.

The functioning of Defence Ministry came under sharper focus. There had been, even earlier, rumblings of dissent, as when on 31 August 1959, General KS Thimayya, a respected officer with proven track record, had resigned due to his differences with Defence Minister Krishna Menon. That storm had died down when on Nehru's persuasion Thimayya took back his resignation the very next day. JB. Kriplani, an implacable critic of Menon, had kept a constant barrage of criticism of Nehru-Menon's handling of the China question. The events had proved Kriplani right. People of India were horrified to learn about the ill-clad and ill-equipped soldiers hurled into battle on the Himalayan front with such disastrous results.

The major casualty of the outcry against the government for its neglect of defence requirement was Menon, the Defence Minister. The PM attempted to shield Menon, but the outcry against him was so shrill that on 31 October, Nehru accepted his resignation and took over the defence portfolio himself(46). Menon was appointed Minister in-charge of Defence Production. The campaign against Menon refused to die. At a private meeting Satyanarain Sinha, a Congress party MP is reported to have told the PM, "Either Menon goes or you too go"(47). Finally, on 9 November 1962, Menon had to resign from the post of Minister of Defence Production as well.

The sentiment against Menon was primarily due to his known leaning towards communists. Some media persons went to the extent of accusing him to have

sabotaged the war effort. The truth, however, was that most major decisions were Cabinet decisions and virtually Nehru's personal decisions. The loss of prestige suffered by Nehru was a major new development. Until then, though a true democrat, Nehru held a virtual autocratic sway over his Congress Party. The outcry against Nehru was muted as there was no other alternative leader in sight. People also felt a need to stand united in face of Chinese threat.

The political fallout of the Chinese aggression affected the fortunes of the Communist Party of India. In 1959, as the tension on the Sino-Indian border arose, the party lost power in Kerala. The Communist Party, in consonance with the Soviet and Chinese opinion, saw the Sino-Indian conflict as a reactionary plot to drag India into cold war. The party had constantly urged restraint on both sides. In the context of the rising tide of Indian nationalism this 'neutralist' stance was unacceptable to the majority of Indians. Between April 1958 and 1961, the active membership of the party declined from 2,75,000 to just over 1,00,000. Worse was to follow. Across the country, Communist Party offices and members were attacked. On 31 October 1962, a mob in Delhi attacked the Central Committee office and ransacked it. There were stray cases of violence against the properties of Indo-Soviet Cultural Societies also.

The pressure of public opinion forced the Communists to take a clear stand on the issue of Chinese invasion. The National Council of Communist Party met in New Delhi on 1 November 1962 and passed a resolution condemning the Chinese aggression(48). The resolution also supported the Government stand that there could be no negotiations with the Chinese till they vacated the occupied areas. The Party Chairman, Mr S.A. Dange, whole-heartedly supported Nehru and wrote a letter to the Communist Parties the world over, condemning China for its wanton aggression(49). The first cracks in Communist unity were clearly apparent. Some members of the Communist Party Central Committee had opposed the resolution condemning China. Notable among them was Mr. B.T. Ranadive. Ranadive was arrested on 7 November 1962 under the Preventive Detention Act by the Maharashtra Government. In early March 1963 Mr E.M.S. Namboodripad from Kerala, and several prominent Communists from West Bengal including Jyoti Basu and Pramod Dasgupta, resigned from the Communist Party, to later form Communist Party of India (Marxist). Thus the Chinese aggression led to a split in India's second largest political party. The Communists never recovered from this blow and remained a marginal political force on the Indian scene for many more years to come.

Chinese nationals living in India became prime suspects in the public eye. In a series of decisions, India severed all links with China. On 10 December 1962 the Reserve Bank of India cancelled the licence of Bank of China. Its branches in Bombay and Calcutta were closed down. On 20 November the Government ordered internment of all Chinese nationals and people of Chinese origin living in Assam and border districts of West Bengal(50). On 4 December 1962, India ordered that no Chinese civil aircraft were permitted to fly over Indian air space. The Chinese in the meanwhile were taking similar actions against Indian nationals and property. The Indian Government action was selective. Only 2000 out of an estimated 15,000 people of Chinese origin were interned. These internees were detained at a camp in Deolali in Maharashtra(51). Initially only grown up men were interned, women and children being left free. The Chinese however requested permission to stay together, which was granted. The representatives of International Red Cross were invited and visited the camp to satisfy that no harm would come to the Chinese. The internment of the Chinese in a sense indicated the total rupture of relations between the two great Asian peoples(52).

