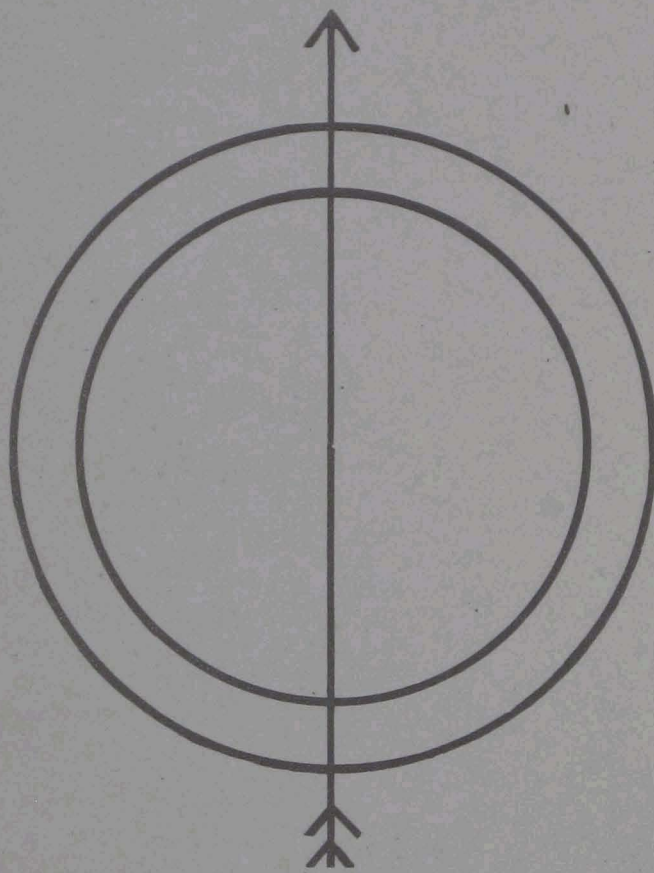


UNSUNG BATTLES OF 1962



LT COL GURDIP SINGH KLER (RETD)

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(Retd)

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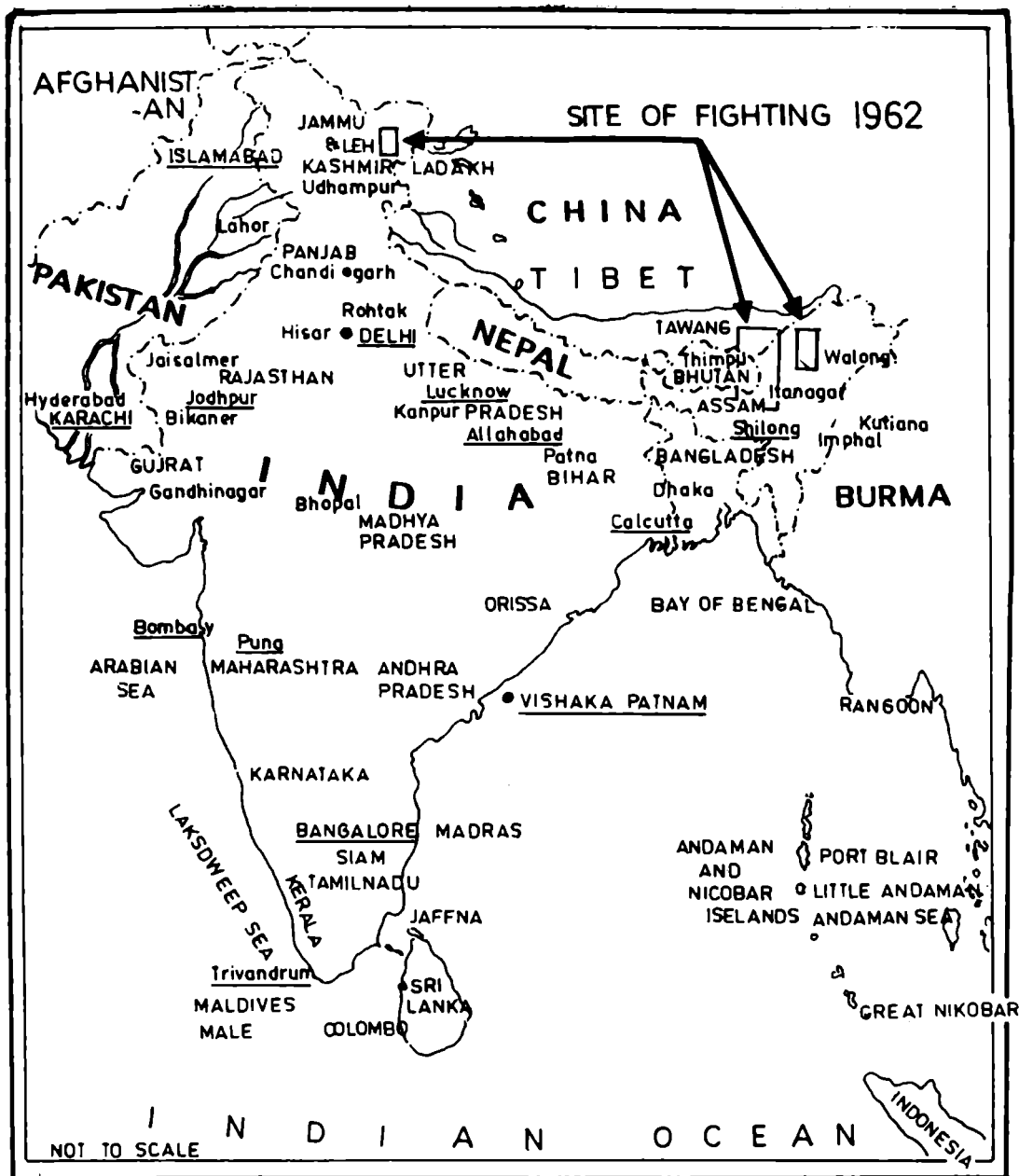
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To
The Indian Soldier
Who Fought Most Gallantly
Though
Ill-clad, Half-fed, Ill-equipped
Ill-fated and remained Unsung

Sketch-1 Sino-Indian War 1962



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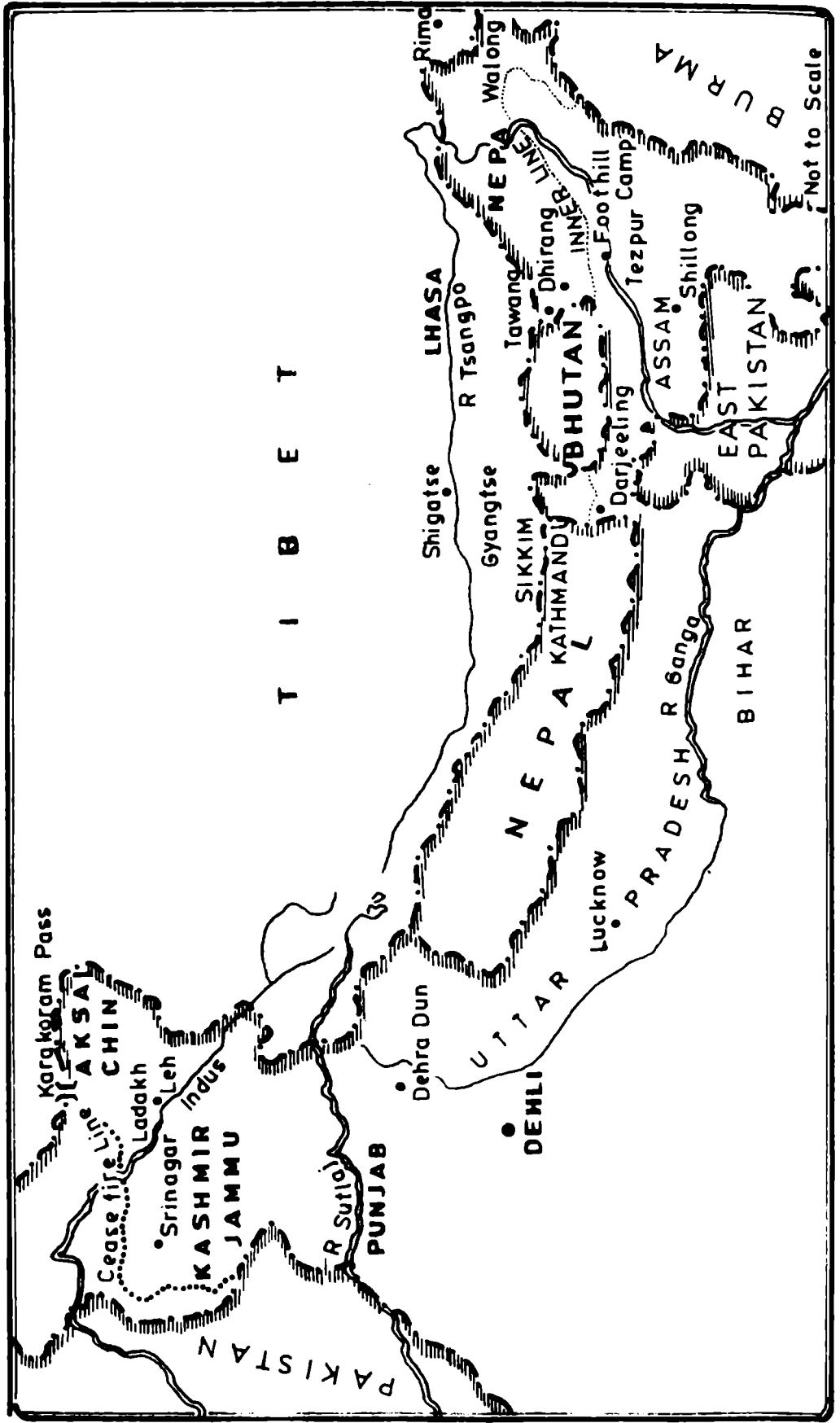
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Sketch-2

Northern India



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"The General must know how to get his men their rations and every other kind of stores needed in war. He must have imagination to originate plans, practical sense and energy to carry them through. He must be observant, untiring, shrewd, kindly and cruel, simple and crafty, a watchman and a robber, lavish and miserly, generous and stingy, rash and conservative, All these and many other qualities, natural and acquired, he must have. He should also, as a matter of course, know his tactics; for a disorderly mob is no more an army than a heap of building materials in a house."

—SOCRATES

PART-I

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I had the privilege of fighting along side the men in Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA in 1962. On many counts the fighting went astray but the saddest part of the operations was the withdrawal, which went out of control when the Chinese infiltrated behind and occupied ground that our troops were to hold for orderly withdrawal. Many brave officers and men, became casualties in the ambushes and roadblocks laid by the Chinese.

We had moved to Tezpur and forward areas in NEFA in December, 1959. The Chinese, as we found out then, were already in the region in the garb of local inhabitants. There are two important questions. Firstly, I ask that why we had not prepared ourselves, by the way of arms, detailed reconnaissance of the area before undertaking the operations? Secondly, why was the withdrawal ordered against the wishes of the forward commanders and troops, who never wanted to withdraw and were prepared to fight when the infiltrated Chinese could have been dealt with, separately, by troops in the rear?

After withdrawal from Bumla and Sela, my unit, the 1st Battalion The Sikh Regiment (also called simply 1st Sikhs) had re-assembled at the Foothills. Colonel BN Mehta, the Commanding Officer of the Battalion was,

PART-I

CHAPTER ONE

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unfortunately, killed in action and in his absence, I sent a short account of the withdrawal and fighting to Lt General Harbakhsh Singh PVSM, PB, VrC, VSM, Colonel of The Sikh Regiment and General Officer Commanding XXXIII Corps at the time, and later General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Command when war was fought against Pakistan In 1965. He very kindly visited the Battalion enroute to Ramgarh (Bihar). This had a great morale boosting effect on the Battalion.

A War Diary of the events was also compiled and copies endorsed to all concerned.

In this book, important territorial divisions, towns and other landmarks connected with the operations from Karakoram in the west to Lohit in the east are described so that the author and reader are closetted on a common grid. I have attempted to narrate the front line episodes in three separate Sectors of Tawang-Sela-Bomdila of Kameng Frontier Division, Walong in Lohit Frontier Division of NEFA and Ladakh. Effort has been made to highlight the individual and collective acts of highest valour and supreme sacrifice which were not rewarded and will go down in history unrecognised and unsung.

The sharp encounter in which the Chinese were thrown out of their roadblocks at Nyukmadong Ridge below the great Sela massif is also told.

This book should also refute the slanderous stories and acrimonious charges and malicious tales against the conduct of Indian troops, spread by ignorant persons. A victory in war hides a hundred faults but defeat brings in it's wake a flood of accusations and recriminations. The book contains many suggestions and recommendations.

I dedicate this book to the Indian soldier who fought and struggled ill-clad, half fed and ill-equipped against heavy odds and yet bore the criticism of the public stoicly.

I am grateful to Lt Col Haripal Kaushik, Vir Chakra, for providing valuable information and sketches pertaining to the Bum La area, where he commanded the forward most company of the Battalion which came under ferocious Chinese assaults on 23 October 1962. I am also grateful to Colonel Nirmal Chahal for advice and to Lt Col Manjit Padda and my niece Jasleen Sandhu for going minutely through the manuscript and for making corrections.

PRELUDE

Political relations between China and India, which had been cordial since time immemorial, further improved under PanchSheel. PanchSheel (The Five Principles of Peaceful co-existence) stated :

- (a) Mutual respect for each other's integrity and sovereignty.
- (b) Mutual non-aggression.
- (c) Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
- (d) Equality and mutual benefit.
- (e) Peaceful co-existence.

In the prevailing atmosphere of cordiality and peace, China and India signed the Sino-Indian Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibetan Region of China and India, on 29 April 1954. The preamble to this agreement enunciated the discredited Panch Sheel or Five Principles to govern relations between the two countries.

China was the main beneficiary of the agreement. India had recognised China's complete control over Tibet in return for Chinese guarantees of good behaviour, as embodied in the Five Principles. On the contrary, we failed to extract any reciprocal benefits and instead became utterly complacent and lost Aksai Chin. Moreover, we agreed to withdraw, within six months, our army detachments stationed at Yatung and Gyantse and gave up our other rights, such as postal and telegraph services embodied in the Anglo-Tibetan Treaty of 1904. On top of this we championed the Chinese cause in the United Nations Organisation and advocated their admission to that world body at the expense of Kuomintang. However,

cordial happy relations were shortlived and suffered an abrupt setback due to conflicting territorial claims of the two countries in Ladakh and NEFA. Later, relations further deteriorated when the Dalai Lama sought asylum in India. Then a period of so-called Forward Policy and the cold war between the two armies started when their detachments infiltrated behind each other's positions and established flag posts in order to lay claims and counter claims to the territory. In one region a divergent interpretation of maps and misunderstanding about the location of forward Army posts, aggravated the situation further. Hence, a very serious situation was created which sparked off the war.

The most tragic part of the story is that this unnecessary war broke out when two great personalities of history, Mao-Tse-tung and Nehru were at the helm of affairs in their respective countries.

Some of the important border incidents which accentuated the situation are narrated at Appendix 'A'. These highlight the background to the events that led to the war. The most serious cause of the friction and feud being, that in the fifties, to link up Tibet and Sinkiang provinces, the Chinese had surreptitiously built a road across the Aksai Chin in Ladakh, through Indian territory. The major bone of contention between the two countries remained the Aksai Chin though there were numerous incidents which occurred on the border between the two countries. These incidents were precipitating portents for the major Sino-Indian flare-up in 1962. These are given at Appendix 'A' attached.

The hot war covered the three distinct Sectors- Ladakh, Kameng Frontier Division (Tawang-Bomdila area) and Lohit Frontier Division (Walong area) in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA).

Appendix 'A'

(Refer to Page 5)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1950

Chinese troops entered Tibet. China criticised the Government of India "as having been affected by foreign influences hostile to China".

1954

China protested against the presence of Indian troops in Bara Hoti. This was the first time that the Government of China had laid claim to any part of Indian territory.

1955

Camping of Chinese parties at Bara Hoti. Chinese soldiers intruded ten miles across the border into Damzan in Uttar Pradesh.

1956

An Armed Chinese party camped half a mile east of Nilang in Uttar Pradesh.

26 July, 1956

China claimed Bara Hoti and denied that Tunjunla was a border pass.

1 Sep, 1956

Chinese soldiers crossed the Shipkila into India.

10 Sep, 1956

Chinese again intruded into Indian territory in NEFA.

20 Sep, 1956

Chinese soldiers crossed Shipkila and came upto Jupsang Khud. When challenged by an Indian patrol the Chinese threatened to use arms.

Sep, 1957

Chinese soldiers arrested an Indian administrative party near Haji Langar in Ladakh.

27 Sep, 1957

Chinese survey parties crossed into Lohit Frontier Division.

Oct, 1957

A Chinese party infiltrated into Walong.

5 Oct, 1957

Peking announced completion of highway from Sinkiang Province to Tibet running 100 miles across Ladakh area.

21 Oct, 1957

Another incident occurred in which eight Indians were killed. The story as narrated is that on 21 October Havildar Karam Singh with twenty men of police moved towards Kongka La in search of a missing two-man patrol. They found hoof marks on the way, which indicated that some Chinese horsemen had come into the area and possibly

captured the patrol. Two miles west of Kongka La, near the bank of the Chang Chenmo river, Karam Singh's party ran into the Chinese ambush. One Chinese party was in position on a hill-top on the flank of the route, on which the Indian party was advancing and another was located in front on the other side of the river. Eight Indian policemen lay dead, but the rest succeeded in taking cover and fought till their ammunition was exhausted. They had killed at least one Chinese officer and injured some others. The party could not get away as its escape route was cut off by the Chinese post on the hill top. At dusk the Chinese brought up some reinforcements from Kongka La and twelve Indian policemen, including Hav Karam Singh, some of them badly wounded, were taken prisoner. They were taken to Kongka La at the point of bayonet and made to carry their injured comrades. One constable, who was badly injured had to be left behind and was said to have been killed by the Chinese. Hav Karam Singh and the other prisoners were subjected to indignities and torture to extract confession regarding trespass into Chinese territory. The Indian government very strongly protested and ultimately the Chinese released the prisoners and returned the dead bodies on 14 November on the bank of the Silung Barma river, which they claimed, was the western frontier of Tibet.

April & May, 1958

Talks were held between the two countries in Apr-May on the question of Bara Hoti. The Government of India suggested that pending a settlement their personnel should not be allowed into the area. China agreed not to send armed personnel but refused to hold back civilians.

July, 1958

India protested against the Chinese occupation of Khurnak Fort, one and a half miles inside Ladakh.

Sep, 1958

Chinese soldiers arrested an Indian patrol party in the northern part of Aksai Chin.

27 Sep, 1958

A detachment of Chinese troops crossed into Lohit Frontier Division.

Government of India protested against the construction of a motorable road by China across the Aksai Chin.

Oct, 1958

Chinese constructed outposts at Laphthal and Sangchamala in Uttar Pradesh.

Chinese also violated Indian airspace over Uttar Pradesh.

Dec, 1958

Nehru wrote to Chou En-lai drawing attention to wrong delineation of Sino-Indian boundary in an official Chinese journal and asked that the misunderstanding between the two countries be resolved soonest.

14 Dec, 1958

Nehru wrote to Chou En-lai drawing attention to continued issue of incorrect maps.

Jan, 1959

India protested against Chinese incursions in Oct 1957 into the Lohit Frontier Division in Sep, 1958. Chou En-lai in his reply to Nehru held that Sino-Indian boundary

had never been formally demarcated and certain unresolved differences remained between the two sides. He added that the McMohan Line had never been recognised by the Chinese. As for Chinese maps, Mr Chou En-lai claimed, that the boundaries drawn on them were consistent with those on earlier maps and laid claim to about 50,000 square miles of Indian territory.

31 Mar, 1959

Dalai Lama fled Lhasa on 20 Mar and crossed into India on 31 Mar. India made it clear to him that he should not indulge in political activities on Indian territory.