The National Emergency and National Mobilization

The President issued a proclamation of National Emergency on 26 October 1962. This was issued under the powers conferred on him through Article 352 of the Indian Constitution. A Defence of India Ordinance was also promulgated simultaneously. Later, the Parliament passed the Defence of India Act, incorporating various ordinances.

Under these measures the government assumed sweeping powers. The Act gave authority to the government to issue directives to State Governments even on matters pertaining purely to the States. The legislatures also got the authority to abridge even the Fundamental Rights given to the citizens under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution.

Various restrictions were placed on foreigners, including prohibiting their visit to border areas and State of Assam. The government also acquired right to requisition movable or immovable property. To ensure that industrial or commercial activity continued un-hampered, the government assured trade and industry that any losses as a result of enemy action would be made up by the government. To this end in December 1962, the Parliament passed the Emergency Risks Insurance Act 1962. The legal measures adopted

including the Defence of India Act, Civil Defence Act and various restrictions were very similar to those enforced by the British during the Second World War.

To co-ordinate and implement the defence plan, an apex body called National Defence Council (NDC) was set up. The NDC was an advisory body chaired by the Prime Minister. The charter of this body was extensive and included the following:-

- To take stock of the situation and arrangements for national defence from time to time.
- To assist in defence build up.
- To advise Central Citizen's Council on measures to ensure popular participation in defence efforts.
- To advise the government on general measures to help fight the aggression(53).

The NDC was a large body. The Cabinet ministers dealing with Defence, Home, Finance & Railways were ex-Officio members. In addition, the three Service Chiefs, Chief Ministers of border States (J&K, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam) were also members. Chief Ministers of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were also added. The Secretaries of Defence, Finance, External Affairs, Home and Cabinet Secretary were also co-opted as members. Prominent retired soldiers like General K.S. Thimayya, Lt Gen S.P.P. Thorat, Vice Admiral Kataria and General Rejendra Sinhji were some other members. The scientific community was represented by Dr. D.S. Kothari, Dr. S. Bhatnagar and Dr. Homi J. Bhaba, while industrialist Naval Tata and Ashok Mehta and Mrs Indira Gandhi were also members. It was a large body(54).

The NDC met for the first time on 25 November 1962, and decided to set up two smaller committees, i.e., one dealing with Military Affairs and another for Peoples Participation. The Military Affairs Committee was chaired by Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan and included the three Service Chiefs as well as retired Generals Rejendra Sinhji, Thimayya and Lt Gen S.P.P. Thorat. The other Committee was presided over by the Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri(55).

Under the Civil Defence Scheme, nine separate organisations were set up. Each had a distinct role.

- The National Volunteer Rifles. This was to be the auxiliary to the Defence Forces. Men and women between the age group of 18-35 joined these organisations. The training included rifle shooting, nursing and operating wire-less sets.

RESTRICTED

- The National Cadet Corps. The NCC had an Army, Air and a Naval Wing. Under this scheme, selected college and school-going students received military training. The NCC strength in January 1962 was nearly 3 lakhs. It was till the Emergency a voluntary body. Now it was made compulsory for all college students.
- The Civil Defence Organisation. This trained the people in first aid, fire fighting and air raid precautions.
- Home Guards. This Organisation was already in existence in cities. Now in addition to its job of helping the police, it was to help strengthen vigilance and security at sensitive installations.
- Village Volunteer Force. This was virtually a replica of Home Guards with similar functions in villages.
- Four more miscellaneous organisations brought together Labour, Women Volunteers, Transport workers and Technically qualified people(56).

Defence Preparations

Y.B. Chavan, the new Defence Minister outlined the defence plan in the Parliament on 8 April 1963. The major effort was to be in four directions: "Firstly we have to expand the Army, secondly there has to be necessary expansion and modernization of the Air Force, thirdly, there will have to be a strong production base, and fourthly the ancillary facilities like communications and transport have to be enhanced and expanded." Chavan in a nutshell summed up the direction of Indian defence effort which in future years was to produce a formidable fighting machine. The Army's size was to be doubled, to nearly 8 lakhs(57).

The expansion was proceeding side by side with modernization of existing force. The major constraints faced were the shortage of Foreign Exchange and limited industrial capacity. Partly the problem of equipment was off set by aid from the USA and UK, specially for the 10 mountain divisions that were planned to be raised.

To cater to the expansion, the Indian Military Academy that normally trained 1000 officers, took up the challenge to train 3,200 officers trained.

Emergency commission was offered in the Army and by September 1963, nearly 5,852 such officers were commissioned. Two new institutions, one at Poona and another at Madras, trained the selected candidates for 3 months before induction into the Army. Various other measures were taken to conserve trained manpower. Junior commissioned officers (JCOs) were retained beyond service limit, and suitable retired personnel were re-called and re-employed. A school was raised to train Mechanical Engineers at Baroda and the capacity of training in High Altitude Warfare was doubled.

Equal attention was given to strengthen the production base. The ordnance and ammunition factories were working round the clock. The value of production from these factories was planned to increase from Rs.50 crores for 1962-63 to Rs.100 crores for 1963-64. The semi-automatic rifle for Army had been developed and was under production at Ishapore Factory. In aircraft manufacturing, the HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd) had taken up development of HF-24 Fighter bomber of indigenous design. In addition, work was started to develop a jet trainer (Kiran). Decision to set up a separate complex to manufacture MiG-21 Supersonic Fighters of USSR origin was also announced. The government also decided to acquire submarines for the Navy, and initial steps were taken to prepare crew and other infrastructure.

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The Chinese explained that since they were prepared to go back to the line as held in 1959, it was a proof of their sincere desire for peace. The note further pointed out that taking the 1959 line as the basis, the Chinese proposal of 20 km withdrawal beyond this line would mean that in Eastern Sector China had to withdraw much more than 20 km (from the recently occupied Towang area, 10-20 km and a further 20 km).

The Chinese claimed that their proposals were equitable and just. They also pointed out that many Afro-Asian countries had supported the Chinese proposals, and added that this withdrawal was to be treated 'only as a preliminary step and "will in no way prejudice the claims of either side in maintaining its claims".'

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The announcement of unilateral cease-fire on the 21 November, was accompanied, as already mentioned, by a Chinese statement that repeated the 24 October proposals. Indian reaction was on two planes. De-facto it accepted the proposals and refrained from crossing the '1959' claim line in west and 1962 line of actual control in NEFA. Diplomatically reacting to the Chinese proposals as elaborated in Chinese Premier's letters of 27 October, 4 November and 28 November, the Indian Prime Minister disputed the Chinese version of 1959 line. He stated that at that time there were no Chinese posts at Qazil Jilga in north or south or west of Spangur lake. The Indian side further said that actually the line of control claimed to be 1959 line was the one that was established by the Chinese forces after their invasion.

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Reporting about his meeting with President Ayub Khan, of Pakistan, the Indian High Commissioner there reported that the President, himself a soldier, evinced keen interest in the military happenings. Ayub Khan felt that the engagements were limited in nature and the real danger was long term and in distant future(77).

Since 1961, the Chinese and Pakistanis had been in touch on demarcation of border between Sinkiang and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir(POK). The talks had reached an advanced stage by spring of 1962. On 2 March 1963, Pakistan and China signed an agreement delimiting the border between Pak held Kashmir and China. India denounced the agreement as null and void, as Pakistan was in illegal occupation of Indian territory in Kashmir. Indian papers described it as agreement between two thieves.

Arms Aid

The flow of arms aid, mainly from the USA and Britain, had started even before the cease-fire. Nehru told Congress MPs on 29 October that some arms (mainly self-loading rifles) had been received from the USA and Britain(78). On 30 October 1962, the British PM, Sir Harold Macmillan as well the leader of Opposition, Mr Hugh Gaitskill, pledged that Britain would do whatever India asked for. Earlier the British Queen had declared her government's resolve to help India. Similar declarations were made by Canadian PM and US Ambassador in India, Mr. Galbraith, made it clear that the US assistance was un-conditional and clarified that he did not expect India to join the US military alliances in return(79).

On 9 November the French Ambassador in India announced military aid worth 10 million US dollars. The aid consisted of Allouette helicopters (Mark I and Mark III) as well as spares for French aircraft in the Indian inventory (Mysteres and Toofanis). An agreement for military aid from the US was signed in New Delhi on 14 November 1962. In deference to US wishes and Pakistani anxiety, India gave an assurance that the arms given by the US would be deployed in NEFA and Ladakh only. Philips Tolbot, the US Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia, explained that the Communist Chinese aggression posed a threat not only to India but to the whole of Indian sub-continent. On 22 November a joint Anglo-US military mission arrived in India to make an on the spot assessment of Indian military needs. On the same day, the first of C-130 'Hercules' transport aircraft landed in New Delhi. Next day another 11 joined it. The aircraft were flown by US crew. These aircraft

were used to shift 5 Infantry Division from Firozpur in Punjab to NEFA. The aircraft, which could operate from forward airfields, had a payload capacity of 20 tonnes. These proved invaluable in building up the Indian strength in Ladakh and NEFA(80).