10 July, 1959

Once again, it was the turn of the Northern Sector. The Chinese selected Galwan in Ladakh for their next incursion. On 10 July 1959 about 300 Chinese surrounded a post established by a platoon of Gorkha troops. The Chinese used all sorts of tricks, including an appeal on loud speakers to the Gorkhas to abandon the post. Galwan Post held, but its siege continued. It was finally overrun in the war with China in October 1962.

20 July, 1959

A Chinese armed detachment intruded in the region of Western Pangong Lake in Ladakh, arrested six Indians and established camp at Spanggur.

7 Aug, 1959

A large Chinese patrol of about 200 strength crossed in Khenzeman in NEFA and pushed back the Indian post. However, later the Chinese withdrew and our post was re-established. The Chinese claimed that the McMahon

Line ran through the Drokung Samba Bridge about two miles in the South and not through Khenzemané.

August, 1959

A large Chinese detachment crossed into Subansiri Frontier Division of NEFA, opened fire and occupied Indian post at Longju. Indians fired back. Later when the Indian post was encircled, it withdrew.

2 Oct, 1959

Chinese troops advanced forty miles into Indian territory in the Chang Chenmo valley of southern Ladakh.

They opened fire on Indian patrol at Konga La. Later Indians were taken into custody.

5 Dec, 1959

India drew Chinese attention to the fact that during the previous two months a number of unidentified aircraft, approaching from Tibet, had over flown Indian territory.

20 Jun, 1960

A Chinese survey party visited Suriah.

22 Aug, 1960

A large Chinese detachment attacked the Indian post at Longju.

13 Oct, 1960

An armed Chinese party visited the vicinity of Hot Springs in Ladakh.

20 Apr, 1961

Chinese personnel intruded into Sikkim near Jelep-La.

May, 1961

Chinese personnel intruded into Indian territory near Chushul in Ladakh.

3 Jun, 1961

A large Chinese party came into Taksang Gompa five miles inside NEFA near Bumla.

August, 1961

Chinese established three new check post in Ladakh at Nyagzu and near Dambuguru and linked their checkpoints, with nearby roads.

12 Sep, 1961

Armed Chinese personnel came into Sikkim across the Jelep-La.

Jan, 1962

Some Chinese civil and military officials crossed the border near Longju and proceeded to Roi Village half a mile within India.

Apr-May, 1962

China announced that they had ordered patrolling in the whole sector from the Karakoram Pass to the Kongka Pass and demanded that India withdraw two of her posts which were situated well within Indian territory.

May, 1962

A new Chinese post was established in Indian territory about 10 miles east of Spanggur.

2 Jun, 1962

The Panchsheel Agreement of 1954 lapsed.

10 Jul, 1962

Chinese troops encircled an Indian post in Galwan valley in Ladakh.

8 Sep, 1962

Chinese troops were sighted near Dhola post in NEFA.

12 Sep, 1962

Chinese troops entered NEFA near Tawang

22 Sep, 1962

Government of India orders Indian Army to evict Chinese forces from Indian territory.

Oct.-Nov, 1962

Sino Indian war broke out.

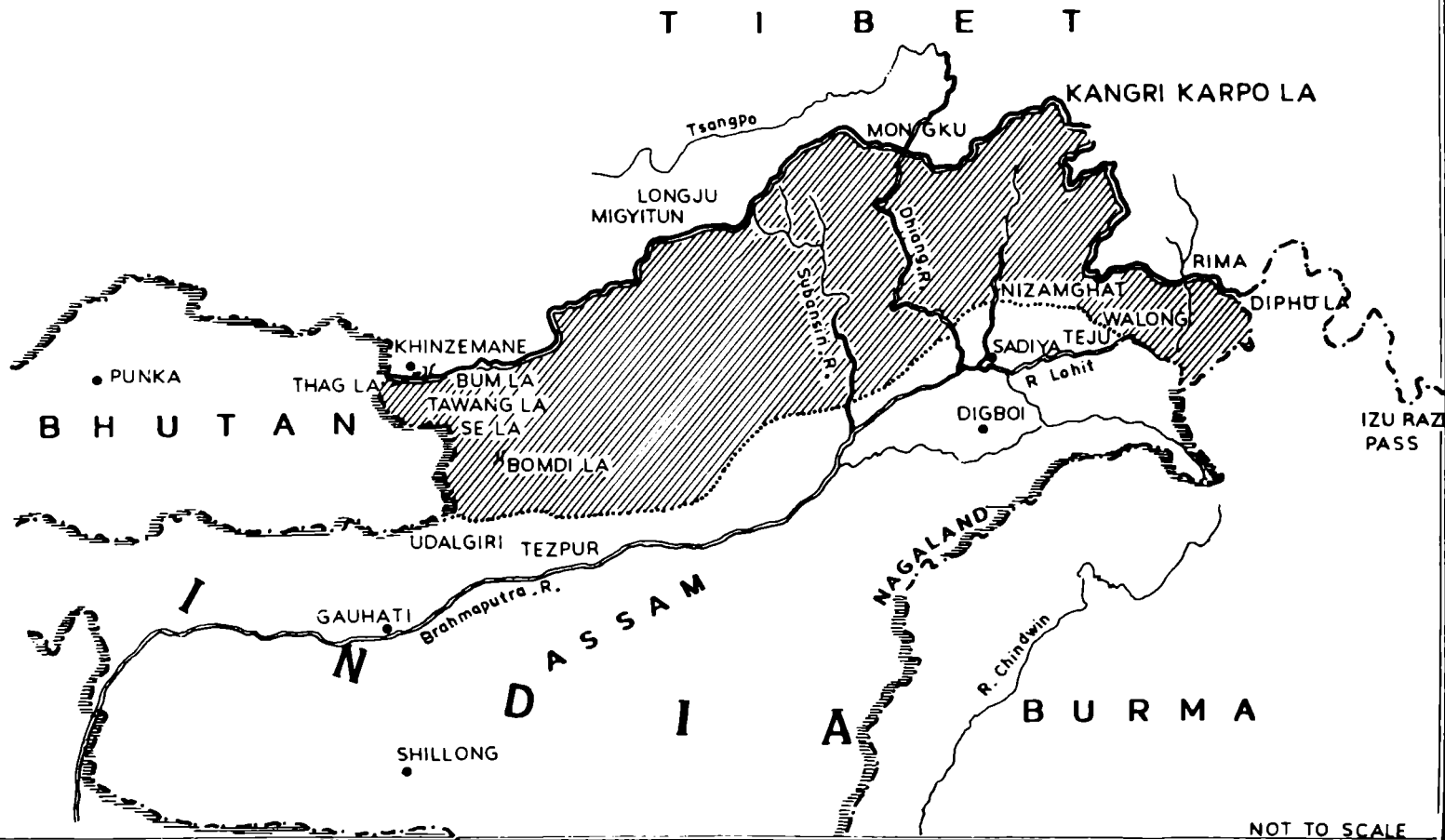
21 Nov, 1962

China declared unilateral cease fire.

Sketch-3

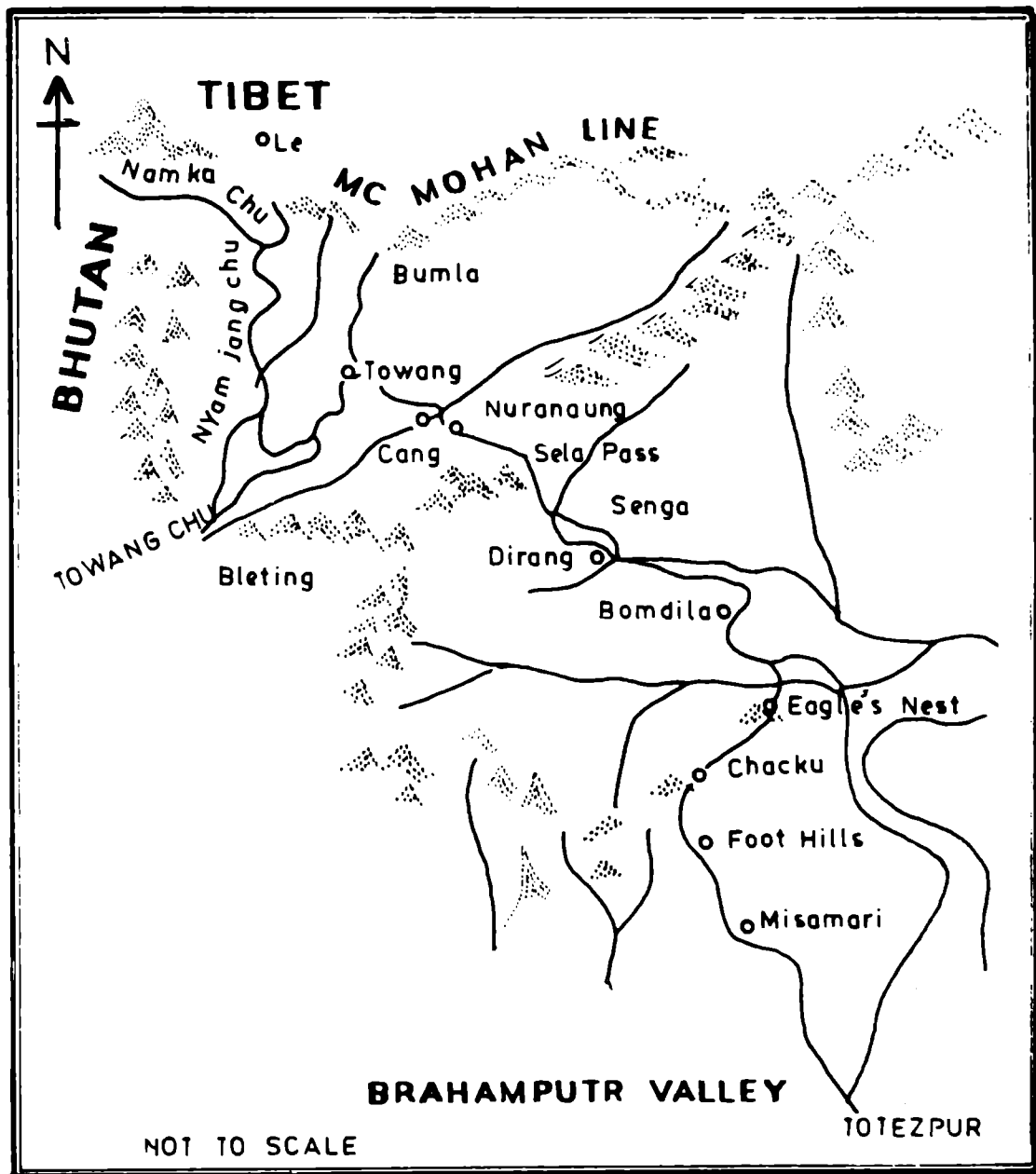
North-Eastern Sector

OUTER LINE (PRE 1914)
BOUNDARY OF BRITISH INDIA
DISPUTED AREAS
MC MAHON LINE



NOT TO SCALE

Sketch-4 Road-Tezpur-Tawang



CHAPTER TWO

TOPOGRAPHY, TERRAIN, CLIMATE AND COMMUNICATIONS

TOPOGRAPHY

EASTERN SECTOR

Kameng Frontier Division

Kameng Frontier Division the scene of major battles is one of the five frontier divisions of NEFA. It is the western most part of the state. The area has soaring Himalayan mountains with majestic snow capped peaks, and erichanting valleys.

Distinct characteristics of the land remain awe-inspiring, wilderness and ruggedness. The gradient is steep and far more difficult to ascend from our side. The ascent from the Tibetan side is gradual. This aspect of the gradient has a definite bearing on the Army planning.

The land abounds in a variety of flora and fauna. The Mompa tribe inhabits Kameng frontier division. Kameng Frontier Division is a remote area kept isolated,

both politically and economically, because of contesting claims on it by Tibet, China and India.

There was no industry worth the name. No railway line was laid. Roads were in the nascent stage. Immense mineral potential was yet to be exploited. However, in the valleys and on lower ridges there were scattered villages and some signs of cottage industry and farming activity was observed here and there. These days a lot of stress is laid on horticulture farming and animal husbandry to make them economically viable.

There were no satisfactory postal and telegraph systems. Telegraph lines were still to be laid. There were virtually no medical or repair facilities for motor vehicles. Proper schools were non existent.

The Mompa tribe that inhabits the Division is very tough. The aboriginal inhabitants are also strong, hardy, simple and hospitable. They wear woolen dresses which are colourful and attractive. Tribal art and culture flourish all along the hills. The present process of urbanisation is leading to questioning the rationale in some of the customs such as polyandry, child marriage and witchcraft which are integral to the tribal culture.

To fix the limits on the British jurisdiction in NEFA two boundary lines were drawn along the foot-hills. The Outer Line divided the rich rice and tea plantations of the plains and the undeveloped tribal lands to the north. South of this line, varying upto, 15 km, was the Inner Line showing civil administrations ordinary jurisdiction which was different from the political limits. British subjects were not allowed to cross the Inner Line without a permit. Later, the Outer Line was shifted north to roughly overlap McMahan Line alignment on high mountains and included all the tribal territory.

Tezpur Misamari Plain

The tea garden plain of Tezpur-Misamari is a part of the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam while the town of Tezpur lies near the northern bank of the river, opposite Guwahati, Misamari is located in the north at the foothills and is the gate way to Kameng Frontier Division. The town has a cantonment dating back to World War II. Charduar is another cantonment nearby. The area is served by a metre gauge railway line branching off from main Assam line at Rangia and ends up at Markong Selek. This area has a good network of roads. An excellent old airfield, since the Second World War II, exists at Tezpur. Tezpur also lies on the country's air map. Guwahati, the state capital and a very important town of Assam lies on the southern bank of the river and the main road and railway line, pass through the town. Guwahati had also a civil airport.

The area is rich in minerals and is industrialised. It abounds in tea plantations, paddy and bamboo. The tea gardens are home to the planters who live in isolated splendour.

Since the railway line upto Guwahati has been converted into broad gauge, to attain uniformity, the line from Rangia to Murkong Selek should also be converted into broad gauge. It will also provide better service to the region. The airfield at Tezpur can be further expanded and made fit for the operation of the latest types of aircraft.

In military parlance from the Army point of view the tea plantation roads provide good mobility. Concealment is abundant in the tea gardens. The plain with its good roads, rail communications and a big airfield lends itself to a fine maintenance base for the Army and air base for the Air Force.

The area forms a natural limitrophe of the district so far as Kameng Frontier Division is concerned.

To apprise the reader of the important places on the new road to Tawang, they are explained in the succeeding paragraphs.

Chaku

Way side hamlet ahead of foothills 4000 feet above MSL. It is midway between foothills and Bomdila. In 1962 Chinese had come upto Chaku area and then broke contact with Indian troops and announced unilateral cease fire.

Eagle's Nest

This is the highest peak between the foothills and Bomdila. It has a steep climb rising upto 9000 feet. The road winds its way along its side.

Tenga Valley

Road now drops to Tenga Valley. It lies at the foot of the Bomdila Ridge having a height of 5000 feet. Transit Camp and parking place for vehicles existed here.

Bomdila

From Tenga Valley one climbs to Bomdila, a very important town on the line of road communication and is a divisional town and a focal point for the Kameng Frontier Division. It lies just midway between Foothills and Sela. This is a good hill-station and a fine tourist town. The town is spread out on the spur of the ridge and to the west the cragged hills abruptly rise.

Mandala Ridge

Next to Bomdila Ridge and in its continuation is the important Mandala Ridge over which ancient trade route crosses at Mandala Pass. This is an alternative to the Bomdila route to the plains and passes through Kalaktang to Udalgiri, a trade fair town. It is a pity that this important route of Udalgiri-Kalaktang-Mandala has not been developed so far for vehicles for over thirty years after the NEFA conflict, though the name of the State has been changed from NEFA to nice sounding Arunachal. One hopes that a change in the name of the State will also usher in extensive development. It is, however, encouraging that a start has been made towards progress and some civil transport plies on certain lengths of road. As already mentioned this is a vital route as it is an important alternative to Tezpur-Bomdila-Dirang road since routes crossing through Bhutan towards North can not be freely used for political reasons.

Dirang Dzong Valley

Next to the Mandala ridge is the Dirang Dzong¹ Valley. This is a fairly spacious valley having ideal height of 6,000 feet. Ridges around provide good defensive positions. However, the valley is over-shadowed by the Sela Mountain and Mandala and other high ridges. Here a good maintenance area can be laid for troops. In fact a Transit Camp functioned there in 1962. Suitable training facilities are available on the ridges and low hilly terrain in the vicinity.

Dirang Chu Nullah, which flows through the valley, is a good source of drinking water. The Border Roads

1. A Dzong was a Tibetan administrative seat and religious centre; part of it was fortress and part monastery. When Tawang Dzong was the main Centre, Dirang was a secondary Centre.

Organisation had established their camp in the valley. Engineers of the Border Roads Organisation had improvised a hydel power house on Dirang Chu to generate electricity for their camp.

HQ 4 Infantry Division was also located here. A helipad and a dropping zone were operative in the valley. An Animal Transport Regiment was also located here. When our unit was located at Dirang on the way to Tawang, for a short while, a Quarterly Station Audit Board was convened to audit the fodder and manure account of the Regiment. I was detailed as a member of the board, apart, from other officers of the AT Regiment and Veterinary Corps. I had just completed the composition of the board, but had just a perfunctory role since as far as accounting of rations for mules and manure was concerned other members were doing everything. So I had a good nap during the course of the board proceedings as I was dead tired due to the routine tough infantry chores.

A base Superintendent, an associate of the Political Officer, was also in position here to look after the local civil administration.

The valley is suitable for establishment of a health resort or sanatorium or a Holiday Home as the place has salubrious climate and is calm and soothing.

Since 1962 this place has made good progress. The Regional Apple Nursery was set up here in 1978; the nursery had developed into a centre supplying apple grafts to the entire north-eastern region. The National Research Centre on the 'Yak' was also set up here in 1989 to promote cross breeding of 'Yaks'. In high altitude areas where no agricultural activity is possible 'Yak' breeding

is the only economic activity possible. Sheep rearing is another important occupation.

Nyukmadong Ridge

Ridge between Dirang and Sela. Height 6000 feet. A short-cut footpath join from Tawang/Jang also. It is an important under feature of Sela.

Senge Dzong Camp

A Transit Camp below Sela. Height 10000 feet. A dropping zone existed here.

Sela Massif

The Sela mountain is a huge and high land mass with its shoulders rising upto 16,000 feet, though the defile itself is 13,400 feet high. Sublime, exotic, rugged, and imposing, Sela presents a unique mix of bare rocks and earth and provides a super saddle for Army formations in defence. From the top of Sela one can view the hills and snow spangled peaks all around. In size and majesty the high mountain dwarfs all features in its vicinity. Thus, it's splendour factually and in classic appearance is bewitching as the phalanx of peaks are incredible and ranges around spectacular. The Pass controls the old trade route from Tibet which touches on its way, Bumla, Tawang Dzong and Jang. After staying at the Tawang Dzong on other side of Sela Mountain. I had proceeded on Senior Officers' Course at the Infantry School. I got a hardy, good looking and smart white riding pony from civil sources to walk and trot to the Transit Camp Dirang Dzong where I was expected to get a vehicle for Misamari. Major Kanwar Joginder Singh the AT Company Commander was unable to provide a service horse as he thought he had more than satisfied us by compensating

with his barbeque parties ! As we climbed the road to Sela, near Nuranaung, we looked up to a splendid waterfall dropping over a grand and elevated precipice. Curves in the nullah along the road were also captivating. As we reached Sela the pony owner refused to go further as he had reached the limit of his clan's territorial domain. I got down, paid the pony owner, dismissed him and halted for some time and scanned the area around Sela. Mysterious Sela once again captivated me. It was an astounding and bewitching picture. What a display of lofty ridges and distant towering ranges covered partly under mist-a string of fine snow capped peaks kissed the low horizon !

My thoughts went over to J & K and places of similar landscapes. I recalled the occasion when in 1948 my old unit 4th Sikhs had moved to Kashmir Valley to reinforce troops in Uri Sector in J & K and motored upto the old Banihal tunnel. Jawahar tunnel had not come into existence at that time. We halted for some time at the top and looked around. It was a breath-taking, thrilling and charming view. Both land and cloud scapes were fascinating. Let us revert to Sela. As we moved down from Sela the night fell and it became pitch dark. The darkness and the steep gradient made our movement very difficult. So at places we virtually crawled down. Under the circumstances we had to interrupt our journey. The night was spent in a nearby Border Roads Camp where we were looked after very well. In the morning we made for Dirang Dzong Camp from where we got motor transport for Misamari. All along we traversed and descended the knee bending Sela slopes except some ascents at Nyukmadong ridge.

Nuranaung Camp

A staging camp on the other side of Sela; height 12,500

feet. Place was a transfer point for dak. It receives sun light for a very short time due to steep ridges around and a narrow gorge on side and is the coldest place in the area.

Jang Camp

Important place on road Sela-Tawang. It was a river side Transit Camp on Tawang Chu on the Sela side. Height 7500 foot. A direct foot path connects it with Dirang. Another foot path which runs some distance along the Tawang Chu connects it with Bumla.

Tawang Dzong

The famous Tawang Dzong is a scattered and serene sleepy settlement lying in the lap of the McMahon line at a height of 12000 feet. It is a broad and beautiful hilly tableland. As one climbs down Sela on the way to Tawang one is taken aback by the magical unfolding of the Tawang Plateau. In the backdrop lofty snow capped peaks lend an idyllic charm; and a magical beauty-it was captivating. The plateau of Tawang is sandwiched between Tibet and Bhutan; two foreign countries surround the exclave on three sides and on the fourth, Tawang is hemmed in by Sela; a diabolic geographical monster like Tataka of Ramayan fame who had barred the way of Rama in exile. The garrison was stationed in the Tawang basin; a queer and enigmatic piece of land that will always remain a headache for soldiers. Difficult to maintain and unviable to secure and defend.

Wooden huts were a common mode of accommodation. The town is famous for its ancient and elegant Buddhist monastery and is the birth place of the fifth Dalai Lama: the monastery being the largest in India.

Some interesting information about the monastery is given at Appendix 'B' attached. Tawang was also the seat of the Assistant Political Officer.

The town lies on the old trade and pilgrimage routes coming from Tibet; one runs through Bumla and the other through Khinzemane, Lumpu and Shakti. The place was the roadhead (for only Jeeps) for the Indian Army. The town had a good helipad and with some effort a short run-way could be bulldozed and levelled off for light planes as tracts of land with mild slopes are available for the purpose.

Tawang had an Animal Transport Company which could sometimes make horses available to officers for riding. Mules of the Company were employed for carrying dak apart from their other role of load carrying for maintenance of troops in forward posts.

On the slopes and small spaces available alongside the bed of deep streams and water courses, where the altitude drops appreciably, the climate is conducive to growing crops of paddy and maize and some fruit trees. There is ample scope for reclaiming more land for cultivation at lower elevations.

As far as operations are concerned it was both administratively and tactically a grave risk to enter the Tawang dragnet. It is a cul-de-sac. So mainly civil administration along with Assam Rifles should look after the wedge.

Bumla

Bumla is 20 km north of Tawang town, situated right on the MacMahon Line at a height of 14,000 feet and

a pony/yak track led to the pass. Bumla has a five figure height, and has a plain locale. Also, though Bumla is almost as high as Sela yet it is not as awe-inspiring as the latter which stands out as a giant by comparison.

From the Bumla Pass one can see miles of the almost flat land of Tibet which forms a nice upland plateau. The 'roof of the world' lies before the visitor giving a look of unlimited vastness and euphoria. On my visit I had climbed a high and rounded hillock nearby which gave me a better view of the haunting Tibetan territory and our own territory. From Tawang to Bumla, the landscape is beautiful and scenic. Some of the knolls are ideally shaped and sloping. At places fine turf was seen studded with beautiful little flowers of subtle hues, of the ginies chionadora type, also called the 'glory of snow'. Here shaggy 'Yaks'² were seen grazing around or carrying loads. This animal is revered by the locals.

I can still recall the time when the area of Tibet in

2. The 'yak' is a shaggy looking animal with a round squat appearance. It has a broad straight back, short legs and long silky hair. This thick coat of hair protects it from arctic cold of the snows and is the longest on its sides and undersurface. In some of the older animals it almost sweeps the ground. The tail ends in a great bushy tuft, curling over the yak's feet and nose when asleep, thus affording protection against the intense cold of the Himalayan nights. The yak is a domestic animal and is used for obtaining milk. The nomads residing at higher altitudes use yak wool for making tents. In the olden times the bushy 'yak' tails were much in demand for making 'fly-wisks' (chowerles) for princes and royal emblems for idols in temples.

The colour of the wild 'yak' is dark brown, almost black, but most of the domestic yaks acquire a good deal of white with the black predominating, and those most valued have their muzzles tipped with white on their neck, and their tails, entirely white.

The animal is also used for ploughing and load carrying. Tibetans associate the 'yak' with wealth and excellence. In pastoral Tibet, where the use of money was almost unknown, the wealth of person was determined by the number of 'yaks' he possessed.

front was dead quiet. I could not discern any sort of movement. No Chinese post was visible. The personnel of the Assam Rifles post also confirmed that Chinese troops or civilians were rarely to be seen.

LOHIT FRONTIER DIVISION

Walong

A small hamlet on the banks of the Lohit River in Lohit Frontier Division near the eastern end of McMahon Line, close to the Burma border. The ancient trade route from Tibet to Assam passed through the place. There has been an Assam Rifles/Army post at the habitation since the British rule in India.

Kibithoo

A small Mishmi Village 10 miles north of Walong on McMahon Line.

Teju

Roadhead 60 miles south west of Walong. also an Assam Rifles base, Talap 48 km away is the rail head.

Hayuliang

An Army base at the foothills. Is a good base but is complicated by the fact the there were no local resources and every thing had to be air lifted.

The Government of India had set up the Border Roads Organisation in 1960 to speed up the construction of roads in the north frontier regions.

WESTERN SECTOR

Leh

Capital of Ladakh-situated on an 11,500 foot high plain. The town was founded by Gtsug Ideon on the bank of river Sindh. There is a ten story palace of the former rulers. A monastery and towers of old fortification are also in existence.

Karakoram

The mountain range seperating Ladakh from Tibet. The Karakoram Pass is a prominent land mark in the area. It is fixed point for plotting boundary.

Chusul

An airfield (4340 feet) 200 km east of Leh located near a small village. It was connected by road to Leh in October 1961. 100 km ahead is Rudok in Tibet. Chusul is bounded by the Pangong Lake in the north and mountain ranges in the east and the west.

Demchok

South of Leh; nearest to the Chinese positions located along the Indo-Tibetan border. Is known for hot springs.

Chip Chap Valley

To lay claim to territory, Indians set up new posts in Chip Chap Valley in Ladakh. When Chinese approached the post several enemy soldiers were killed when Indians opened fire.

Galwan Valley

The Valley appeared to be one of the best routes along which troops could move into Chinese territory from Ladakh.

Chang Chenmo Valley

The Valley located near the Karakoram Pass provides a good approach into Chinese territory; claimed to be Indian.

Samzungling

A Chinese post existed at the entry point of the Galwan Valley in 1962.

Daulet Beg Oldi

A point beneath the Karakoram Pass and situated outside the Chinese claim line.

Sinkiang

A province of China to the north west of Tibet.

Appendix 'B'

(Refer to Page 25)

TAWANG MONASTERY

The famous seventeenth century monastery situated, at 12,000 feet above sea level, was developed as a military post to guard its founders from foreign invaders besides serving as a strong religious base. Standing on a spur of the hill, the 500 year old manastery offers a commanding view of the picturesque Tawang Chu valley, earlier known as Tsosum valley, in the midst of snow-clad mountains and pine forests below. A mile or so to the north overlooking a remote ravine, is the 'anigompa' where only nuns live.

A visit to the ancient monastery confirms the strategic location of the monastery, surrounded by ravines in the south and west, a narrow ridge on the north connecting it with a hilly range and a gradual slope on the east, rendering the approaches virtually impossible from three sides. The followers of the Gelugpa sub sect of Buddhism, who founded the monastery had sufficient reason to develop it as a fort. As legend goes, the founders faced trouble from the Khampas and Dukpas - rival sub sects of Buddhism-who came from Bhutan and made several attempts to capture Tawang. Mera Lama, the founder, attached so much importance to the military aspect that he encouraged military activities and also introduced incentives in the form of 'monthly food rations' for those joining the 'defence service'.

Out of the monthly allowance of 13 'Bres' of cereal, equal to about one kg of wheat, as much as 10 were supposed to be given as an inducement to those who

actively joined in the defence of this area. The story of the monastery is equally interesting. It is believed that the Mera Lama, finding it difficult to build the monastery at Tsosum, the ancient name for Tawang, approached the fifth Dalai Lama for his help. The Dalai Lama issued a diktat to all the villages in Tsosum area to help Mera Lama and gave him a ball of yarn instructing him that the perimeter of the monastery should not exceed the length of the yarn.

The construction of monastery when completed, some time in the seventeenth century, housed about 500 'Lamas'. The record about the exact year of establishment, was lost alongwith other sacred books in two incidents. In the olden days, recount the monks, the 'Lamas' of Tsona monastery, used to come down in winter with their sacred books and live in the Tawang monastery, while the monks from Tawang spent their summers in the 'cooler' Tsona monastery. Once, Tsona Lamas asked their counterparts from Tawang for a 26 feet high richly giided image of the Buddha, in Lotus position. then installed in the Tawang monastery -a demand that was not acceded to. The Tsona Lamas, in turn refused to return some sacred texts and records of Tawang monastery in their possession. In 1951 some records were again taken away.

The most imposing building of the monastery is the three storyed assembly hall known as the 'Dukhang', 'Du' meaning assembly and 'Khang' meaning building. The interior is well planned with arrangements made for all to conduct their daily chores without any problem. Apart from the assembly hall, there is a residence for the Mera Lama, situated near the gate at the south eastern corner of the monastery, and a big library hall, that covers the entire first floor. Heavy curtains bearing Buddhist symbols are hung over the balcony and an

altar with images of divinities and ritual articles stand on the western side of the hall.

The monastery also owns some real estate in the Shoma and Nerguit villages and small patches in some other villages. These lands are cultivated by some families who share the produce with the monastery.

Over the years the monastery has earned fame as a pilgrim centre with daily visitors though the biggest draw of the crowd is during the local festival of Torgya.

Head lama of the Monastery is known as Khempo and is a dignified man accepted as an incarnation of the first rank. Head Lama in 1962 had received his training in Tibet. When he left the Monastery he turned out in complete ceremonial regalia and the grandeur befitting an incarnation.

TERRAIN CLIMATE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Eastern Sector

Generally the terrain between the Foothills and the McMahon Line is broken and mountainous and interspersed with deep and fast flowing streams with rapids with steep banks. There are thick forests of bamboo and other trees and prickly bushes, and scrub. Precipitation is heavy with monsoon downpours alternating with deep snowfall in winter. While steady rain and snowfall are signs and a source of fascination, in normal life, these have a very different impact on the army supply line to Sela and beyond and were extremely damaging. Consequently, the movement of troops was slow and strenuous. At places there were logs or rope or

bamboo suspension bridges which were risky to cross. In fact, mules could not cross them at all.

There are both high peaks, low bright and broad valleys and also bleak narrow vales in NEFA. Some of the regions are barren, uninhabited and inhospitable. The terrain is rugged, with numerous deep and fast flowing unbridged streams. Most of the year the rivers and streams which are monsooned or snowfed remain swollen and unfordable. The country side is dotted with scattered hamlets and sparsely cultivated terraced fields and legendary unfrequented trails winding over high mountains and remote passes.

There are extreme and critical gradients. One is confronted with vertical climbs of 8000-9000 feet from the valley to the top of a mountain. Weather conditions in the winter are most severe. Sub zero temperature is considered normal; snow storms rage during winter and despite the beauty it becomes bitterly cold and hazardous. Where there is relief from flies and mosquitos, leeches have filled their annoying role to the full extent and to their best capability.

Some of the peaks occupied by our troops were over 16000 feet. At these dizzy heights, the troops have to face the cruelty of weather. Temperature dips as low as minus 40°C. Both terrain and temperature are extreme and cruel. Frostbite, pulmonary odema, mountain sickness, snow blindness, and an acute feeling of loneliness are the most severe problems which troops face at extreme altitudes in windswept areas. Here the entire body mechanism gets upset and breathing, sleep and digestion, all become difficult.

Troops at such high altitude areas need highly expensive snow clothing. Weapons, radio sets and vehicles

are required that can function in extreme cold. These had to be imported at exorbitantly high prices as India was yet to gear up for their production. Terrain and weather are suitable for a keen and adventurous soldier like Brigadier Ranbir Singh MC, the earlier Commander of 7th Infantry Brigade who travelled extensively, explored nature and exhibited adventurous instincts. I saw him in his jeep in 'shikar' outfit when he visited our unit and was impressed by his soldierly bearing.

Quick acclimatisation for Indian troops, who came straight from the plains, was a problem. Ground conditions on the Tibetan side were easy and favourable to the Chinese as acclimatisation was not a problem for the Chinese Army; since large forces were stationed in Tibet for a long time and were deployed against Khampa rebels.

The area has steep tracks on our side and road building is an uphill task. Road and airstrip construction in Tibet is a simple process and miles of road can be laid out by demarcating the alignment with stones. Not much engineering work is involved.

In the east starting from Misamari railhead, the main road to Tawang Dzong is a magnificent glide through green jungles and on the sides of high grey mountains, there were narrow gorges and high passes enveloped in clouds. At places the road was narrow, had sharp curves and was meandering and dangerous. Maintenance of the road was more challenging than its construction due to heavy snow and monsoon downpour that regularly alternated. There were numerous land slides as the road had only recently been constructed and the roadbed did not have sufficient time to repose and firm up.

The foothills are 55 km from Tezpur and Bomdila is 160 km away. A good one ton road connected Tezpur, Misamari, Foothills (1000 feet) and Bomdila (10,000 feet). This road crossed a height of 9,000 feet at Eagle's Nest. Then it descended to Tenga Valley (4500 feet). From Bomdila a nominal road connected Dirang Dzong (5500 feet), Sela (13,400 feet), and Jang (7500 feet). Towang Dzong (12000 feet) was connected by a 'Kachcha' jeepable road to Jang. These were all fair weather one ton/jeep roads and were often disrupted by extensive land slides; thus they were not of much military value.

The climb from the foothills to Bomdila-Dirang Dzong and Nyukmadong, is generally gradual. Beyond Nyukmadong, towards Sela, the gradient is very steep. Sela perched on a massive mountain is representative of the high Himalayas. Sela is 266 km from Tezpur. Except for a few patches, from Sela to Tawang Dzong and Bumla (14000 feet), the going is again steady. Tawang Dzong is 340 km from Tezpur and Bumla is 18 km ahead towards north and Namka Chu/Thagla 60 km to the west. One can easily compare the Sela panorama with that which obtains from Udampur to Ramban in Jammu & Kashmir, then, to Banihal Pass which also tops a ponderous mountain of the Pir Panjal Range. The descent beyond Banihal Pass into Kashmir Valley is likewise also gradual. The other pass that has comparable indentify is that of Hajipir Pass between Uri and Poonch again in Jammu and Kashmir. Still further, Zojila, at 11000 feet height, where General 'Sparrow' took his tanks in 1948, can also be favourably compared.

Namka Chu valley is six days march on bridle path from Tawang, a 'Kachcha' roadhead. Provided there were no impediments enroute, vehicles took almost three days for the journey from the foothills to Dirang Dzong and

two days further by road which was cut against the grain of the country and had sharp bends and steep ascents and descents and for the greater part of the year was not usable due to heavy snowfall and rains. In Walong sector there were no roads. Walong itself was 100 km from its road head Teju.

Middle Sector

The Middle Sector included Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim where no fighting took place. Very high mountain ranges such as Shivalik, Naga Tibba, Dhauladhar and the Great Himalayas exist in this area. These ranges are a great obstacle to the movement of large bodies of troops. The main approaches are restricted to unduly high passes. These approaches are, however followed by pilgrims, to Kailash mountain, Mansarovar Lake and other sacred places. A number of rivers such as Satluj, Ganges and Brahmaputra flow to India amidst the high mountains. The area is further dotted with valleys, stateiy forests, lakes and springs. The vaileys present plush green landscapes, at the same time bleak and arid regions of sand and rocks are found as in Ladakh. There are charming meadows and pastures. Some pastures on the frontiers created rivalries and disputes between China and India.

Some important passes are the crossing places for trade routes between the two countries and at places camp sites were found for traders. The climate varies from very pleasant and salubrious to extreme cold. Extreme cold is a cause for many high altitude diseases. Prominent hill roads pass through Simla - Kinaur in Himachal Pradesh, Nainital, Pithoragarh - Tawaghat in Uttar Pradesh and Siliguri-Gangtok in Sikkim. In so far as the population is concerned Hindus mingle with

Buddhists and temples and Gompas are found side by side.

Western Sector

So far as the terrain and climate are concerned, Ladakh differs from the North-East on at least three major counts. Firstly, hills and mountains are barren and have excessive sandy composition. Secondly, there is an acute shortage of rainfall being only three to four inches, annually and consequently there is absence of flora and fauna. Logs and fire wood are scarce which adversely affect the building of defences. Thirdly the area is wind swept, suffers from piercing cold after scorching heat during the day. As for the road to Ladakh the difficulty was to get up to Zojila from Srinagar and then to reach Kargil where during the winter season the snowfall varied between fifteen to twenty feet. In order to keep the road open during the battle snow clearance in temperatures of minus 40°C and below in blinding blizzards was done under the fear of avalanches. However, the construction of roads in Ladakh was easier and by 1962 the road link from Leh to Chushul, Koyal and Demchok was available but road links to the northern region towards the Karakoram pass was not so easy. Another alternative to the Zojila route to reach Leh is via Manali, Rohtang Pass and Bara Lacha La. This was yet to become effective.

On the other hand road construction conditions on the Tibetan side are good. China's job of constructing roads was quite easy since the Chinese were already sitting on the high plateau; where, the only effort required to build hundreds of miles of roads was to mark out the direction by flags or by stones. Only an occasional, filling or blasting would suffice. The natural surface was so hard that the road could take heavy military traffic without metalling or turning. There were lateral roads with

approach roads which took the troops within short distances of the border. These were all weather roads as snow-fall on the Tibetan side is light and the heavy vehicles can easily ply on them.

In fact, in 1962 on the Indian side there were no roads leading to or within the western boundary sector. Construction of road from Srinagar to Leh a distance of 435 km over Zojila, (13472) feet had begun in 1954 but was suspended. Leh could still only be reached by mule track or by air. There were landing air strips at Leh and Chushul but other places had to be supplied by air drops only.

At heights the roads were blocked by deep snowfall and land slides. Maintenance was to be done exclusively by air. The problem was further aggravated because the Jammu-Srinagar road which passes over Zojila Pass to enter Ladakh region, was in the initial stage of construction. Though one of the lowest passes on the Great Himalayan range, it remains covered with snow for almost six months in a year. The two sides of the pass afford a most striking contrast with the verdant valley on the Kashmir side and bare stony wastes towards Ladakh. Even the feel of the air is somewhat different. The soft, mild and fragrant breeze of the Kashmir Valley is replaced by the brisk and intense atmosphere of the Dras Valley of Ladakh. Zojila pass is open for traffic from May to November only.

The road, passing through the picturesque villages of Ganderbal, Kangan and Gund was to depart the Kashmir valley at Sonamarg. It was to follow the general alignment of the ancient track on which the caravans used to take 15 days to reach Leh from Srinagar. The bus journey now takes two days, the first halt being at Kargil village. Dras, the second coldest place in the world

lies in broad opening of the valley about three kilometers wide and five kilometers long.