The Western arms aid to India in the wake of Chinese aggression crystalized at the Nassau Summit in December 1962. The total aid package was to be \$120 million worth. This was to be shared equally by the US and the Commonwealth nations. The arms aid would help India raise six mountain divisions. Assistance was also promised to establish a chain of early warning radars on the Sino-Indian front. In addition, the immediate needs for communication were to be met through supply of modern wireless sets.

The joint statement issued at the end of Nassau Summit urged Indo-Pak reconciliation. India and Pakistan were urged to open talks to resolve the vexed Kashmir problem. The thrust of American efforts to influence India were even more clearly articulated by Defence Secretary R. MacNamara. In a testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, on 30 January 1963, he stated, "It is our belief that both India and Pakistan must now recognize that they face a common enemy to the north in Communist China. From this recognition must come the impetus for resolution of their differences, and in future their efforts must be directed against the real threat in Asia rather than be dissipated against each other"(81).

In the immediate aftermath of Indian reverses, a Chinese air threat to the Indian cities was visualised. In case the Chinese were to renew hostilities and press on to the Assam plains, India proposed to use her airforce in support of ground operations. In that event, it was suggested that the US and other Western countries might provide air umbrella over Indian cities. The proposal was not seriously pursued and receded to background once it became clear that the Chinese were indeed carrying out their withdrawal as planned. The proposal soon got transformed to holding a joint air exercise, code named Exercise 'Shiksha' (Training). On 22 July 1963, India formally announced her acceptance of this proposal.

Exercise 'Shiksha' was carried out from 9 November 1963, till end of the month. Six and a half squadrons of IAF that included Hunters, Vaspire, Gnats and Canberra bombers took part. The RAF had sent a squadron of Javelin fighters. The US F-100 Super Sabres as well as Canberra bombers of Aerialwar

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- The National Cadet Corps. The NCC had an Army, Air and a Naval Wing. Under this scheme, selected college and school-going students received military training. The NCC strength in January 1962 was nearly 3 lakhs. It was till the Emergency a voluntary body. Now it was made compulsory for all college students.
- The Civil Defence Organisation. This trained the people in first aid, fire fighting and air raid precautions.
- Home Guards. This Organisation was already in existence in cities. Now in addition to its job of helping the police, it was to help strengthen vigilance and security at sensitive installations.
- Village Volunteer Force. This was virtually a replica of Home Guards with similar functions in villages.
- Four more miscellaneous organisations brought together Labour, Women Volunteers, Transport workers and Technically qualified people(56).

Defence Preparations

Y.B. Chavan, the new Defence Minister outlined the defence plan in the Parliament on 8 April 1963. The major effort was to be in four directions: "Firstly we have to expand the Army, secondly there has to be necessary expansion and modernization of the Air Force, thirdly, there will have to be a strong production base, and fourthly the ancillary facilities like communications and transport have to be enhanced and expanded." Chavan in a nutshell summed up the direction of Indian defence effort which in future years was to produce a formidable fighting machine. The Army's size was to be doubled, to nearly 8 lakhs(57).

The expansion was proceeding side by side with modernization of existing force. The major constraints faced were the shortage of Foreign Exchange and limited industrial capacity. Partly the problem of equipment was off set by aid from the USA and UK, specially for the 10 mountain divisions that were planned to be raised.

To cater to the expansion, the Indian Military Academy that normally trained 1000 officers, took up the challenge to train 3,200 officers trained.

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The joint statement issued at the end of Nassau Summit urged Indo-Pak reconciliation. India and Pakistan were urged to open talks to resolve the vexed Kashmir problem. The thrust of American efforts to influence India were even more clearly articulated by Defence Secretary R. MacNamara. In a testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, on 30 January 1963, he stated, "It is our belief that both India and Pakistan must now recognize that they face a common enemy to the north in Communist China. From this recognition must come the impetus for resolution of their differences, and in future their efforts must be directed against the real threat in Asia rather than be dissipated against each other"(81).

In the immediate aftermath of Indian reverses, a Chinese air threat to the Indian cities was visualised. In case the Chinese were to renew hostilities and press on to the Assam plains, India proposed to use her airforce in support of ground operations. In that event, it was suggested that the US and other Western countries might provide air umbrella over Indian cities. The proposal was not seriously pursued and receded to background once it became clear that the Chinese were indeed carrying out their withdrawal as planned. The proposal soon got transformed to holding a joint air exercise, code named Exercise 'Shiksha' (Training). On 22 July 1963, India formally announced her acceptance of this proposal.

Exercise 'Shiksha' was carried out from 9 November 1963, till end of the month. Six and a half squadrons of IAF that included Hunters, Vaspire, Gnats and Canberra bombers took part. The RAF had sent a squadron of Javelin fighters. The US F-100 Super Sabres as well as Canberra bombers of Aerialwar

Air Force participated. Radar and communication equipment was tested. Air Marshal Arjan Singh was the overall incharge. This was the high point of military cooperation between India and the Western World(82).

COLOMBO PROPOSALS

The Sino-Indian conflict gave a severe jolt to the new found Afro-Asian solidarity. The third world countries like Ceylon, UAR and Cambodia offered to play the role of 'honest brokers' between the warring sides. The PM of Ceylon, Mrs. Sirimavo Bhandarnaike, played a leading role in these efforts. The concrete result of these efforts was the 'Colombo Proposals'. The story of these efforts of Afro-Asian countries is important as this showed the limitations of the very concept of Afro-Asian solidarity.

Even though most countries of the third world took a neutralist stance on this issue, their reactions were coloured by the perceptions of their own national interests. Ghana's pro-China stance could well be attributed to the strong economic links she had developed with China. At the other end, Indonesia's pro-China inclinations were mainly due to her dispute with Malaysia. Indonesia was angered by the Indian support for the cause of greater Malaysia.

The six non-aligned nations met in Colombo on 10 December 1962, within twenty days of the cease-fire. The countries represented were, host Ceylon (Sri Lanka), United Arab Republic (UAR), Ghana, Indonesia, Cambodia and Burma. The opening speeches gave an idea of the daunting task ahead. Mrs. Bhandarnaike, PM of Ceylon, in her opening speech emphasised that China through her unilateral cease-fire had given proof of her good intentions, while India felt that she was the aggrieved party and had to be satisfied on the count of Chinese intentions.

The Ghanaian representative felt that the first priority was to establish necessary conditions which would enable talks between the Indian and the Chinese Prime Ministers. The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr Subandrio, echoed the Ghanaian sentiments. Mr Aly Sabri of the UAR was explicit that the basic principle of finding a lasting solution was that "there should be no territorial gain on account of military operations".

Prince Norotom Sihanouk struck a pessimistic note. He said that the Indians felt that the proposals put forward by the Chinese were humiliating and had rejected them. The Indian counter-proposals

bore little relation to the concessions the Chinese would be prepared to make. He felt the best way would be for the two parties to negotiate directly. President Ne Win of Burma, in his opening speech, cautioned the participants against passing judgements on the rights and wrongs of the Sino-Indian dispute(83).

The deliberations continued for two days in camera. On 12 December 1962, the participants unanimously agreed on a set of proposals to be placed before India and China. The proposals mark an important watershed and deserve a detailed treatment(84).

The following is the text of the proposals of the six-nation Colombo Conference held from 10 to 12 December 1962:

"(1) The Conference considers that the existing de facto cease-fire period is a good starting point for a peaceful settlement of the Indian-Chinese conflict.

"(2) (a) With regard to the Western sector, the Conference would like to make an appeal to the Chinese Government to carry out their 20 kilometres withdrawal of their military posts as had been proposed in the letters of Prime Minister Chou En-lai to Prime Minister Nehru on 21 November and 28 November 1962.

"(b) The Conference would make an appeal to the Indian Government to keep their existing military positions.

"(c) Pending a final solution of the border dispute, the area vacated by the Chinese military withdrawals will be a demilitarised zone to be administered by civilian posts of both sides to be agreed upon, without prejudice to the rights of the previous presence of both India and China in that area.

"(3) With regard to the Eastern sector, the Conference considers that the line of actual control in the areas recognised by both the Governments could serve as a cease-fire line to their respective positions. Remaining area in this sector can be settled in their future discussions.

"(4) With regard to the problems of the middle sector, the Conference suggests that they will be solved by peaceful means, without resorting to force.

"(5) The Conference believes that these

proposals; which could help in consolidating the cease-fire, once implemented, should pave the way for discussions between representatives of both parties for the purpose of solving problems entailed in the cease-fire position.

"(6) The Conference would like to make it clear that a positive response for the proposed appeal will not prejudice the position of either of the two Governments as regards its conception of the final alignment of the boundaries."