From Dras to Kargil, the road was to follow the valley of the River Dras. It continues over stony ground, along the foot of the great rocky mountains. A sharp bend in the alignment near the place where river Suru joins Dras river, brings the town of Kargil in sight. Kargil³ lying at 204 kilometers from Srinagar is the second largest town of Ladakh. The road winds up towards the highest point on the Srinagar-Leh road, namely Fatu La, 13479 feet in height.

About half an hour's drive from the wind swept and chilly Fatu La brings one to the mysterious Lamayaru, the oldest monastery in Ladakh. The road was to cross the Indus near Khalsi where the ruins of the Zorawar Fort are found adjacent to the bridge. From Khalsi onwards, the road alignment almost continuously follows the Indus river and more or less traverses level terrain to enter Leh.

3. It is not known that why a bypass was not feasible on highway from Jammu-north of Srinagar to connect Zojila-Kargil-Leh main road to avoid the crowded city.

CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN BORDER AREAS

Eastern Sector

Civil administration was run by Indian Frontier Administrative Service in NEFA. On their quitting India in 1947, the British had left only two part time Political Officers based in the Assam plains. In 1948 five frontier divisions came into existence and their head-quarters, which were so far located in Assam plains, later moved forward to their areas of jurisdiction. Soon their number was increased. The number of Additional Political Officers, Assistant Political Officers and Base Superintendents was also increased. The NEFA administration had great difficulty in, finding suitable and willing officers. For the senior officers a separate cadre for the frontier area, called the Indian Frontier Administrative Service, was created and recruits were selected from amongst the volunteers from the various services. A large subordinate staff had to be selected and trained. Building material was transported from the railhead hundreds of miles away. This Administrative organisation had to cope with the unprecedented large work such as opening of new schools, providing medical cover, improving the standard of agriculture and animal husbandry, extraction of forest wealth and replanting of new plantations and welfare work had also to be attended to.

Telegraph lines were provided to the headquarters of all the Base Superintendents and the Assam Rifles were provided good alternative lines of wireless communications. To assist the Political Officers they had under them the para military Assam Rifles units which functioned as district police as well.

The Assam Rifles is a para quasi military force placed under the Assam Rifles Directorate functioning through the Governor of Assam who was then the agent of External Affairs Ministry. After independence they played a major role in NEFA and Nagaland by providing assistance to the civil administration. The Assam Rifles posts were located non-tactically and were poorly armed; neither were they properly equipped. Later, although, Assam Rifles posts were put under the operational command of the Army their administration remained under the Inspector General of the Assam Rifles located at Shillong. Thus, was institutionalised a system of dual command and control that was apt to create confusion.

Till the arrival of the Army in NEFA the Assam Rifles, had shouldered the entire responsibility for the security of NEFA. Each of the six frontier divisions of NEFA had at its head a Political Officer who was equivalent to Deputy Commissioner in the normal states. The Commandant of each Assam Rifles battalion, who was on deputation from the Indian Army, was responsible to the Political Officer for the check and regulation of trans-border traffic, maintenance of law and order in the division, provision of armed escorts as required by the civil authorities and collection of intelligence. The Assam Rifles battalion was organised into wings, normally three in number and each wing was again commanded by an Army Officer seconded from the Army.

In 1959 the government decided to expand the Assam Rifles and added a number of new battalions. Instead of recruiting only Gorkhas, as was the practice till then Garhwalis, Dogras, Kumaonis and other classes from hilly areas were also taken. The expansion helped to increase the strength and number of border posts. But the ethics and ethos of the Assam Rifles, based on the Gorkha disposition and behaviour, remained unchanged.

The men of Assam Rifles⁴ are simple, honest, sincere, obedient, courageous and hardy.

Assam Rifles was also an asylum for Indian Army officers who were oppressed by their debts. It was said that there was a good chance of squaring up one's debts while being with Assam Rifles, as the organisation offered better allowances and privileges.

Middle Sector

In Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim the administration was like wise extended to the extreme frontier regions. In Uttar Pradesh, six hill districts were created and in Himachal Pradesh two more districts came into existence.

Western Sector

In Ladakh the Administrative Centres and Ladakh Police Posts were opened in places like Phobrang, Zanskar and Thoise. There was no revenue staff or development work and tribals were left to themselves. There were odd personnel of J & K Police. There were no roads connecting the important places and border posts, schooling and telegraphic facilities were not in existence so far. The few border posts which existed were manned by Indo-Tibetan Border Police or J & K Militia.

4. Before World War Two, the Assam Rifles was a force of five military police battalions maintained by the Assam Government and was composed of Gorkhas under British Officers seconded from the Indian Army. In World War Two they were organised into 'V' Force.

'V' Force was raised from Chin, Lushai and Nagas, the hill people, to undertake guerilla operations against the Japanese lines of communications in World War Two. When the Japanese did not follow up their successes in Burma the original role of 'V' Force was changed to that of obtaining information. In addition, the force provided guides and porters and became a link between the Army and the locals.

INTELLIGENCE AND SIGNALS

Intelligence and counter-intelligence play an important part in war. We hardly had any intelligence system worth the name in so far as Tibet and China were concerned. And what we had was under civilian control. As later events proved, our intelligence only found what the Chinese wanted us to know, and no more. The Chinese had an extensive intelligence set-up in India. In the Kameng Division they had begun intelligence operations two years before the first shots were fired in the Namka Chu Valley. They planted their agents among road-gangs, muleteers and porters the people likely to come in contact with troops daily. Besides providing day-to-day information to their masters, these agents later guided the advancing Chinese columns through NEFA.

At Chaku, a high-ranking Chinese agent had been working at a roadside tea-shop for two years. Two buxom Monpa girls were an added attraction at this shop. Even junior Chinese commanders had carried out reconnaissance of the area disguised as Tibetans. Chinese planes had carried out a thorough reconnaissance of the border areas. The Indian Government sent 113 protest notes on this score, but the Chinese had conveniently blamed them on the Americans. Chinese intelligence operations in this theatre had for sometime been under Colonel Kan Mai, whose last assignment had been as Military Attache at their Embassy in Delhi.

While the Chinese knew a good deal about our weapons and tactical concepts we while laid on demonstrations for them we knew very little about them. The Chinese Army had made a thorough study of methods employed by the Japanese in World War II; they used them to good effect in Korea. Concealment and surprise

were very effective weapons in their hands. In mountain and jungle warfare it is necessary to guard against a breakdown in communications; and maintenance of command and control is all the more essential. The Chinese had ensured this by providing their units with high-power wireless sets. Our Signals set-up was as outdated as our weapons.

Success of an operation depends on good intelligence work. If accurate and timely information about the enemy is known it greatly simplifies operational planning. We were at a great disadvantage in collecting updated intelligence data in 1962. The Intelligence Bureau had to play a significant role. Check posts had to be located close to the borders. The Intelligence Bureau had to collect information about the Chinese forces in Tibet under great handicap. Local population were averse to the Intelligence personnel. The presence of the check posts infringed upon their freedom which was resented by them. Also bereft of the facilities for border trade locals faced great hardship as they could no longer move across the frontiers as they liked. It was not easy to get the required number of educated trainees capable of receiving new ideas and at the same time ready to undertake the difficult task of manning the checkpoints where they would be cut off for practically the whole period of their stay. If anybody fell ill, only God and nature could take care of them. The only means of communication with base camps were the old radio sets of World War II vintage. Breakdowns were frequent and the problems of repair came in. If the set was sent down, the post would remain without any means of communication. Couriers took a long time to reach and functioned only during good weather.

A school was set up to provide training in foreign intelligence work and the Intelligence Corps was raised. More liberal allowances were given to trainees as incentive

since a sufficient number were not responding because of the difficult service conditions.

For us installation of tele-communications for the transmission of reports was yet another problem, since the courier system was unsuccessful. Operators were required to be mechanics as well. So another school was set up for their training.

Decoding of messages was yet another difficulty. The Chinese language was itself a code which was passed over the wireless only in numbers, and when that was codified, it really became a triple code. So a large cryptography section was built up to decipher the messages intercepted by the monitoring stations. The credit must go to Shri B N Malik the then energetic Director of Intelligence Bureau for the extensive improvements in Intelligence Department.

Our intelligence system did not compare favourably with that of the Chinese. As said earlier they had infiltrated agents into our frontier regions and even deeper into India. These agents built up a net-work of espionage. They also indoctrinated the local population. The Chinese knew about our Army build up but similar information was not available to us. The Chinese adopted many ruses. They moved about disguised as local tribals and their troops wore our uniforms which had been removed from our dead. The enemy deceived us by moving their detachments during the day in one direction and attacking us at night from another.

There has been much criticism about the functioning of Military Intelligence and the Intelligence Bureau during the Sino-Indian war and the period preceding that when our Intelligence failed. Whereas some criticism is justified, some is due to misunderstanding.

However, at one time the criticism had percolated so deep that there was even a proposal to induct a foreign intelligence expert to head the intelligence set-up in the country. This proposal was later abandoned.

It will not be fair to unduly blame the intelligence in our country as it functions under great limitations. There is a severe lack of resources which are available with advanced countries such as satellite photography. Yet we have to make do with the means available to us. The division of responsibility has to be understood. Much depends on the unit in front which has to collect information mainly by patrolling, capturing prisoners, setting up observation posts and denying information to the enemy through comouflage, concealment and foiling enemy patrols. The unit is to be helped by aerial reconnaissance. However, responsibility for strategic military intelligence remains with the Intelligence Bureau.

CHAPTER THREE

TIBET

Tibet, which has an area of 5,00,000 square miles has a 2,600 mile long common frontier with India. Tibet is in the cradle of high mountains whose altitude rises from 9000 to 16000 feet; the country is the source of great rivers; a lofty country and thus is also called 'roof of the world' in geography books. It contains both uninhabited wilderness and cultivated areas. In the south-west Tibets great rivers Indus and Brahmaputra originate within a distance of eighty miles, and flow in opposite directions, apart from other rivers - such as Sutlej, the Kosi and Karnali, all of which flow into India. Three other rivers Salween, the Mekong, and the Yangste flow into Burma, Indo-china and China respectively. The Yellow river also flows into China. It is a mythical land of magnificent monasteries and gompas and has been an enigma for invaders from the north and south. It offers wonderful natural sanctuaries to tourists who are as much attracted as the pilgrims. It is said that one son of Chenchiz Khan, the greatest conquerer and master butcher of the world, was killed during the invasion of Tibet; the shock of which led to Chenchiz Khan's death. A number of attacking armies perished under snow blizzards.

The inhabitants are nomads and aborigines and of 'yellow man' origin and their off shoot. They cannot,

with any accuracy, be called of Chinese stock. The Khampas who rose in rebellion and attained world fame when the present Dalai Lama fled Tibet, live between upper Yangste and the Chinese border. Their language, called the Tibet Burman language is quite distinct from the Chinese language. The majority of Tibetans are farmers and herdsmen. The climate is dry and very cold in the uplands but not so dry and cold in the valleys. In the uplands there is little vegetation except grass but in the river valleys good crops of barley, wheat, peas, and beans are grown, while willow, poplar, walnut and apricot are the common trees. Mineral resources have not been exploited. Some gold and small quantities of coal, iron and copper, were mined. Gold was also produced by washing the sands of several rivers in the east. But mining was considered an offence to Tibetan principles as also adversely affecting the environment. The people are generally sturdy bread winners and are given a high position. The Amdoas and the Khampas in the north and east are brave and rugged fighters.

For the first time in history there arose a military warlord in Tibet in the person of Tsang Gompo, about the middle of the seventh century. He unified the different tribes of Tibet and set up a national Tibetan government at Lhasa. The Chinese and the King of Nepal had recognised the importance of the event and started to woo Tsang Gompo. Each offered his daughter in marriage to the new ruler of Tibet. Tsang Gompo embraced Buddhism and Tibet began to look to India for the seeds of the new culture.

Since the national religion of Tibet is Buddhism, the whole national system of Tibet-political, social and economic had for several centuries been constructed around Buddhist religious observance. The Dalai Lama was the political as well as the religious head of all the

Tibetans. The origin of Dalai Lama was the culmination of the long process of adjustment between the Buddhist hierarchy and the lay nobility. He is deemed to be a reincarnation of an aspect of Buddha. The life of the community was built around the vast complex of monasteries which dominate the whole of the Tibetan social system. Tibet had been exercising an ecclesiastical authority over a large portion of Bhutan, Sikkim and part of Nepal and political privileges often accompanied the religious jurisdiction. There are fairy tales of beautiful princesses who won the hearts of rulers of Tibet and lured them to embrace Buddhism.

Tibet had been independent for long periods upto the eighteenth century. The 'de jure' Chinese 'suzerainty' or 'sovereignty' over Tibet was beyond apprehension or comprehension, as the two terms are so vague and misleading. In 1720 Chinese forces entered Tibet to forestall a suspected Tibetan and Mongol alliance against China. They occupied Lhasa and appointed their Residents. In 1772, the Chinese Emperor Chiena Lung brought around Tibet to recognize Chinese suzerainty and the administration of Tibet was brought more under the control of China. In the nineteenth century, the Chinese hold weakened and Tibetans chose Dalai Lama without informing China as they were required to do. The Chinese condoned the irregularity as at this stage they were too weak to resort to any other course.

However, later the Chinese imperial government of the Manchu invaded Tibet in 1910 and Dalai Lama fled to India. After the overthrow of the Manchu dyanasty by the Chinese Revolution of 1911 the suzerain right of China was challenged and removed. The Dalai Lama was restored to power and returned to Lhasa. He then drove out the Chinese garrisons.

Later China's suzerainty over Tibet was acknowledged and even bolstered by the British for the sole monopoly of opium trade with China against other rivals. The trade took the Tibetan route. This destructive habit forming drug was grown in India, where it was a profitable public sector enterprise throughout the period of the British rule, and was sold at an exorbitant price, in China with its vast population. It remained in the interest of the British, to keep the trade going, to sustain the Manchu rulers. Albeit, the rule of the Manchu dynasty in Peking was brought to an end by the revolution led by Dr Sun Yat Sen in 1911 and the opium trade suffered a severe setback.

Later the Chinese tried to recapture Tibet but were prevented from doing so by the British government as the Britishers held that any attempt to recapture Tibet would violate the Anglo-Chinese treaty of 1906. While Chinese suzerainty was not disputed the British Government could not consent to the assertion of full sovereignty over a state which had established independent treaty relations with the British Government.

This was a period when the Chinese influence over Tibet was waning and the Russians tried to step into the vacuum. The Russians, whose rule had by then spread over Central Asia, touched the fringes of the Asian continent and extended into Sinkiang, now turned their eyes towards Tibet. The British Viceroy Lord Curzon in India wanted to exclude the Russians from this sphere of influence but the Tibetans were reluctant and more inclined towards the Russians. Therefore, the Britishers decided to use force and the Younghusband Mission was sent to Lhasa. The mission consisted of a force of about ten thousand armed men with instructions to annihilate any resistance. The Tibetans put up a brave fight but being ill-armed, their resistance crumbled under the

determined and furious attack of the British. The Dalai Lama left Tibet and took refuge in China. Their agent in Tibet meekly obeyed. Younghusband established his command in Lhasa. A convention was signed, known as the Lhasa convention of 1904 which was signed by the Lamas who were running a caretaker administration after the dismissal of the Dalai Lama's regent. Under the convention the Britishers sought to establish a British Protectorate type of control over Tibet.

In 1913 the Tibetans proclaimed their independence. In the same year the British government held a Tripartite conference of Tibet, China and the British, at Simla (India). The conference concluded its deliberations by April 1914. Briefly, the main provisions which concern our study, were that Tibet was divided into two regions, ie Inner and Outer Tibet. China agreed to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet. China agreed not to convert Tibet into a Chinese Province or send troops to Outer Tibet. Agreement was also reached on the boundary between India and Tibet, from Bhutan eastwards to Burma, which was then under the British Indian government. This boundary later became known as the McMahon Line, which has figured so largely in the Sino Indian dispute. The question of Chinese "suzerainty" was settled bilaterally between the Governments of Tibet and British India.

Mr Hugh Richardson CIE, OBE, former officer-in-charge of the Indian Mission in Lhasa, has made this authoritative statement in a letter entitled "The myth of suzerainty"—term that was bandied about in the past. We hear that somehow or other Tibet has always been under the suzerainty of China and that various Governments, our own and the Indian Government have recognised that. The facts are quite the opposite."

In 1914 by the Simla convention, the British Government signed a declaration directly with Tibet by which it undertook not to recognise the suzerainty of China over Tibet unless the Chinese give a substantial 'quid pro quo'; this was never given and consequently to this day, or rather till they handed over responsibility in 1947 to the Indian government, the British Government did not recognise the suzerainty of China over Tibet. 'I am aware that certain Ministers of the Crown have made statements that might give you another impression. But whatever a Minister may say in Parliament cannot affect the terms of a mutually signed declaration with another government.'

China did not ratify the Simla Agreement on the grounds that they could not accept the proposed boundaries between Inner and Outer Tibet. The British and the Tibetans went ahead and signed a convention almost identical to that agreed to at Simla. Now the Chinese claim that they have never accepted the McMahon Line because they were not signatories to the Simla convention.

After the Simla convention Tibet remained in effect independent. In 1921 the British government informed China that they did not feel justified in withholding recognition of the status of Tibet as an autonomous State, under the suzerainty of China, and intended to deal on this basis with Tibet in future. China was too weak to challenge this position.

During World War II Tibet opened its own Foreign Affairs Bureau. She did not join China which was directly involved in the war. Tibet claimed neutrality and resisted Chinese pressure for opening up communications through Tibet. If Tibet had been under China, she could not have been neutral or denied facilities to the Central authority.

In 1947, a Tibetan trade mission travelled abroad on Tibetan and not Chinese passports.

Tibet was thus never a full-fledged Chinese province. Chinese suzerainty was nominal and was challenged by the Tibetans whenever they were strong, or the Central Chinese Government was weak; China never had any direct control over Tibet except by conquest. Except for two short periods of direct Chinese rule, Tibet had been independent for years. The Tibetans have nothing in common with the Chinese; their language traditions, and outlook are different. Tibetan culture is a spiritual outcome of Buddhism and hence is Indian. Tibet is the homeland of a distinct and ancient nation. It is true that when Tibet was weak China ruled this country, but there were also times when, conversely, Tibet invaded China and annexed large parts of Chinese territory. There is no basis for the Chinese to claim that Tibet is a part of China.

British officials who ought to know this had proclaimed Tibet's independence. The last British officer in Lhasa, Mr H Richardson had said, 'There was not a trace of Chinese authority in Tibet after 1912'.

On 7 October 1950 the Chinese Army entered Tibet. Tibet appealed for help but India refused and recommended a peaceful settlement. Tibet had been a buffer state and had been important for British India's strategic defence. With the removal of the buffer, the situation had changed and now India was to reckon with a live northern border. The distinguished British general 'Joe' Lemaigne had remarked that 'India's back door had been opened and the Himalayas had become the boundary with a large and powerful China. India's eastern regions, with concentration of industry, would be within the range of bombers operating from bases in Tibet.' He forecast

“that the defence of this mountainous frontier would cost India more than she could afford. Roads would have to be built and large, specially, equipped forces would have to be raised and stationed in accommodation which India would have to construct at great expence.”

Ironically China and India signed the Sino-Indian Agreement called Panch Sheel on 29 April 1954. India had written off Tibet, the buffer, in return of the Chinese guarantee of good behaviour as embodied in the five principles of Panch Sheel.

India gave up military communications and Postal rights in Tibet which had been inherited from the British and agreed to withdraw the military detachments stationed at Yatung and Gyantse and offered to hand over to China, the postal and telegraph services along with their equipment. India continued to champion China's cause in the UN and advocated her admission to the world body.

In fact India tried to become over friendly with China and took for granted its peaceful and outwardly friendly intentions as if we had no conflict with them since time immemorial. This was also because both religions had common elements and there was reciprocity. But China was thinking differently. China hoodwinked India and went for one sided gains which created rivalry between the two countries and ultimately it resulted in the unfortunate border war of 1962.

The Indo-Tibetian boundry is given at Appendix 'C' attached.