Clarifications

The following clarifications of Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of the Colombo Conference proposals were given by the delegations of Ceylon, UAR and Ghana at the request of the Government of India:

Western Sector: (i) The withdrawal of Chinese forces proposed by the Colombo Conference will be 20 kilometres as proposed by Prime Minister Chou-En-lai to Prime Minister Nehru in the statement of the Chinese Government dated 21 November and in Prime Minister Chou-En-lai's letter of 28 November 1962, i.e. from the line of actual control between the two sides as of 7 November 1959, as defined in maps III and V circulated by the Government of China.

"(ii) The existing military posts which the forces of the Government of India will keep to will be on and up to the line indicated in (i) above.

"(iii) The demilitarised zone of 20 kilometres created by Chinese military withdrawals will be administered by civilian posts of both sides. This is a substantive part of the Colombo Conference proposals. It is as to the location, the number of posts and their composition that there has to be an agreement between the Government of India and China.

Eastern Sector: The Indian forces can, in accordance with the Colombo Conference proposals, move right up to the south of the line of actual control, i.e. the McMahon Line, except for the two areas on which there is difference of opinion between the Governments of India and China. The Chinese forces similarly can move right up to the north of the McMahon Line except for these two areas. The two areas referred to as the remaining areas in the Colombo Conference proposals, arrangements in regard to which are to be settled between the Government of India and China, according to the Colombo Conference proposals, are Chedong or the Thagla Ridge area and the Longju area, in which cases there is a difference of opinion as to the line

of actual control between the two Governments.

"Middle Sector: The Colombo Conference desires that the status quo in this sector should be maintained and neither side should do anything to disturb the status quo."

The proposals were not made public, so as not to prejudice the chances of their acceptance. The PM of Ceylon carried the proposals to China on 31 December 1962. After talks lasting 9 days, a joint communique was issued. Through this China expressed its willingness to accept the Colombo proposals as basis for starting negotiations with India. China expressed her reservations on some of the proposals concerning Ladakh Sector. It was proposed that these could be resolved through discussions with India.

Mrs. Bhandarnaike visited Delhi on 10 January 1963, immediately after her China trip. At this meeting, India sought certain clarifications, which were given as detailed above. In the New Delhi parleys, the Ceylon PM was joined by PM of UAR and Justice Minister of Ghana, both participants at the Colombo Conference. The Colombo proposals were debated for four days in both the houses of Indian Parliament. After Nehru clarified that acceptance of these proposals did not mean that India had given up her claims to the disputed areas, the Lok Sabha accepted the Colombo proposals by 349 votes against 59 on 25 January 1963.

The proposals in a nutshell meant that in the east both India and China would remain 20 km away from McMahon Line, and in Ladakh while India would remain at the present position :(the line reached by Chinese on 21 November 1962) the Chinese would have to withdraw 20 km behind this line. Without formally rejecting the proposals, the Chinese hedged their acceptance with 'modifications' and clarifications. Nehru told the Indian Parliament on 25 February 1963 that no negotiations could begin unless the Chinese accepted the Colombo proposals in "Toto". The Sino-Indian border dispute was to remain frozen on this issue for years to come. The Indian acceptance of Colombo proposals, in themselves favourable to India, was minor diplomatic triumph.

CONCLUSION

The intensity and pitch of the Indian national upsurge was such that it could not be sustained indefinitely. The Chinese cease-fire also contributed to the dousing of fierce flames of Indian nationalism. Nehru was no war leader and often talked of peace,

while the nation clasoured for war. The event left him a shattered man, a mere shadow of his former self. It was not too long after the event that all the contradictions and conflicts of a sub-continental nation, re-emerged. The noise and din of democracy made it appear as if nothing had changed. But this was a very superficial understanding. A British author commenting on the 1965 Indo-Pak War has quite rightly observed that the Pakistanis had mis-read the Indians. Indian nationalism, so visible in 1962, had neither died nor faded, but had merely gone underground(85). This characteristic Indian response was to be later seen again during the times of national crises. Fundamentally, India underwent a major change. A nation in Gandhian pacifist mould became determined to acquire military power. Possibly the roots of this go into far antiquity, as Indians perceive themselves to have been victims of aggressions for thousands of years. In the Indian mind, these misfortunes are attributed to military weakness and political disunity. In the wake of Chinese aggression, the nation resolved to eradicate both these evils. This fundamental change in Indian attitudes is probably the longest lasting consequence of the 1962 conflict.

In the realms of foreign policy, for a moment it appeared that India had all but given up her non-alignment and was ready to join the western camp. It was not to be for several reasons. The most important reason, however, was the attitude of the Soviet Union.

In a major speech to the Supreme Soviet on 12 December 1962, the Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, referred to the Sino-Indian conflict and declared:-

"China was now withdrawing its troops essentially to the line at which this conflict broke out. (It) would have done better not to have advanced at all"(86).