Appendix 'C'

(Refer to Page 54)

THE INDO TIBETAN BOUNDARY

The Indo-China boundary starts from the trijunction of the boundaries of India, China and Afganistan at approximately Longitude 74°34' East, Latitude 37°3' North and runs eastward through the Kilik Pass (Long 74°41'E and Lat 37°5'N) Mintaka Pass (Long 74°51' E and Lat 36°59'N), Parpik Pass (Long 75°26'E and Lat 36°57'N), and Khanjerab Pass (Long 75°28' E and Lat 36°51'N). These passes lie on the watershed between the Hunza river flowing into the Indus system in India and the Qara Chukar river flowing into the Yarkand system in Sinkiang. From the Khanjerab Pass the boundary lies along a spur down to the north-western bend of the Shaksgam or Mustagh 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 (Long 76°37'E and 36°11'N) the Marpo Pass (Long 77°14'E and Lat 35°43'N) and the Shaksgam Pass (Long 77°28'E and Lat 35°34'N) 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 (belonging to the Indus system) and the Yarkand, and run through the Qara Tagh Pass (Long 78°20'E and Lat 35°43'N) to cross the eastern bend of the Qara Qash river (north-west of Haji Langer) and to ascend the main Kuen Lun mountains. Thereafter the boundary runs through the Yangi pass (Long 79°25'E and Lat 35°55'N) along the crest of the mountains separating the Yurungsh basin from those of the lakes in Aksai Chin. It leaves the main crest of the Kuen Lun

mountains at a point approximately Long 80°21'E and descends in a south-western direction, separating the basins of the Amtogor and Sarigh Tilganag lakes in India from those of Leighten and Tsoggar lakes in Tibet, down to Lanak Pass (Long 79°34'E and Lat 34°24'N).

South of Lanak Pass (Long 79°29'E and Lat 34°30'N), and the Kepsang Pass (Long 79°30'E and Lat 34°8'N), which lie along the watershed between the Chang Chenmo and Chumesang in India and the stream flowing into the Dyap Tso in Tibet. Thereafter the boundary lies 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, lies along the watershed between the Ang stream flowing into the western Pangong lake and other streams flowing eastward, cuts across the eastern part of Spanggur lake and follows the northern and eastern watershed of the Indus through the Chang Pass (Long 79°22'E and Lat 33°1'N), into the Jara Pass (Long 79°33'E and Lat 32°47'N). A little south of Jara Pass it turns south-westward, crosses the Indus about five miles south-east of Demchok and following the watershed between the Hanle river and the tributaries of the Sutlej river it passes through the Charding Pass (Long 79°24'E and Lat 32°32'N) the Imis Pass (Long 39°2'E and Lat 33°23'N) and the Kyungzing Pass (Long 78°46'E and Lat 32°38'N). Thereafter it turns westward and crosses the Para river about five miles south of Chumar to reach Gya Peak (Long 78°24'E and Lat 32°32'N).

From the Gya Peak the boundary follows the watershed between the Spiti and Para rivers and crosses the Para river a mile south of the village of Kaurik. South of the Para river the boundary ascends one of the ranges leading to the high peak of Leo Pargial (Long 78°45'E and Lat 31°54'N) crosses the Sutlej at its bend and following the Zanskar range lies through the Shipki Pass (Long

78°44'E and Lat 31°51'N) the Raniso Pass (Long 78°49'E and Lat 31°38'N), and the Shimdang Pass (Long 78°44'E and Lat 31°39'N). Thereafter it follows the main watershed between the Sutlej and Ganges basin and lies through the Thaga Pass (Long 79°45'E and Lat 31°26'N), Tsang chok Pass (Long 79°13'E and Lat 31°20'N), Muling Pass (Long 79°18'E and Lat 31°13'N), Mana Pass (Long 79°24'E and Lat 31°4'N), Niti Pass (Long 79°52'E and Lat 30°58'N), Kungri Bingri Pass (Long 80°13'E and Lat 30°38'N), Darma Pass and the Lipu Lekh Pass (Long 81°2'E and Lat 30°14'N) to join the tri-junction of the India, Nepal and Tibet boundaries.

East of Nepal the boundary follows the watershed between the Tista river system, and the Yaru Chu and the sources of the Amo Chu in Tibet, and crosses the Netu and Jelep Passes. Thereafter it crosses the Amo Chu, and, following the watershed between the Amo Chu and Para Chu, joins the Great Himalayan Range at Chomo Lhri and runs east along the crest of that range upto the Mela Pass (Long 91°40'E and Lat 27°57'N). Thereafter it turns South and about 13 miles from the Mela Pass, turns east, crosses the Namjang river, and following the crest of the Great Himalayan Range which is also the watershed between the Chayual Chu in Tibet and the Kameng, Kamla and Khuru rivers in India, proceeds east and north-east. Thereafter it crosses the Subansiri river and then the Tiari river just south of Migitun and taking a north-easterly direction crosses the Tunga Pass (approximately long 94°10'E and Lat 28°59'N). It then runs east, crosses the Dihong and ascends the watershed between Chimdru Chu and Rongta Chu in Tibet and the Dibang and its tributaries in India. The boundary crosses the Yonggyap Pass (Long 95°36'E and Lat 29°13'N) and Kangri Karpo Pass (Long 96°5'E and Lat 29°28'N) in this sector. It then crosses the Lohit river a few miles South of Rima and joins the trijunction of India, Burma and China boundaries near the Diphu Pass.

THE CHINESE DESCRIPTION OF THE CUSTOMARY SINO-INDIAN BOUNDARY LINE

The Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delineated and there is only a traditional customary boundary line between the two countries. The location and terrain features of this boundary line in various sectors is discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

The Western Sector

This sector of the boundary is divided into two portions, with Kongka Pass as the dividing point. The portion north of Kongka Pass is the boundary between Sinkiang and Ladakh, and the portion south of it is that between Tibet and Ladakh.

The portion between Sinkiang and Ladakh is a part of the entire boundary between Sinkiang and Kashmir and bears the general natural features of the latter which for its entire length runs along the Karakoram Mountain Range, following broadly the watershed between two big river systems : that of the Tarim River of Sinkiang and the Indus River which flows to Kashmir. The location of the portion between Sinkiang and Ladakh is as follows: From the Karakoram Pass it runs eastward along the mountain ridge to a point east of 78° East Longitude, turns south-eastward along the high ridge of the Karokoram Mountains on the east bank of the Shyok River and northern bank of the Kungrang Tsangpo River down to Kongka Pass.

The terrain features of the portion between Tibet and Ladakh are complicated. They include mountain passes, river valleys, lakes and watersheds. Its location is as follows: South of Kongka Pass, it runs along the

ridge, passing through Ane Pass, cut across the western half of Pangong Tso, skirts the western side of the Spanggur Tso upto Mount Sajum, crosses the Shangatsangpu (Indus) River at 33° North Latitude, runs along the watershed east of the Keyul Lungpa River and south of the Hanle River up to Mount Shinowu and then runs westward to reach the tri-junction of China's Ari district and India's Punjab and Ladakh.

The Middle Sector

This sector of the boundary also has the natural features of the watershed, mountain passes and river valleys. Its location is as follows: Starting from the terminal point of the western sector, it runs southwards along the watershed west of the Para River and Chuva River, passes by the converging point of the Para River and the Spiti River, crosses the Siangchuan (Sutlej) River west of Shipki Pass, continues southward along the watershed and crosses the Jadhganga River west of the Tsungsha. It then turns east, passes through Mana Pass, Mount Kamet, skirts along the south side of Wuju, Sangcha and Laphthal, again runs along the watershed, passing through Darma Pass, and reaches the tri-junction of China, India and Nepal.

The Eastern Sector

The terrain features of this sector are comparatively simple. The greatest part of it - the portion from the south-eastern tip of Bhutan eastward to a point west of 94° East Longitude, and then northward to Nizamghat - follows all along the line where the southern foot of the Himalayas touches the plains on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River. This portion of the line crosses the Subansiri River south of Bini and the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) River in the vicinity of Pasighat. From

Nizamghat onwards, the line turns south-eastward and enters mountainous terrain, passing through Painlon Pass, following the valley to the lower reaches of the Tsayul River and reaching the tri-junction of China, India and Burma.

The present line of actual control between the two sides is to a certain extent different from the above-described traditional customary line. In the western sector, the Parigas district which is on the Chinese side of the traditional customary line has been occupied by India in recent years. In the middle sector, eight places: Chuva, Chuje, Shipki Pass, Sang Tsungsha, Fuling-Sumdo, Sangcha and Lapthal, which are on the Chinese side of the traditional customary line are also at present under Indian occupation. In the eastern sector the entire area north of the traditional customary line up to the so-called McMahon line is now under Indian occupation.

CHINA

China is a vast land mass, larger than India and the third largest in area in the world. Its population surpasses any other country in the world and it is one of the oldest countries. China is, essentially, an agricultural country and produces a variety of crops. Its chief minerals are coal, manganese, iron ore, gold and copper.

For many generations the people saw little peace. It was a land inhabited by constantly fighting war-lords. A weak dynasty ruled over a nation of the largest size and a country with a great and ancient culture, weakened militarily by the very processes of a long-established civilisation. The people were embittered against all foreigners who were seekers of easy profits and forced China to open its doors to the opium trade. The alienation

increased by the happenings of the Boxer rebellion, which took place in the first decade of the twentieth century, the people were engulfed through no wish of their own, and with no social purpose in the adventures of the many war-lords that plagued the whole country. These circumstances combined to bring about the revolution of 1911 under the national leadership of Dr Sun Yat Sen and China became a Republic.

For long periods the country remained subjugated by foreign countries. The great Mongol incursions of twelfth and thirteenth centuries resulted in China coming under the rule of the Mongol Yuan dynasty and collapse of the great period of Han empire. Then Han people were forbidden to have weapons, horses or to practice fighting or even to trade in the market place; at night they were disallowed to go out of their houses. Then came the Government of Chiang Kai Shek which was utterly corrupt. In 1949 the communists under Mao Tse Tung came to power after a long struggle which included the legendary 'Long March'. The 'Long March' of Mao-Tse-Tung's communist guerilla forces was a great feat. Having been pursued by the government troops many people collapsed and some survived. They, sometimes, found protection in the mountains, and in the caves. It was a superb long march of 8,000 miles. The Chinese resistance under Mao-Tse-Tung will remain one of the great epics of history. Though Mao liberated the Chinese people from oppression and exploitation; ironically, he later marched his Army into Tibet to subjugate the Tibetans who were never akin to the Chinese. On top of it the Chinese violated the borders of India and occupied a large chunk of its territory.

The mountain ranges of Himalayas, the highest in the world, have been the lofty dividing wall for more than two thousands miles, and on each side of this have flourished two of the greatest and most ancient

civilisations the world has seen. Buddhism cradled in India has a profound influence on China. The Himalayas have provided a protective bastion for India's northern border. The high passes through the mountains have also for many centuries provided passage for some of the great north south routes of Asia for trade, pilgrimage and travel.

Until the seventh century AD there was really, no common frontier between China and India. The large mass of Tibet lay between, inhabited by different tribes, owing no allegiance to any one except to themselves. But the roots of China's territorial claims lie not only in the recent history of foreign conquest and occupation; they lie far deeper in history, and reach back to the earliest periods of Chinese imperialism.

Two centuries before the Christian era, many feudal states in China had been integrated under the Han dynasty; the Great Wall of China had been built. From then on for several centuries, the Chinese rulers, with a consolidated nation at home reached outwards for new territories to extend their sway and for new worlds to conquer. The T'ang dynasty (seventh to tenth century AD) saw the extension of Chinese authority over the whole of Asiatic Russia, and over what is now Afghanistan. The Mongol Yuan dynasty during the thirteenth to seventeenth century witnessed Chinese adventures still further afield. Burma was conquered, so also Thailand and the whole of Indo-China. Indonesia and Ceylon were attacked; and in Western Asia the whole of the Islamic territories, including Mecca itself were forced to pay tribute to Peking. Only India was left alone.

We may see thus, more precisely the point of Mao Tse Tung's reference in 1939 to the "many Chinese dependent states and parts of her territory"; and the

territorial objectives of Communist China, though, he had ignored the Great Wall of China which was an indicator of the isolated and defensive mind of the Chinese.

After the capture of Peking in January, 1949 and the fall of Nanking to the communist forces in April 1949 it was apparent that it would not take more than a year for the Chinese to enter Tibet. It was most unlikely that the communist Chinese would ever give up the traditional Chinese claim of sovereignty over Tibet. In spite of their profession of peace the Chinese launched their attack on eastern Tibet on 7 October, 1949. Then it was quite clear that the China would soon overrun the whole area upto the border of India and would also claim those parts of Northern India which had been shown in the Chinese maps as coming under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Emperors. The Communist world at this time understood only force. But due to the state of unpreparedness it was not possible for India to intervene militarily in Tibet. It, therefore, appeared that within a couple of years the Chinese would range all along the 2600 miles frontier with India. In spite of their peaceful professions the Chinese launched their attack across Indian border. To cope with the situation it was decided to tune up the administrative and intelligence set up on the border areas. It was also decided to increase the strength of Assam and J & K Rifles and open new posts. To a small extent the Army was also redeployed to serve as some sort of deterrent. Steps were also taken to improve the road communications on the north-western border.

In spite of the Sino-Indian estrangement ultimately these two great countries will come together due to the similarity between Buddhist and Hindu religions and their great places of pilgrimage being spread over the two countries. People of the two countries are close in their

beliefs and are sympathetic towards each other. They have a great love for each others places of worship- mandirs and monasteries. In the future, China and India, have to forge a unity against the threat of Islam from the west and technical superiority of the advanced countries in Europe, USA and Japan.

There are some important questions which have not been adequately answered :-

- (a) After liberating itself, why did China not help the down-trodden countries as India has done in the case of African nations and other countries? Conversely, it subjugated Tibet.
- (b) Why did the USA not come to the help of Tibet in 1951 as they did in the case of Kuwait when Iraq captured that country in 1991?
- (c) Why did India surrender it's rights in Tibet to China without bargaining?
- (d) Why did India not get China to maintain Tibet as a buffer state between the two countries?
- (e) Apart from constructing railways, roads and airfields for consolidation of their military rule, will the Chinese apply the same criteria to the development of Tibet as it will in its own territory?
- (f) In view of the changes in the world panorama why is China keeping Tibet captive when it is known that Tibet is not akin to China in any way?

The Chinese Army Organisation and Tactics are given at Appendix 'D' attached.

Appendix 'D'

(Refer to Page No 64)

CHINESE ARMY ORGANISATION AND TACTICS

The fundamental Chinese military doctrine is that victory can be won only by attacking. The purpose of offensive operations is to destroy the opposing forces rather than to capture or retain ground. This doctrine applies at all levels. Moreover, the Chinese believe that victory can be achieved only by striking in selected areas with overwhelming numerical superiority. A ratio of 3:1 is considered the minimum but much higher ratios of even upto 10:1 are preferred. The concentration of force occurs only in the area of the proposed attacks and the Chinese are quite prepared to weaken other sectors to achieve this imbalance.

Basic Tactical Manoeuvres : The Chinese Army, as with all conventional armies, employs two distinct offensive tactical manoeuvres :

- (a) Envelopment in its various forms.
- (b) Frontal attack.

Envelopment: This manoeuvre can take either of the following forms :

- (a) **Double Envelopment** : Elements of the attacking force engage the enemy in the main defensive position to neutralize their small-arms fire and force them to disclose their mortar and artillery defensive fire tasks. The remaining assaulting force divides and simultaneously attacks around both flanks to

cut off the enemy force and thereby prevent reinforcement or withdrawal. The encircled force is then destroyed.

- (b) **Simple Envelopment** : The main assault is on one flank only, otherwise, the aim and the method of execution are the same as for the double envelopment. The frontal attack is employed only when reconnaissance has failed to find a gap in the enemy defenses and manoeuvring along the FEBA (Forward Edge of Battle Area) has failed to develop one. The assault is launched on a narrow front with the aim of breaking through the enemy FEBA, thereby permitting successive assault waves to pass through and fan out within and behind the defensive position.

A frontal attack combined with an encircling movement is called penetration-envelopment manoeuvre.

Tactical Techniques : The Chinese use simple catch phrases to describe various tactical actions. Examples are “one point, two sides” and “divide and destroy.”

- (a) One point, two sides is a variant of the envelopment in which the enemy's weak spot is attacked simultaneously with feints and enveloping movements. “One point” means the concentration of overwhelming superior strength and attack at a selected weak point. “Two sides” means the launching of an attack is limited to only two sides. When strength permits, attacks on three or more sides may be launched.
- (b) Divide and destroy is a principle applicable at

all levels and is an alternative to the "one point, two sides" tactic. As the words imply, the Chinese attempt to penetrate the enemy position and to split the defenders successively into smaller groups; then they assault to annihilate by overwhelming forces.

The Chinese, in all their tactics, make the maximum use of the following basic principles.

- (a) In the Offensive—the continuous development of the attack at high speed is mandatory. The division usually is assigned an initial, an intermediate, and a subsequent mission, all to be accomplished within the first 24 hours of the operation. Successive echelons follow up and exploit successes, thereby maintaining the initiative and momentum of the attack.
- (b) Secrecy is maintained in the preparation for the attack and every effort is made to surprise the enemy as to the time and place of attack.
- (c) Long experience in guerrilla warfare has made the Chinese masters of the art of infiltration. Their teaching emphasizes the importance of sufficient infiltrating forces around the enemy's flank and rear prior to an assault. These forces endeavour to prevent reinforcements from assisting withdrawal of the defending forces prior to their destruction by the main attack.
- (d) Virtually all movement and the majority of operations occur at night.

2. All Chinese offensive actions are divided into four basic phases:

- (a) The Approach March—The move from the assembly area to the attack positions.
 - (b) The Attack—The move from the attack positions to the assault positions.
 - (c) The Assault—The move from the assault position until the initial objectives have been secured.
 - (d) The Attack in Depth—This phase begins as soon as the initial objectives are secure. It may be started by the first (or assault) echelons when it is still an effective force or by the second (or support) echelon.
3. One or more of the following echelons are employed to carry out and add weight and depth to the attack:
- (a) First or assault.
 - (b) Second or support.
 - (c) Third (usually only when attack is on a narrow front).
4. Reserve—The Chinese do not term the reserve as an echelon in the offensive. The second or support echelon is given the task to follow up and support the assault echelon in the attack. This echelon is not a proper reserve although it may be assigned missions such as repelling counterattacks which are normally given to a reserve. The reserve proper varies in strength according to each operational situation. Normally, the reserve is an infantry force, motorized and if possible—a combined arms force.

5. A guide to the size of the reserve is as follows:

Division-Battalion in reserve
Regiment-Company in reserve
Battalion-Company in reserve
Company-Platoon in reserve

6. The Chinese ground forces recognize three different types of attack which affect their tactics at division level and below:

- (a) Logically following the advance, is a contact stage between opposing forces on the move. It usually takes place before either force is fully deployed.
- (b) Whenever possible, it is conducted on the advance. Its purpose is to penetrate thinly occupied and hastily prepared defensive positions by rapid deep thrusts, disrupting the entire defensive system.
- (c) The deliberate attack requires careful planning and a relatively long period of preparation. It is mounted against a well-prepared defensive position.

7. Action of a division deployed in a movement to contact is as follows:

- (a) On contact, the advance party, consisting of a reinforced company, engages the enemy and attempts to destroy or contain him. If the point and advance party (van guard) cannot overcome the resistance they will quickly dig in and engage the enemy while the advance guard proper (about a regiment) attacks on

one or both flanks to encircle and destroy the enemy or force his retirement.

- (b) The advance guard commander deploys his force on a wide front to seek the best avenues of approach to the enemy's flanks. The advance guard action is often a piecemeal operation, units being allotted tasks and launched into action as they become available. These rapid piecemeal attacks are part of the reconnaissance to locate weapon and gun positions, and to determine defensive fire tasks.
- (c) The divisional commander, from the information gained by the advance guard, will deploy the main body as soon as possible to carry out an enveloping attack to annihilate the enemy.
- (d) If the enemy withdraws before encirclement is complete, he will be pursued.

8. Rapid and bold offensive action is considered the key to success, even against a stronger enemy, and envelopment is considered the best method of isolating and annihilating portions of the enemy position. The division commander, having allotted his commanders their tasks, places greater reliance on their initiative and judgement in dealing with the situation and in the pursuit that may follow a quick success-than in the more deliberate phases of war.

9. The proposed role of armour, based upon the terrain, determines its positions in the advance. However, tanks are normally allocated to the advance guard to support the infantry in its operations.

10. The commander handles his armour carefully and is unlikely to commit his tanks until the enemy tank strength has been reduced by artillery and anti-tank fire. Tanks will then be massed in the main attack to destroy the remaining enemy tanks and strong points and to pursue the withdrawing forces.

11. The role of artillery is to deliver fire and pin down enemy forces as soon as they come within range, and to counter flank attacks.

12. Artillery units are deployed well forward in the advance to exploit the maximum range of the guns. On contact with the enemy, artillery units with the advance guard go into action as rapidly as possible. Direct fire, including tank fire, constitutes a considerable portion of the initial support until artillery with the main body is able to reinforce the fire of the advance guard.

13. Chinese doctrine stresses that artillery must be able to support the infantry and armour as they commence their attacks.

14. Engineers organic to the division and regiment clear or supervise the clearing or breaching of obstacles and minefields on the scale of three lanes per attacking rifle company.

15. Mine detector probes and dogs are used for mine detection. Mines are neutralized and removed for use else-where, although attempts may be made to detonate anti-personnel mines on the spot using long bamboo poles with hooks. Bangalore torpedo-type devices are also used.

16. Minefields may also be breached by using mine ploughs or in difficult terrain by mine plough/roller

combinations. Both are fitted to the front of tanks. These devices clear mines only from the area over which the tank tracks move. The undetonated mines may be destroyed by an explosive-filled hose dragged by the tank across the minefield.

17. The quick attack is made against an enemy occupying a hastily prepared defensive position. The Chinese consider that such a position is unlikely to have a fully co-ordinated defensive plan and that its fire support will be relatively poor.

18. The Chinese emphasise the need for speed in the planning, preparation and execution of the attack consistent with an adequately coordinated fire plan. The "one point, two sides" tactical technique (a main attack with simultaneous diversionary attacks) is normally used.

19. An attack by an infantry division with two regiments in the first echelon and one regiment in the second may be launched on a frontage of about 6-7 kilometers. At times, three regiments may be deployed in line for the attack.

20. Infantry Regiment. In this case the first echelon usually consists of two reinforced battalions and the second, of one battalion. The attack frontage is about 3 kilometers.

21. The battalion attacks on a frontage of about 700 meters with two reinforced companies in the second.

22. Fire support—A quick conventional fire plan will be drawn up while the infantry moves into attack positions. This allows for the employment of divisional artillery and infantry mortars.

23. The deliberate attack against a well-organised defensive position is characterized by careful planning, increased reconnaissance activities, and the deployment of numerically superior forces against specific positions. In fact, a Chinese infantry division may be employed against a battalion position or a battalion against a platoon.

24. The Army carry out an attack either independently or as part of an army group. The attack frontage is normally about 8 kilometres and its initial objectives are about 10 to 15 kilometers deep. Final objectives may be upto 30 kilometers.

25. The division, usually controlled by army, attacks on a 4-kilometre front, normally in two echelons. Initial objectives are 3 to 4 kilometres behind the enemy Defended Area (FEBA—Forward Edge of Battle Area) and final objectives may be upto to 10 to 15 kilometers. If the attack is on a narrow front, the Chinese may use three echelons.

26. The divisional commander may use one or more of his infantry regiments to try to outflank and encircle the enemy. The regiment attacks in two echelons, the first consisting of two reinforced battalion, the second, of one battalion on a frontage of upto 2 kilometers. Objectives are allocated only to the first echelon battalions; the second echelon follows the first echelon and is usually given missions of mopping up bypassed centres of resistance. Both echelons are considered to be committed.

27. The infantry battalion normally attacks in two echelons in a manner similar to the regiment.

28. The rifle company is considered to be the smallest force capable of using the "one point, two sides" and "divide and destroy" techniques. It often attacks in two

echelons, but it can attack in one. Orders are usually very specific and give the company commander little scope for independent action.

29. Frontages—The frontage allotted depends on a number of variables. Listed below is a guide to the frontages for various units carrying out a deliberate attack:

a) Army	6-10 kilometers
b) Division	2-4 kilometers
c) Regiment	1-2 kilometers
d) Battalion	500-700 meters
e) Company	250-350 meters
f) Platoon	100-150 meters

30. The pursuit will start when the enemy either is routed or attempts to break contact in a preplanned withdrawal.

31. When it becomes apparent through intensified reconnaissance that the enemy is planning or has just begun to withdraw, an attack is launched immediately to confuse him and disrupt his plans. Once it is clearly determined that a withdrawal is in progress pursuit is initiated. All available units are committed immediately, piecemeal if necessary, to insure that contact is maintained with the retreating enemy. Once initiated, pursuit cannot be terminated except on orders from a higher headquarters.

32. In the pursuit tactics, close and continuous pressure on the enemy is considered necessary to prevent his regrouping or reassuming the defence. As soon as possible, the Chinese form two or more columns, one to exert direct pressure and the others to move on either flank parallel to the withdrawing enemy in an attempt to overtake, encircle and then destroy him.

33. The flanking columns are organised from units of the support echelon and the reserve. They are often motorized and reinforced with tanks if available. Speed is emphasized and enemy strongpoints are bypassed so that critical road junctions and defiles on the enemy withdrawal routes can be seized and defended.

34. The Chinese define the defence as an intermediate stage in the overall, broad offensive aim. It is assumed that if the offensive is terminated due to strong enemy action or if time is required to concentrate forces for the counter-offensive, defense is regarded as a temporary expedient adopted in order to;

- (a) Preserve friendly forces while weakening those of the enemy.
- (b) Gain time to concentrate forces for the offensive or counter offensive.
- (c) Economize forces to allow an offensive to be mounted in another area.
- (d) Consolidate captured objectives.
- (e) Cover a withdrawal.

35. Chinese defensive postures are based on:

- (a) Retaining in the second echelon mobile reserves to block penetrations and to counter attack.
- (b) Making maximum use of both natural and artificial obstacles throughout the defensive area. Defensive positions are normally placed behind natural antitank obstacles which are

improved or supplemented by constructing boobytrap entanglements and laying antitank and antipersonnel mines.

36. Broadly, the Chinese employ two types of defensive positions : positional and mobile :

- (a) **Positional Defence**—It is organized in depth and designed to deny vital areas to the enemy or to halt his attack while inflicting significant losses on his men and material. For war units engage the enemy decisively and hold at all costs with no thought of withdrawal to successive positions. At the same time, this defence permits the massing of Chinese forces for the counter offensive.

- (b) **Mobile Defence**—This had developed from China's long experience in mobile revolutionary warfare. It is a "hit-and-run" type of defence based on movement. It is conducted as a series of defensive actions followed by controlled movement to the rear, with the aim of inflicting maximum casualties on the enemy without undue loss of one's own forces. Retention of terrain, per se, has only a passing relevance or importance. Chinese forces are organized so that they can break contact at will, thereby enabling them to continue their stepping-back process until the purpose of the mobile defence is achieved or until they have withdrawn back to an area where the bulk of their forces are deployed in a positional defence role.

37. **Deployment**—

- (a) **Army**—An army normally deploys with two

infantry divisions in the first echelon and one infantry division in the second. However, in a subsidiary sector, it might deploy three infantry divisions forward.

- (b) Division—An infantry division normally deploys with two regiments in the first echelon and one regiment in the second. In a subsidiary sector, some or all of the three regiments may be in the first echelon.

38. Dispersion—Chinese forces are always sufficiently dispersed to prevent a single tactical nuclear weapon from destroying more than one battalion-size unit.

39. Covering Forces—Elements (usually not more than a reinforced regiment) of the army's second echelon or of an armoured division attached to the army will normally be employed as the covering force in front of the divisional defence zone. The distance that it operates in front of the main defences varies from 16 to 100 kilometers and obviously depends on the terrain, the relative strength of opposing forces, and the overall mission of the Chinese commander.

40. The infantry division normally participates in defensive operations as part of a larger force. The army commander prescribes the area to be defended by the division and coordinates the employment of artillery and armour.

41. The infantry divisional commander is responsible for the following:

- (a) Organizing and defending an assigned defensive zone.

- (b) Providing security for supporting arms and services within the zone.
- (c) Constructing fortifications to withstand artillery fire and attacks by armour and from the air.
- (d) Maintaining integrity of the Defended Area and inflicting maximum casualties on the enemy in front of the Defended Area.
- (e) Should a penetration of the Defended Area occur, counterattacking to restore the integrity of the Defended Area or, if this is not possible, containing any penetration until counterattacks can be mounted by a higher headquarters.

42. Division Defense Area is organised as under—

- (a) Security Position. The security position is located forward of the main defensive position. It is lightly manned by mobile troops who provide security for forces in the main defensive position.
 - (i) Screening Force. This consists of the division reconnaissance company. It is deployed 6 to 15 kilometers forward of the main defensive position to provide early warning, to maintain liaison with the army's covering force, and to determine enemy strength and main axis of advance. It will fall back under pressure through the security position into the main defensive position where it will be used to cover gaps, to protect flanks, and to provide rear area security, particularly against airborne attacks.

- (ii) **Regimental Security Force.** This force operates some 2 to 6 kilometers in front of the FEBA and is deployed in locations prescribed by the division commander. The force normally consists of one reinforced company from each of the frontline regiment's second echelons. The regiment retains operational control over their reinforced companies. The tasks of the security force are to :
- (1) Defend stubbornly if the situation permits.
 - (2) Engage the enemy at long range in an attempt to force him to deploy prematurely and thereby slow down his advance.
 - 3) Deceive the enemy as to the strength, dispositions and intentions of the main defensive force.
 - (4) Maintain contact with the attacking force.
 - 5) Protect the main position from a surprise attack.
- (iii) **The Battalion Security Force.** Normally, each battalion is required to provide a reinforced platoon to man security positions up to some 2,000 meters in front of the FEBA. Operational control is retained by the battalion commander. Tasks are the same as for the regimental security force.

- (iv) The Company Security Force. Each frontline company usually provides a reinforced squad to man security positions up to some 750 meters in front of the Defended Area. In very close terrain the battalion commander may not order the establishment of such a force. Operational control remains with the companies at all times.
 - (v) Supporting Fire—Artillery, tank and heavy weapon fire is carefully coordinated to support the security forces mentioned above.
- (b) Main Defensive Position (MDP). The bulk of the division is deployed in the division MDP. The position is organized in depth as a continuous defensive belt. The defensive belt is made up of mutually supporting strong points or localities employing allround defence across the entire frontage. These strongpoints are expected to hold out even if bypassed or encircled. Gaps between companies and battalions are covered by observation, fire and minefields.
- (1) **Forces:**
- (a) In the division MDP-normally two reinforced regiments.
 - (b) In the regimental MDP-normally two reinforced battalions.
 - (c) In the battalion MDP-normally two reinforced companies.

- (d) In the company MDP-normally two reinforced platoons.
- (e) In the platoon MDP-normally two reinforced squads.

(2) Tasks:

- (a) To organize and defend their assigned sectors.
- (b) To inflict significant losses on the enemy and his equipment in front of the Defended Area.
- (c) To prevent penetration of the Defended Area and, should penetration occur, to restore the integrity of the Defended Area.
- (d) Position in Depth (PD). The position in depth is organized in such a way as to stop deep penetration of the defence zone, to provide a firm base to support counterattacks, and to provide rear area security. This organization applies to all units carrying out a positional defence. At division level one regiment normally mans the PD, the forward edge of which is usually located 6 to 13 kilometers behind the Defended Area. The regiment normally organizes the PD with two of its three battalions. Strong points are often constructed on the reverse slopes of key terrain

features. In addition, blocking positions are constructed. The third battalion of the regiment is usually motorised, forming part of the mobile counter attack force of the PD, and is located between the MDP and the actual PD itself.

(l) Forces:

- (a) In the division PD-one infantry regiment and one tank assault gun regiment.
- (b) In the regiment PD-one battalion.
- (c) In the battalion PD-one company.
- (d) In the company PD-one platoon.
- (e) In the platoon PD-one squad.

(m) Tasks :

- (a) To organise and defend the PD.
- (b) To provide rear area security.
- (c) To counter attack in order to destroy any enemy penetration and to restore the integrity of the Defended Area.
- (d) To contain enemy penetrations.
- (e) To act as a divisional reserve.

43. Digging—The ability and the willingness of the Chinese soldier to dig in and construct extensive, elaborate trench-work are extraordinary. Given time, he will build weapon emplacements and troop shelters that will withstand all but direct hits by conventional weapons.

- (a) Infantry—All infantry are dug in a series of a interconnecting strong points which are organised for all-round defence and mutually supporting. If time permits communication trenches and alternative positions are dug laterally between platoons and back to company headquarters. Overhead cover is normally provided for the bunker entrances, troop shelters, individual foxholes and machine gun emplacements. Comouflage is used extensively to provide concealment.
- (b) Tanks and APCs—Tanks and APCs are normally dug in. Explosives and dozer blades, if available, are used.
- (c) Artillery—Guns may be dug in, Comouflage is used extensively to provide concealment.

The continuing effort to modernise China's armed forces has required parallel strengthening of administrative support at all levels. Considerable improvement is apparent when current supply and service procedures are compared with those of the Korean War period, when China entered that conflict with little in the way of a recognised system for the administrative support of its forces. Although there are inherent weaknesses in organisation and equipment maintenance at the operational level, the PRCA's logistical system, especially its supply, transportation, and medical support functions are considered well suited, at least in theory, to the military establishment it is intended to support.

45. Chinese logistical doctrine has been influenced by the following :

- (a) Experience gained during the Korean War.
- (b) Influx of Soviet doctrine, training, and equipment in the 1950's.
- (c) Lessons learnt from the North Vietnamese support of their forces and the Viet Cong in the face of enemy air supremacy.
- (d) Experience acquired in moving troops and supplies during breakdown of communications caused by the Cultural Revolution.
- (e) Redeployment of troops and equipment to the north in response to the Soviet threat.

46. Some of the observations from the Korean war and other actions fought by Chinese are similar to our observations in the 1962. The Chinese have divided their country, possibly, into six fronts and eleven military regions. India is on the South Western Front and is allotted to Chengtu Military Region. The military regions are responsible for the command and control of the ground forces in their geographical areas.

Organisational structure of the combat unit/formations is as under:-

Infantry Battallion	(Strength-682)
Infantry Regiment (Equavalent to a Brigade)	(Strength-2046)
Infantry Division	(Strength-8451)
Mechanised Infantry Regiment	(Strength-2340)

Airborne Division	(Strength-9099)
Armoured Division	(Strength-9208)
Armoured Regiment	(Strength-1176)
Tank/Assault Gun Regiment	(Strength-596)

47. The usual type of offensive action is frontal attack on the enemy with Regiment (Brigade in our parlance)-and/or Battalion size units operating on independent axis along roads, valleys and ridges in conjunction with enveloping movements across the adjacent mountains. Enveloping forces are employed to seize commanding heights, passes and road intersections on the flanks and rear of the enemy position while the main force carries out the frontal attack. If the enveloping force succeeds, in making the enemy withdraw before the main frontal attack is initiated the main force will immediately carry out a pursuit to prevent the enemy from occupying another defensive position.

48. The Chinese make the maximum use of the basic principles of speed, secrecy, infiltration and night operations. The Chinese attack the enemy's weak spot simultaneous with feints and enveloping movements. They try to split the adversary into small groups and then to destroy them by assault with overwhelming forces.

49. Patrolling by Chinese troops is very aggressive and vigorous and their reaction to enemy patrolling is intense. They try to dominate 'no mans' land and are attracted towards gaps and junctions in the opponents defences. In fact patrolling is the corner stone of their victories.

50. In all phases of war Chinese patrols are headstrong and act energetically and skilfully. The patrols carry special equipment and a high proportion of automatic weapons. In addition, the Chinese have no scruples about

employing soldiers in civilian clothes or enemy uniforms for reconnaissance purposes.

51. Special attention is paid to winter warfare training. The Chinese believe that large scale ground operations in extreme weather are feasible. It is seen that extreme cold has a direct effect on troops stamina and their equipment.

52. The Chinese soldier has the ability to improvise under various conditions. He is the most motivated soldier in the world and can endure extraordinary hardships. The stamina of the individual soldier and his familiarity with marginal living conditions simplifies supply problems. Equipment is kept to the minimum required for efficient operating. Rations are simple; and personal needs and comforts are few.

53. The prominence and respect which the armed forces have enjoyed has enhanced the prestige and social standing of the soldier and he has overcome the traditional contempt for military life. It is a proud family whose son or daughter is chosen for the service. A Chinese soldier⁵ has a standard of living well above that of any average civilian. Special privileges and an enormous gain in special status have all contributed to what is considered to be generally good morale in Chinese armed forces. It is apparent that the Chinese soldier has a better status as compared with the Indian soldier. India must go seriously into this aspect to improve the lot of the Indian soldier. The majority of soldiers in the Chinese Army are drawn from the peasant-worker class, which constitutes eighty percent of the population. The average soldier is a hard and willing worker and is able to survive and improvise

5. *The Chinese soldier is a hard and willing worker with an ability to improvise under a variety of conditions. He is one of the most highly motivated soldiers in the world and can endure extraordinary hardship.*

under a variety of conditions. He has sufficient education to read and understand simple training manuals. His physical condition is considered excellent but technically he may not be so good. Pervasive and continuous indoctrination from an early age has instilled in him national pride. He is obedient and under competent leadership will strive to carry out his mission, regardless of obstacles and consequences.

54. In June 1965 all insignia indicating rank and branch of service were abolished and a standard uniform for all branches of the PLA was adopted. Officers have since been distinguished from enlisted men by the number of pockets on the coat: Officer's coats have four pockets; those of enlisted personnel have two pockets. There have not been any noticeable changes in the uniforms of the Army and the Air Force since 1965. However, in 1974 changes were made in the uniforms of navy personnel, particularly those worn aboard naval vessels.

There are three types of army uniforms:

- (a) Parade dress.
- (b) Service dress.
- (c) Field dress.

55. Parade and service dress are basically the same except that brown leather belts with side-arm holsters or ammunition pouches, white gloves, and black leather boots instead of shoes are worn with the parade dress. The winter parade dress uniform includes a brown fur cap and an overcoat with a brown fur collar.

56. The field dress uniforms; for winter and summer are made of olive-green cotton material, identical in colour and style, except that the winter uniform has an inner lining of quilted cotton padding which gives it a bulkier appearance. These uniforms (winter and summer) become

combat types with the addition of pouches, belts and other equipment. A light-green, faded outer shell worn over the winter field dress uniform has been observed.

Navy Uniforms

57. There are three types of naval uniforms with distinctive styles for afloat and shore-based personnel:

- (a) Parade dress.
- (b) Service dress.
- (c) Field dress.

Officers: Naval officer afloat have two styles of summer service dress uniforms. The first consists of a white coat and dark blue trousers, both made of a cotton material, black leather shoes, and a service cap with a black visor and a white crown. The other uniform is identical except that the material is woollen. A brown leather belt and holster, white gloves, and black boots are added to both summer and winter service dress uniforms when worn as a parade dress uniform. A blue over coat with a brown fur collar, and the above-listed accessories are used with the winter parade dress uniform.

58. The summer and winter field dress uniforms worn by shore-based personnel are of the type introduced in 1965.

59. Enlisted Personnel. The summer service dress uniform of personnel afloat consists of a traditional white jumper with a red rectangular patch beneath the shoulder, a blue and white striped undershirt, blue trousers, and a large round, white-crown cap. This uniform without cap and jumper is also used as a work uniform. The same style uniform, all dark blue and made of woollen material, is worn as a winter service dress uniform. Black

leather shoes and boots and olive-green, canvas, rubber-soled shoes are issued to personnel afloat. A cap band with Chinese characters is worn on the new sailor cap.