This speech was carried in full the next day in 'Pravda', the official Soviet newspaper. The Peking's 'Peoples Daily' on 15 December 1962 openly attacked Soviet Union for this criticism of Chinese actions. The Sino-Soviet rift had come out into the open. Soviet Union also pointedly confirmed its intention to go ahead with the 'MiG Deal' that envisaged setting up factories to manufacture the MiG-21 supersonic aircraft in India. In June 1963, Soviet Union signed agreement to help India build a steel plant in Bokaro. As the western arms aid was pouring into India, Soviet Union also pitched in with its offer of supply of

helicopters and transport aircraft on deferred payment in rupees. With his characteristic foresight, Nehru told a meeting of Indian envoys that Indo-Soviet friendship was worth 20 divisions(87).

The Americans also did not appear too keen on India giving up its non-alignment. American Envoy to India, Galbraith, told a press conference that US thought that India's foreign policy had been successful and should continue(88). The Americans might well have wanted to use India as a wedge between China and Soviet Union, as cracks appeared in the monolithic communist block. Some Indo-US contradictions were soon to surface, leading to sober realization in India that no aid was unconditional. As seen earlier, the USA and Britain soon brought pressure on India to start talks on the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. Six rounds of fruitless talks were held from December 1962 to May 1963. The American image suffered when the protracted negotiations over Voice of America transmitter in India floundered over issue of control and ownership. The negotiations were finally given up in 1964. Similar difficulties also cropped up over the quantum and quality of military aid. Indian request for supersonic fighters was turned down by US.

In the ultimate analysis, it was Nehru's determination and deft handling that prevented India from abandoning its non-alignment. Much earlier, in May 1962, Nehru had told Parliament : "The moment Indian Army and people cannot defend its borders and we have to rely on others to do it, India's freedom is lost. I would rather prefer India sink and die than it should continue in this fashion as a camp follower of some other nation"(89).

The nation had learnt its lesson. In the harsh realities of geo-politics and 'real politik', it was the strength of a nation that was its ultimate guarantee of security.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Official Records.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. This information was forwarded by HQ IV Corps to Army HQ giving situation as existing on 30 November 1962.
4. Ibid. The brigade was 77 Infantry brigade and battalion 7 Punjab.
5. From Official Records.
6. The Times of India, 21 November 1962.
7. From Official Records.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. The Eastern Army Commander Lt Gen L.P. Sen had located himself at Gauhati since November. The main HQ moved in on 23 December 1962 and continued to remain there till April 1963.
10. Ibid. General Chaudhari at a conference in Calcutta on 9 March 1963 decided to establish Eastern Command HQ at Calcutta. He further ruled that the troops will remain short of foothills till 1963 monsoon and will only later move to Tenga valley.
11. From Official Records.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid. Appreciation of enemy threat as given out by Lt Gen S.H.F.J. Manekshaw (Later Field Marshal).
15. From Official Records.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. The Chinese Red Cross in response to Indian Red Cross telegram of 14 December 1962, replied on 22 December that the body of Brigadier Hoshiyar Singh was accidentally discovered by the Chinese. The Chinese claimed that exact date of

his death could not be determined but nevertheless maintained that he was killed on 22 November. The story given by Indian soldiers appear to be more authentic rather than the Chinese after-thought.

19. Ibid. One D. Sarmsh wrote a letter to V.C. Shukla, Congress Party MP from Madhya Pradesh outlining the plight of Mechuka garrison. Sarmsh mentions that the troops in Mechuka were well entrenched and willing to fight when inexplicably they were ordered to withdraw on 17 November. Prior to their withdrawal the Mortars deployed at Mechuka were airlifted to rear areas leaving the troops without artillery support. This letter was passed on to the Defence Minister Chavan, and was also commented upon by the CGS, Lt Gen Moti Sagar.
20. Interview with Brigadier B.S. Malik, May 1988.
21. Asian Recorder, 1-7 January 1963, p.4967.
22. Ibid. 15-21 January 1963, p.4991.
23. From Official Records.
24. Annual Report on the Health of the Army 1962
(Army Statistical Org, New Delhi, 1966)pp.12-13.
25. From Official Records. This exercise was carried out in January 63, and there is a definite element of exaggeration.
26. Ibid. This note was handed over by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to the Indian Charge 'd' Affairs in Peking on 22 November 1962.
27. From Official Records.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid. Jawaharlal Nehru accompanied by the Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan visited Tezpur on 5 and 6 December 1962. Colonel Luthra ex-Commissioner of NEFA and Special Advisor to Assam Governor had intimate knowledge of the area as well as local contacts. His offer was greatly appreciated.
30. From Official Records.
31. Ibid.
32. AR, 5-11 February 1963, p.5028.