Air Force Uniforms

60. These are four types of air force uniforms:

- a) Parade dress.
- b) Service dress.
- c) Field dress.
- d) Flight dress.

No information is available on the enlisted personnel summer field dress uniform, although a work uniform of the same style as the officer field dress uniform has been identified. The jacket, like the trousers, is dark blue, not olive green. Flight personnel wear sheepskin-lined, brown leather jacket, trousers and boots. This uniform with blue instead of brown leather trousers and the Chieh-fang cap has also been observed.

61. **Paratroopers:** Paratroopers wear an olive-green coat with blue trousers, green-ribbed helmet, and light-green jumping boots.

62. **Chemical Warfare :** For this activity there is a green, one-piece protective suit, apparently made of rubberized fabric, protective mask, gloves, and buskings or boots.

63. The air force parade dress uniform is believed to be similar to that of the army; however, no information is available for positive identification.

64. The summer service dress uniform of both officers and enlisted personnel consists of an olive-green coat with red collar tabs, blue trousers, and black leather shoes.

65. Officers have a summer field dress uniform consisting of an olive-green, open-collar, waist-length jacket, blue trousers, and black leather shoes. No verifiable information is available on the enlisted personnel field dress uniform, although a work uniform of the same style as the officers summer field dress uniform has been identified. The jacket, like the trousers, is dark blue, not olive green.

66. **Armour** : Armoured troops wear a heavy, olive-drab, one-piece overall over the standard uniform in both summer and winter; a ribbed crash helmet of strong canvas material is worn with the overall.

67. **Collar Tabs** : Red collar tabs are a mandatory item for all uniforms, except for enlisted personnel afloat who wear rectangular red patches on their shoulders. Collar tabs are worn by officers and enlisted personnel.

68. **Headgear Insignia** : A red star insignia is displayed on all headgear worn by members of the PLA and the national emblem.

69. Since the abolition of rank and service insignia in 1965, military personnel have not been observed wearing decorations or commemorative badges on their uniforms. Although such national awards as Orders and Medals of August first, Orders and Medals of Independence and Freedom, and Orders and Medals of Liberation still exist, they are no longer awarded. Commemorative medals and badges for specific battle campaigns are no longer awarded. There is, however, a system of honours and awards for both individuals and units for efficiency, achievement and valour.

One who knows himself and the enemy will rarely be defeated.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDIAN FORWARD POLICY

To avoid confusion it must be clarified that there were really two types of Forward Policies which have been mentioned in this book. The first Forward Policy was a political one which was followed by the British government and to a certain extent by the Indian Government after Independence. British Political Forward Policy is explained at Appendix 'E' attached. The second brand of Forward Policy was a purely a military one which was adopted by the Indian Government after it was known that Chinese had constructed the Aksai Chin road in Indian territory. Effort has been made to explain the two types of Forward Policies. It is important to understand the forward policies that caused the 1962 war and which can prominently figure in future negotiations between China and India to settle the border dispute and in finalising the border between the two countries. Whilst the Forward Political Policy was formulated by the Government as a political venture the Forward Military Policy was left to the Army, to execute as a corollary of the Forward Political Policy. The two policies often intermingled. One can also say that the conception stage remained in the political domain and implementation process was mainly a military one which is explained in these pages.

Indian frontiers have always presented an open invitation to foreign invaders. Time and again we have been leaving them unguarded. No attempt was ever made to guard the frontier on a permanent basis. Some rulers did make vallant efforts to resist invaders but, more often than not, they failed because they were unable to rally and inspire forces at a national level and there was lack of solidarity and purpose. Often we lost as we were not fully prepared; many times we were defeated as we did not have the desire, weapons or equipment, at times, we were complacent and woke up late. It is criminal not to prepare and to leave the security of a country to chance and budgetary constraints. Security of the country must be accorded the first and top priority in the fiscal estimates and subjected to the age old policy of 'beg, borrow or steal' if need be. There should be two budgets presented on two separate occasions. One budget should cater for entirely security needs and the second should deal with other requirements.

On 15 August 1947 India became an independent country and with that its boundaries also changed. In the British appreciation national interests of India were not factors which mattered. Until that moment; these had been the concern of Britishers, who saw the interests of the sub-continent in terms of British stake. With independence there was a total change. The boundaries of India ceased to be pawns of the British in the game with their imperial rivals. So far as the northern borders were concerned the policy of the new Indian Government did not differ from that of the departed British rulers. Independent India also initially continued British Policy towards Tibet. The Indian government soon saw that unresolved territorial problems along the northern borders were amongst its inheritance.

On the other hand the Tibetans, seem to have hoped that the transfer of the British power to Indians offered an opportunity for them to regain all the territory that the British had taken from them over the previous century or so. In 1947 they formally asked India to return to Tibet a wide strip of territory from Ladakh to Assam. The withdrawal of British power in 1947 prepared the way for reversal of the balance that had existed across the Himalayas.

When China annexed Tibet and stealthily built the Aksai Chin road, India was forced to adopt a fresh Forward Military Policy. General Kaul was the author of this Forward Military Policy in the sixties and according to Krishna Menon, the then Defence Minister, it corresponded to a game of chess and if it was implemented in the spirit of the game there was chance of its success. The aim of the policy was to interpose Indian posts amongst the Chinese to neutralise their communications and supply system and to render their positions untenable. More experienced incumbents considered the Forward Military Policy a reckless step even though Chinese reaction to our measures could lead to war with a superior adversary and we had to face the resultant consequences. It is known that many military experts opposed the indiscriminate opening up posts. Moreover, we did not have the required resources to back the effort. But, perforce, we had to follow this policy as there was nothing else India could do to oust the Chinese from our territory.

The initial Forward Military Policy was comparable with the passive civil disobedience movement which we carried out against the British. It reflected Nehru's pacific disposition. Many of us compared the forward Policy with police action, whereby, we could push the Chinese out of our territory. This action we thought, could not lead to

war. We considered the world would ensure that war did not occur. The Forward Policy was also to remain as a thought. It was considered that if war broke out it would unite the Indian nation and there would be cohesion amongst the people under the adverse conditions.

Some new Army units were proposed to be raised to back up the new Forward Military Policy. But insufficient funds were allotted to the Armed forces for weapons, equipment and ammunition; as such we found it difficult to equip the new Army raisings which were necessary to implement the Policy. It is strange that in this state of affairs we had to confront with one of the worlds strongest countries.

The Indian Government described the Chinese presence on Indian territory as an act of aggression, though ejection of Chinese by direct use of military force was ruled out because it could lead to war and the status quo was out of question as it would amount to defeat. The third way thought of was a novel one. India was to assert its right by sending patrols in areas in the possession of the Chinese since prolonged silence would mean tacit acceptance of Chinese occupation. The Indian patrols were to probe the Chinese occupied area. There were to be no formal attacks to avoid friction and clashes but our patrols were to penetrate the empty spaces between the Chinese positions to make these untenable.

In the north west region Aksai Chin had always been Indian territory and the Chinese claim to it was fictitious, concocted to camouflage illegal and clandestine seizure. If, China refused to withdraw from the area, India would have to turn to measures other than argument to recover it, lest the situation set into permanence - a de facto settlement by default. Therefore,

India had parried or rejected China's attempts to obtain an agreement on maintenance of the status quo of 1959.

The government, by describing the Chinese presence in Indian-claimed territory as an act of aggression, had brought upon itself the obligation to do something about this, by force if diplomatic methods failed. While resisting the Opposition's clamour for bombing or employment of paratroops or infantry to throw the Chinese out of the Indian soil, Nehru coupled his rejection of war with a commitment that, if diplomacy and talks failed, the Government would not supinely accept the situation. If ejection of the Chinese by the direct use of military force was ruled out because it would lead to war, and acquiescence in the status quo on the boundaries was ruled out because it would amount to defeat; a third way suggested was that India must assert its rights by despatching properly equipped patrols into the areas currently occupied by the Chinese, since any prolonged failure to do so will imply a tacit acceptance of Chinese occupation.

The Government of India had reached the same conclusion that one should not expect the borders to relapse into silence, as Indian patrols would have to begin probing the Chinese-occupied area. There would be no attacks on Chinese positions to avoid friction and clashes, but the Indian patrols would penetrate the spaces between them.

This Forward Policy was not formulated in the normal processes of government but it emerged in a kind of situation in which the Indian Government found itself at the beginning of 1960. Various and varying claims about the authorship of the policy were put forward.

As late as October 1962, General Kaul, then Chief of the General Staff, divulged that the Forward Policy had been his own conception 'sold to Nehru over the head of Krishna Menon', but in Gen. Kaul's later accounts, responsibility for the policy is shifted away from himself and towards Nehru, Menon and his own military superiors.

The objectives of the Forward Military Policy were first, to block potential lines of further Chinese advance; secondly, to establish an Indian presence in Aksai Chin which would make Indian participation in the joint withdrawal proposed by Nehru more than theoretical, and thus give strength to the diplomatic lever for getting the Chinese out of the area. Beyond that, implicit at the outset, was the intention to under-mine Chinese control of the disputed areas by the interposition of Indian posts and patrols between Chinese positions, thus cutting their supply lines and ultimately forcing them to withdraw. The Forward Policy really sprang from the conclusion that there was nothing else India could do.

At no time were the implications thought out in New Delhi. The policy was legalistic assuming that as possession is nine-tenths of the law India had only to go and stand on as many parts of Aksai Chin as possible to turn tables on China, or at least attain a position of equality with her. It was reckless, ignoring the often repeated Chinese warning that assertion of Indian claims in the western sector could court retaliation across the McMahon Line. At the bottom it was irrational, because its fundamental premise was that no matter how many posts and patrols India sent into Chinese claimed and occupied territory the Chinese would not physically interfere with them provided only that the Indians did not attack any Chinese positions. From the very beginning of dispute in 1954, after the advance of Indian boundary

posts in the middle area brought them into contact with the Chinese, India had been ready to threaten use of force against Chinese, who tried to maintain positions across the Indian claim lines, but Nehru and his colleagues were absolute in their faith that the Chinese would not do likewise.

The Forward Military Policy smacked of satyagraha, the passive civil disobedience movement which Indians employed against the British. In this case the satyagrahis would be armed troops, able to fight back if attacked; but the confidence in a kind of moral unassailability, which would dissuade the Chinese from attacking, recalled the belief that the British would be reluctant to use force, and that if they did it would rebound against them. 'My, whole being reacts against the idea of war anywhere, Nehru often said; but when not in his apocalyptic vein, he could be quite pragmatic about the prospect of war. 'A certain aggression has taken place on our territory', he told the Lok Sabha in 1961, when the forward policy had begun to be put into effect. 'How do we deal with it? First of all, what is the objective? Obviously, our objective can only be to get that aggression vacated. How do we get that aggression vacated? By diplomatic means, by various measures, and ultimately if you like by We go on strengthening our position to deal with the situation whenever we think it is strong enough to be dealt with by us, and not from a weak position. 'How it could be believed that the Chinese would stand idly while India gradually and laboriously built up positions of strength from which to attack them is difficult to understand; but that Nehru and his colleagues did believe it was to be demonstrated not only in the western sector, but below Thagla ridge in the east-until they were brutally uprooted in October 1962.

The Opposition benches were solid in their calls on the Government to use force to evict the Chinese as such action would not amount to war. 'To defend your own territory is not to wage war.' The opposition said, 'I have never known this suggestion before, that if you throw out bandits from your territory you are engaged in an act of war. It is just police action on your own territory.' The phrase 'police action' was consistently used by the Government's critics to describe what they had in mind for the Chinese.

After the Longju and Kongka Pass incidents of late 1959, with the realization that an intractable dispute might develop over the boundary question; the expansion of the Army became more purposeful and faster. In November-December 1959, 4th Infantry Division was hurriedly transferred from Punjab to the north-east and a new Division 17th created, 4th Division was placed under a new formation, XXXIII Corps, which, with its headquarters at Shillong, was responsible for Sikkim; the boundary with Bhutan; NEFA and East Pakistan; and Nagaland. 4th Division's responsibility was the McMahon Line, from Bhutan to Burma, about 360 miles; one of the division's brigades was promptly detached from service in Nagaland.

The transfer of 4th Division made little immediate difference to India's defence posture in the north-east. At this time no roads reached more than a few mile from the plains into the foothills, and there were no lateral roads in NEFA at all-the north-south lie of the great ridges running down from the Himalayas made lateral movement almost impossible, and access to the different sectors of the McMahon Line was from the Brahmaputra valley. The division's move into NEFA was painfully slow. In January 1960 one Infantry company established itself at Bomdi La; in March

another reached Tawang; and it was not until August 1960 that Tawang became a battalion location. By the end of August, the headquarters of 7th Infantry Brigade was at Bomdi La.

Vocal political opinion was, until late in the 1950s, against any increase in defence expenditure. Kripalani expressed it in the Lok Sabha in 1958:

We have believed that in a non-violent India the last thing the Government would contemplate would be an increase in the military budget, but I am sorry to say, and I think it would disturb the soul of the nation (Gandhi), that in recent years there has been an increase of about Rs. 140 million..... May I ask why we are increasing our military establishment ?

While the Gandhians were criticizing the Government from one side, the Defence Services were complaining that the budgetary restrictions under which they operated were preventing proper upkeep of their establishments, let alone allowing modernization. The Services difficulties were exacerbated by the political rivalry and personal hostility between Krishna Menon and Moraji Desai.

The complaints from the Army became more pressing in the early 1960s, and in 1961-62 a series of letters went from the Army Headquarters to the Defence Minister enumerating deficiencies in equipment and supplies, and warning that these could be crippling in the event of war. The letters were drafted by General Kaul, Chief of the General Staff, and in the last and most urgent of them he described the quandary in which Government policy had placed the army. 'On the one hand we are required to raise additional forces

as soon as possible, failing which we run the risk of our territory being occupied by foreign aggressors; on the other hand, the weapons, equipment and ammunition available to us are so meagre that we are finding it impossible to equip the new raisings'. This particular letter included the request that it be placed before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet.

The conception of the Forward Military Policy; that moment when the thought that India might one day have to move patrols and posts into Chinese held territory became an intention to do so, can be traced back to the beginning of 1960 but it was not really put into effect until the end of 1961. The long delay between the adoption of the Forward Policy and the first attempts to implement it reflected the army's unwillingness to undertake a course for which military means were wholly lacking.

The Government's policy at the end of 1959, as set out in Nehru's September memorandum, was to maintain the 'status quo' on the boundaries and carefully avoid any provocation, 'not only in a big way but even in a small way'. Military expression was given to that policy in instructions from army headquarters to the Commands concerned; In November Eastern Command was told to make clear to all ranks that 'we must avoid real conflict with the Chinese unless actually forced upon us,' and that no patrols should approach closer than two miles to the McMahon Line except in those places (such as Khinzemane) where posts had been set up practically, on the line itself. In February 1960 Western Command was ordered to take up positions along a line roughly between Murgu, Tsogtsalu, Phobrang, Chushul and Demchok and given as its task the prevention of any further Chinese incursions. The westernmost positions of the Chinese

at that time were believed to be at Quizil Jilga, Dehra La, Samzungling (on the Galwan river), Kongka Pass and Khurnak fort; so distances of between twenty and fifty miles would accordingly separate the two sides (except at Demchok, which was less than twenty miles from the southern extremity of the main Chinese road).

Even for this limited defensive task, however, the Army's resources were deficient. There were only two battalions of the Jammu and Kashmir Militia. In Ladakh; there were no regular troops, no supporting arms. There were no roads to, or within, the western boundary sector. Construction of the road from Srinagar to Leh had begun in 1954 but was suspended for four years, and Leh could still only be reached by mule track or by air. There were landing-strips at Leh and Chushul, but other places had to be supplied by air-drops. At this time Western Command's estimation of its needs, was for a brigade group (i.e. five infantry battalions plus supporting arms) in addition to the militia battalions already in the sector. This requirement was based on intelligence suggesting that the Chinese already had more than a regiment in the area (equivalent to an Indian brigade) with supporting arms; including some armour; and on recognition that the network of Chinese roads, which was already well advanced, gave them immense advantages of supply and manoeuvrability. Western Command wanted four infantry battalions to be inducted during 1960, and the fifth in 1961.

In May 1960, at a meeting under Krishna Menon in the Defence Ministry it was decided that the Army should establish itself on the old trade route running north from Shyok and set up a post as near the Karakoram Pass as possible. When this had been done the possibility of patrolling eastward up the Chip Chap

Valley would be explored. In the meantime, unoccupied areas were to be patrolled, but the troops were to avoid clashes and, if they encountered Chinese, they were to report their position without attempting to dislodge them.

The first evidence of these instructions appears in a minute signed by the Foreign Secretary in 1960. This pointed out that there were no restrictions on India's sending out forward patrols; the only condition was to avoid border clashes. The minute, therefore, proposed a more active patrolling policy, in the western sector, with the troops steering clear of Chinese posts but not hesitating to probe into, and set up posts in areas across the Chinese claim line where as far as was known, the Chinese were not established. This minute was passed to the Defence Ministry and on to Army Headquarters, but it was not reflected in orders to the troops for three months. A signal from Army Headquarters to Western Command only four days after Foreign Secretary's minute was signed in fact confirmed the earlier orders. It stated that the Government's policy was to maintain the status quo on the boundary, maintaining our positions firmly on our side of the international border under our control at present. So far as the disputed areas are concerned the status quo that has existed for some time is to be maintained. In the context of that policy it was necessary for the army to exercise effective control over the areas which are undisputed/unoccupied and also to prevent any further infiltration into our territory. The signal went on; "these requirements in some cases necessitate probing forward and establishing additional posts ahead of our present defensive positions". The operative part of the signal concluded with the order that troops must avoid any clashes with the Chinese, and fire only in self-defence. Army Headquarters had thus carefully omitted the

instructions, which required Indian troops to move into Chinese claimed territory. Army Headquarters instructions referred only to such areas as were undisputed/unoccupied-that is, areas outside the Chinese claim line where the Indians had not yet been able to set up posts or dispatch patrols.

That the Government's requirement for forward patrolling in the western sector was pressed can be inferred from new instructions issued by Army Headquarters at the turn of August-September 1960. In these instructions, Western Command was advised that patrols could be sent into areas claimed but not occupied by China, 'to determine the extent of the Chinese ingress and to ensure that no further advance is made by Chinese troops in the area where no static posts have been established by them so far. This signal provided for the implementation of the Forward Policy but it was optional, not mandatory. The dispatch of patrols into Chinese-claimed territory was left to the discretion of Western Command, the decision to be taken in the light of tactical and logistical factors. Army Headquarters was quite plainly stalling on the implementation of instructions that the Government had issued without proper consideration of the military factors.

At the same time as it sent the new instructions down to Western Command, Army Headquarters warned the politicians and bureaucrats of the serious military risks entailed in the forward patrolling for which the Government was pressing. The Army pointed out 'that forward patrolling, as called for by the Government, would invite a sharp Chinese reaction, with 'the possibility of the international border, which is dormant at the moment, becoming active'. The acute difficulties of transport and supply in the western sector had

prevented the induction of additional troops, and with the limited strength available the army would not be in a position to counter effectively any large-scale incursion by the Chinese.

Whatever the demands and attitudes of the politicians, civil servants and high army officers in 1960-61, they came up against the hard rocks of fact - or rather against the rocky, forbidding terrain of north eastern Ladakh. As against the five infantry battalions which Western Command had said must be in the sector by late 1961, only one was actually inducted. After this battalion (1/8th Gorkha Rifles) was deployed during the summer of 1961, the Indian Army strength in the western sector was three battalions (of which two were militia) without any supporting arms, under a brigade headquarters now based at Leh. The posts and picquets held by these troops were still on the same line as had been defined in Army headquarters orders in February 1960 - well short of the Chinese claim, except at Demchok. The government's pressure for forward moves had been resisted by the Commands concerned, who were unwilling to send troops where they could not be supplied or supported, and the only advance made in the spring of 1961 was a post at a point beneath the Karakoram Pass named Daulet Beg Oldi, was set up but this was not in territory claimed by China.