33. As already explained.
34. From Official Records.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4910.
41. Interview with 'Pradip' held in Bombay on 14 March 1988. The response of entertainment world, like the other sections of society, was overwhelming. A noted film producer, Chetan Anand, produced a film on Chinese aggression with full co-operation of the Armed Forces. The film 'Haqqiqat' (The Truth) continues to draw crowds even todate. Describing the inaugural show in Delhi on 14 November 1964, Chetan Anand recalled that when the film ended there was hushed silence, with many an eye full of tears. Nehru was no more and a rose was placed on seat next the the President's, remembering the great Indian leader who was victim of Chinese deceit. Interview with Chetan Anand, held in Bombay on 16 March 1988.
42. A Nation Aroused: (How India is Determined to fight Chinese Aggression), Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, November 1962.
43. Ibid. You and Freedom's Battle, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, December 1962.
44. The Times of India, 13 November 1962, C.N. Annadurai, MP, a leader of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, a Party that had demanded secession from India, pledged in Rajya Sabha on 12 November that his party has suspended its agitation. He pledged full support to the government to push Chinese out of India. Leaders of Akali Party Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh, agitating for Punjabi Suba also pledged similar support.
45. A Nation Prepares, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, September 1963.
46. AR, 3-9 December 1962, pp.4925 and 4927.

47. Bandopadhyaya, J., The Making of India's Foreign Policy, Calcutta 1970, p.121.
48. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4910.
49. AR, 10-16 December 1962, p.4931.
50. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4910.
51. Ibid.
52. AR, 24-31 December 1962, p.4957.
53. A Nation Prepares, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, September 1963.
54. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4911.
55. AR, 17-23 December 1962.
56. A Nation Prepares, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, September 1963.
57. Ibid.
58. AR, 29 January - 4 February 1963, p.5016.
59. From Official Records.
60. Notes, Memoranda and letters exchanged between the Government of India and China, October 1962 - January 1963, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, 20 January, WHITE PAPER No.VIII, p.1-4.
61. Ibid., pp.6-7.
62. Ibid., pp.7-10.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., pp.14-17. Also, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.IV, Publications Division, Government of India, 1964, pp.235-248.
65. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4916. President Kennedy's photograph was often displayed alongside such Indian favourites as Gandhiji and Nehru. Neither his youth nor good looks really explain the phenomenon. It can quite legitimately be attributed to the Indian perception that America and specially Kennedy came to be regarded as a true friend, having been a friend in need.

65. AR, 8-12 April, 1963.
67. From Official Records.
68. This inference is drawn from the adverse Soviet reaction to the Chinese invasion that surfaced around December 1962. The Cuban missile crisis had reached its peak on 22 October 1962, when the US announced Naval blockade of Cuba. The crisis paralleled Sino-Indian Conflict.
69. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4916. Some of these 40 countries are, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jordan, Luxemburg, Mexico, Dominican Republic, UK, USA, Bolivia, Nicaragua, France, Ceylon, Cyprus, New Zealand, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago, West Germany, Holland, Sweden, Belgium, Venezuela, Iraq, Congo, Nigeria, Argentina, Thailand, Italy and Malaya, Vatican, Israel, Somalia, Finland, UAR, Yugoslavia, Denmark, Costa Rica, Liberia, Philippines and Panama.
70. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4916.
71. AR, 10-16 December 1962, p.4932.
72. From Official Records.
73. Ibid.
74. AR, 8-14 January 1963, p.4983.
75. Dawn, 7 April 1959 and Hindustan Standard, 6 November 1959.
76. Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.IV, Publications Division, Government of India, 1964. p.245.
77. From Official Records.
78. AR, 26 November - 2 December 1962, p.4915.
79. Ibid., p.4916.
80. AR 10-16 December 1962, p.4932.
81. AR, 5-11 March 1963, p.5075.
82. AR, 10-16 December 1963. pp.5558-5559.
83. AR, 8-14 January 1963, pp.4979-4980.
84. Ibid., pp.5051-52.

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85. Russel Brines, The India Pakistan Conflict, Pall Mell Press, London, 1968, p.351.
86. AR, 8-14 January 1963, pp.4980-4982.
87. Blitz, 29 January 1963.
88. AR, 10-16 December 1962, p.4932.
89. Lok Sabha Debates, Vol.III, No.22, Column, 4549.

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