If the Indian Army's strength in the western sector had by mid-1961 thus been increased only slightly with the greatest difficulty, their position relative to the Chinese had changed drastically, but for the worse. While the construction of the road from Srinagar to Leh was lying pended (the first experimental convoy got through only in October 1961; until then, the troops were supplied by air or mule

convoys), the Chinese had pushed feeder roads up to their westernmost posts. The terrain they had to deal with was relatively easy, and they had sufficient labour and road-building equipment. In New Delhi this intensified Chinese activity in Aksai Chin was seen as a provocative development. That the Chinese might be moving in reaction to the Indian diplomatic stance and to India's own military build-up, small and slow though that was, occurred to no one but some of the soldiers; one of these was later to point out to his Government that the Aksai Chin road was a vital strategic link for the Chinese, and warned that they would react forcefully to Indian moves which threatened it, however, distantly.

At the end of 1960 Indian military intelligence reappraised the Chinese strength in the western sector, putting it now at a division, with some armour, and having high mobility because of their road network and motor transport. Accordingly, Western Command informed Army Headquarters that a full Indian division was required in the sector if the Chinese threat were to be contained.

Whereas a division was needed only one regular and two militia battalions were all that the Indian Army had been able to deploy. The speed and weight with which the Chinese had outdistanced the laborious Indian build-up emphasized the unreality of the Forward Military Policy - but without impressing the Indian Government, which continued to press for its implementation.

In the summer of 1961 the Indian Army was maintaining with great difficulty a line of posts and picquets that for almost its entire length was well short of the Chinese claim line in the western sector. The

exception was at its southern extremity, where the Indians had established a post at Demchok (inside the Chinese claim line-Peking calls it Parigas) and in 1961 had sent out some patrols from there. Peking complained in August about these moves and some Indian patrolling just over the Chinese claim line near Spangur Lake, accusing India of having 'wilfully carried out armed provocations and expanded its illegally occupied areas in the Chinese border region'. New Delhi retorted that the areas about which China complained were Indian; the allegation that Indian troops are intruding when they go to a part of Indian territory is manifestly absurd, the note said, and the measures India adopted for defence within her own territory were no concern of China's. That month, Nehru had told the Lok Sabha that there had been 'no further Chinese aggression anywhere, but when replying, belatedly, in October, to the Chinese protest, India accused China of numerous recent intrusions.

Orders began to go out from Army Headquarters for forward patrols even before the Forward Policy directive had been issued to the two commands. Those orders were detailed and specific, stating which troops should be moved and when; giving the routes to be followed and the area in which posts were to be established, decisions which would normally have been left to the discretion of lower formations. The patrols and citing of posts were directed by General Kaul and his officers of the General Staff, in consultation with Intelligence Bureau, and frequently with, the foreign Secretary. From the beginning it was stated that the posts to be established were to be so cited as to dominate the Chinese posts.

Acting on these orders, small parties of Indian troops moved out eastward from all their main positions

in the western sector through the winter of 1961-62. The towering, naked ridges kept the troops to the valleys, a necessity confirmed by the need to have flat dropping zones on the which the Air force could parachute their supplies. The general altitude was in the region of 14,000 feet, and passes took the patrols; as high as 16,000 feet. The temperatures were arctic, and the troops winter clothing was inadequate and in short supply. The rarefied air meant that the troops would carry only small loads themselves; mules were not of much use at those altitudes and there were, in any event few of these, and no 'yaks,' the only reliable pack animal in such conditions. All supplies, often including water, had to be airdropped.

When the Forward Policy began to be put into effect, the Leh-based 114 Brigade had still only three battalions under command-one regular and two militia. These troops were between them responsible for a front of more than two hundred miles, stretching from the Karakoram Pass to a few miles beyond Demchok. The limit of their responsibilities was in theory the Indian claim line; on the Kuen Lun mountains more than a hundred miles to the east, on the far side of the empty, freezing wasteland of the Aksai Chin plateau.

The Forward Policy was meanwhile beginning to have effect in a rather passive way. Small Indian posts were being established overlooking Chinese positions and sometimes astride the tracks or roads behind them; the General Staff theory was that the Chinese lines of communication would thus be cut forcing the ultimate withdrawal of their posts. In the beginning of the year the Indian press and foreign correspondents in New Delhi, reflecting what they were being told by officials and the Army staff officers, began to prophesy early steps by the Army to force the Chinese out of Aksai

Chin. China's warnings of grave consequences if the Indians persisted in their forward movements became emphatic, but Nehru dismissed them. He explained to Parliament that the Chinese had become rather annoyed because Indian posts had been set up behind their own, and reassured members who might have thought the Chinese tone dangerous. 'There is nothing to be alarmed at, although the Chinese note threatens all kinds of steps they might take,' he said.. 'If they do take those steps we shall be ready for them'. In June, Nehru again assured Parliament that the position in the western sector was 'more advantageous to India than it was previously.'

By this time another infantry battalion 5th Jat had been inducted into Ladakh and deployed in the forward positions. Like the other three battalions, this was also split into small detachments; by mid-summer there were sixty Indian posts out in the sector. Facing these was a full Chinese division. This meant that the Indians were overall outnumbered by more than five to one but the actual difference between their strength and that of the Chinese was far greater. It was not only that the Chinese were concentrated whereas the Indians were thin on ground, or that they were motor transported when the Indians had to trek on foot, the Chinese had all regular and proper supporting arms for their troops, while the Indian 114 Infantry Brigade had nothing beyond one-platoon of medium machine-guns. The Chinese could be seen ranging their heavy mortars and recoilless guns on the Indian posts, and their infantry was equipped with automatic rifles. The Indians had nothing heavier than three-inch mortars and most of their posts lacked even those, the Indian troops were equipped with the Lee-Enfield rifle which had seen action before the First World War. The posts which the Indians set up were no more than platoon

or sometimes section positions, scraped out in ground that was frozen to within a few inches of the surface even in summer. The troops lived in tents or makeshift shelters of crates or parachutes and they were dependent upon air supply for all maintenance.

The Chinese began to react vigorously early in 1962 when the Indians set up a post overlooking a Chinese position, and the Chinese promptly took up positions around it. In April Peking informed India that border patrols, which China had suspended in 1959, were being resumed in the western sector from the Karakorm to the Kongka Pass; and warned that if the Indians persisted in their forward movement, patrolling would be resumed everywhere along the frontier. This note described how the Indian troops on the Chip Chap Valley axis had taken up positions on two sides of the Chinese post and were 'pressing on the Chinese post and carrying out provocation'. Peking said that if such provocation continued, the Chinese troops would be compelled to defend themselves, and India would be responsible for the consequences. The Indian Government dismissed such warnings as bluff and threatening Chinese moves as idle boasts. Early in May Chinese troops advanced on one of the new Indian posts in the Chip Chap valley in assault formations, giving every indication that they meant to wipe it out. Western Command asked permission to withdraw the post and the request was passed on to Nehru. He believed that the Chinese were making a show of force to test India's resolution and said that the post should stand fast and be reinforced. When the Chinese did not follow up their threatening moves it was concluded in the Government and at Army headquarters that the Prime Minister's judgement and nerve had been vindicated, and that the basic premise of the Forward Policy had been confirmed. Further

confirmation was obtained from the Galwan incident. The Galwan valley appeared to Army headquarters as one of the best routes along which troops could move into Chinese held territory. The track through the valley was in fact extremely difficult, and the Chinese had a post at the head of the valley at Samzungling, since at least 1959; nevertheless a patrol up the Galwan with a view to establishing a post that would dominate Samzungling, was among the first forward moves ordered by General Kaul in November 1961. The attempt to negotiate the valley up river in the winter failed, the terrain being too difficult; and in April Army Headquarters ordered that another route be tried, this time over the hills from the south. Lt General Daulet Singh of Western Command demurred, warning that any move to threaten the well established Chinese post at Samzungling would almost certainly evoke a violent reaction. He pointed out that as the Chinese had given notice that they were resuming patrolling in this sector, a threat appeared to be building up to the Indian posts already established, and therefore everything should be done to consolidate these rather than try to set up more posts. He concluded that, in the circumstances, no Indian post could be established at Samzungling but Kaul overruled him. 'The Galwan river was an axis along which the Chinese can make a substantial advance', he replied, and therefore they must be forestalled. Accordingly, a platoon of Gorkhas set out from Hot springs, trekking over the forbidding ridges, and after more than a month emerged on the upper reaches of the Galwan River, taking up positions there on 5 July. In so doing, they not only cut off a Chinese outpost that had been established farther downstream, but were able to hold up a small Chinese supply party. The first Chinese reaction was diplomatic, a note of strongest protest on 8 July asking for immediate withdrawal of the Indian troops and warning that China'

will never yield before an ever deeper armed advance by India, nor.....give up its right to self-defence when unwarrantedly attacked.' India replied that her forces 'have regularly been patrolling the Galwan valley and have never encountered any Chinese infiltrators' there, and also lodged 'an emphatic protest' against the Chinese reaction describing it as 'unwarranted aggressive activity'. Warning that Peking would be entirely responsible for any untoward incident, the Indian note said that 'China should stop the incessant intrusion deeper inside Indian territory and ceaseless provocative activities against Indian border guards'. The Chinese reacted on 10 July, advancing on the Indian post with a company in assault formation and quickly building up to battalion strength. Through loudspeakers the Chinese, with interpreters, tried to play on the Gorkhas' national feelings, proclaiming that China was a better friend to Nepal than was India, and berating them for folly in serving India's expansionist ambitions. The Gorkhas, cocking their guns rather than their ears, lay low. Seeing this as the most serious confrontation yet, the Indian Government called the Chinese ambassador to the External Affairs Ministry and warned that if the Chinese troops pressed any closer to the Galwan post the garrison would open fire. Furthermore, if the post were attacked, India would take retaliatory action against Chinese positions. In a few days the Chinese did pull back a little from the Galwan post, but they continued to surround it in relatively greater strength, cutting it off from ground supply route. Western Command signalled New Delhi that any attempt to reach the post by land would provoke a clash, and asked for air supply; the reply came back the same day, that the post was to be supplied by the land route. In the reading taken in New Delhi, an eyeball to eyeball confrontation had been relaxed by not attacking the Galwan post and so the

initiative must be maintained by challenging the besiegers with a land relief column. Another small force was therefore dispatched to Galwan. It turned back in August, under the Chinese guns, when the Chinese said that they would fire if it advanced any farther. The use of force was not advisable Western Command reported - it was beyond the Indians' present capacity and might touch off open hostilities. The Galwan post was henceforth supplied by air for a long time until the morning of 20 October, when it was wiped out by the enemy.

News of the Chinese siege of the Galwan post was published in India on 11 July in reports that presented this as new and provocative Chinese advance into Indian territory. When later it was appreciated that the Chinese had not carried out their physical and diplomatic threats to attack the post, a wave of triumph swept the press and the politicians. A Congress MP said that the incident had raised the morale of the whole nation. 'The Chinese withdrawal in the face of the determined stand of the small Indian garrison', news paper Hindu put it, 'was taken to confirm the basic logic of the Forward Policy, that if the Indian troops were resolute, the Chinese would swerve away before impact'. The orders which had been given to the Galwan post were extended to all Indian troops in the western sector. From 'fire only if fired upon' the orders were changed to 'fire if the Chinese press dangerously close to your position'.

Nehru described the Indian actions at this time as a dual policy, with the military moves on the ground complemented by steady diplomatic pressure. In keeping with this concept, India in May revived and slightly modified the proposal that Nehru had put forward in November 1959 for joint withdrawals behind

each other's claim line. This proposal, as Nehru now assured the Indian Parliament again, meant a very large withdrawal for the Chinese and a very small withdrawal for the Indians. China had rejected this before, and New Delhi now sweetened the pill a little by embodying in the official proposal the suggestion, which Nehru had previously made only in a press conference, that pending settlement of the boundary question, India would 'permit, continued use of the Aksai Chin road for Chinese civilian traffic'. It was hoped in New Delhi at this time that, with the establishment of Indian posts in Chinese-claimed territory Peking would now be more inclined to take what the Indians considered to be the best way of saving China's face. After again asserting India's readiness to risk war with China, Nehru said in the Lok Sabha, on the day that the withdrawal proposal was renewed to Peking: 'If one is prepared to recover (the areas occupied by China) and one is strong enough, other things also help in the process and it is possible that those things plus our preparation for any action may result in some kind of agreement for these areas to be liberated'. This, read in the context of the note delivered to Peking on the same day, suggests that Nehru believed that India's resolute advance into Chinese-occupied territory would ultimately make China accept the necessity of complete withdrawal, and that he hoped that the few Indian posts already established might already have brought the Chinese to that position.

If Peking had accepted the proposal, it is most likely that Nehru would as far as his extreme pliability to domestic pressure was concerned would have taken a very distant interest in the nature of the traffic on the Chinese road. But in the Chinese perception of the situation, the proposal was as unreal, and as much of

an affront, as it would have been to India if Peking had proposed that India withdraw all personnel, civilian and military, from the area south of the McMahon Line, subject to China's allowing India use of roads in NEFA for civilian traffic. 'Why should China need to ask India's permission for using its own road on its own territory? Peking remonstrated in reply. 'What an absurdity, if the Indian Government wished its proposal to be considered seriously, the Chinese suggested, it would have been prepared to apply the same principle to the eastern sector; but Nehru had of course ruled that out, assuring the Lok Sabha that 'we are not going to withdraw in the east. In the note reviving the proposal for joint withdrawal India had gone very close to threatening China with war, by quoting a remark that Nehru had made in the Lok Sabha on 2 May; 'India does not want, and dislikes very much, a war with China. But that is not within India's control'. In rejecting the proposal as 'unilaterally imposed submissive terms', Peking pointed out that China was not a defeated country, and declared that she would never submit before any threat of force.

New Delhi's conclusion from this exchange appears to have been that the Forward Policy had simply not yet brought enough pressure to bear, and must, therefore, be pursued until China accepted the need for withdrawal.

The Indian troops in the western sector were pressing hard, setting up their puny posts within near range of the Chinese, acting as if they were the vanguard of a powerful army rather than the stake in a wild political gamble. But the Forward Policy was by no means bold enough for the Government's domestic critics, who continued to demand stronger and quicker action against China. Defending itself,

the Government began to play the same numbers game that Nehru had decried when his critics used it. Official spokesmen drew lines on maps to connect the new forward Indian posts, calculated the area thus enclosed, and claimed that more than a quarter of the area 'overrun' by the Chinese had been recovered. An Indian journalist who enjoyed ready access to the Prime Minister reciprocated with fulsome praise, reported that the troops in the western sector had made a general advance over a wide front of 2,500 square miles' and complimented Nehru on 'a unique triumph for audacious Napoleonic planning'. The real situation did not go entirely unreported; one political columnist with good military contacts wrote in August that the Chinese enjoyed a ten-to-one superiority in the western sector and had all the advantages of terrain and communications. But this was an isolated report; other journalists were writing that the Indians were in superior strength and better equipped than the Chinese, and suggesting that the latter were garrison troops of poor fighting quality.

That did not, however, satisfy the Government's critics or diminish the clamour in Parliament for yet stronger measures to expel the Chinese. If as the Government said, the situation in the Western Sector had now changed in India's favour, why the Opposition wanted to know, was the Army not being employed in a massive and immediate offensive to throw the intruders out of Indian soil? 'The bogey of Chinese superiority..... should not worry our military experts,' an Opposition MP told the Lok Sabha in August : not only were Chinese lines of communication very long, but their army was distracted, too, by the threat of revolt of a dejected and frustrated population.

After a tour of the western sector in June, Kaul reported. 'It is better for us to establish as many posts as we can in Ladakh, even though in penny packets, rather than wait for a substantial build-up, as I am convinced that the Chinese will not attack any of our positions even if they are relatively weaker than theirs'.

Earlier, Nehru, rebuking his critics for urging the Government on to more drastic measures, had rejected the thought of what he called adventurist action, saying that it would not be fair to the Indian troops, brave and fine men, but by the end of the summer there had been a marked change in his attitude. 'We built a kind of rampart on this part of Ladakh and put up numerous military posts, small ones and big ones', he said in Parliament in August. 'It is true that these posts are in constant danger of attack with larger numbers. Well, it does not matter. We have taken the risk and we have moved forward, and we have effectively stopped their further forward march.....If (the Chinese) want they can overwhelm some of our military posts. That does not mean we are defeated. We shall confront them with much greater problems and face them much more stoutly'. Thus, it cannot be said that Nehru was ignorant of the situation in the Western Sector or that he failed to appreciate the risk to which the Indian troops were exposed.

Lt General Daulet Singh of Western Command was, on the other hand, still by no means reconciled to the sacrifice of his troops in a gamble that he saw as irrational and hopeless. In mid-August he wrote to Army Headquarters pointing out the enormous superiority of the Chinese in the Western Sector and the helplessness of the Indian posts which, anchored as they were to the valley floors by the need for proximity to their dropping zones, were dominated by

the Chinese from higher ground 'Militarily we are in no position to defend what we possess, leave alone force a showdown', he wrote; 'and therefore it was vital that no clash should be provoked'. He deduced from the experience of the past three years that 'China does not want war with India on the border issue provided we do not disturb the status quo'. But he argued that 'as the Aksai Chin road was a vital strategic link for the Chinese, they would react forcefully to Indian moves which threatened it, however distantly'. He proposed therefore that, 'until India's strength in the western sector matched that of the Chinese (and for that he said a division of four brigades with all supporting arms was needed), the Forward Policy should be suspended. Some political solution should be found for extricating the beleaguered Galwan valley garrison; and he noted that the Chinese had made plain that, far from interfering with the Indian withdrawal from the post, they would welcome it'. Daulet Singh concluded with a lesson for his civilian masters:

It is imperative that political direction is based on military means. If the two are not co-ordinated there is a danger of creating a situation when we may lose both in the material and moral sense much more than we already have. Thus, there is no short cut to military preparedness to enable us to pursue objectively our present policy aimed at refuting the illegal Chinese claim over our territory.

Daulet Singh had to wait nearly three weeks for a reply from the General Staff. When it came, it declared that events had justified the Forward Policy, and that its continuance was vital to stake our claim, as unless this is done the Chinese have a habit of pouring into any vacuum. There was no mention of the reinforcements which Daulat Singh had said were

essential even to allow him to maintain his present position (four infantry battalions, a mountain artillery regiment and medium machine-guns); and the reply concluded 'that if a showdown is forced upon us we must do the best we can under the circumstances'. At about this time a senior officer of the General Staff, on a visit to the eastern sector, was reported to have strongly reassured officers there who thought the Chinese too strong to be tackled that experience in Ladakh had shown that 'a few rounds fired at them would make them run away'.

As August passed into September, the Chinese protests became more threatening, 'Shooting and shelling are no child's play and he who plays with fire will eventually be consumed by fire'. Peking wrote in mid-September. 'If the Indian side should insist on threatening by armed force the Chinese border defence force.....and thereby rouse their resistance, it must bear the responsibility for all the consequences arising therefrom'.

The situation reached a climax in October of 1962 - WAR BROKE OUT as a result of the Forward Military Policy - eventually a 'casus belli' ensued.

Appendix 'E'

(Refer to Page 92)

BRITISH FORWARD POLICY (POLITICAL)

Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British power in India expanded, until in the north it reached the great barrier of the Himalayas. There it came into contact with another empire, that of China. In the north-west and the north-east, where no minor, independent states existed to act as buffers, the British sought secure and settled boundaries, with China; that they failed to achieve their purpose and failure was to lead in 1962 to the border war between India and China.

As the advancing British frontier approached the great tangle of the Hindu Kush and the Karakoram mountains in the north-west, Imperial Russia moved towards the same point from the other side. The same process made for the advance of both powers, conquest entailing the need for further conquest; the Russians explained the compulsion behind their advance.

Russia had come into contact with a number of semi-savage tribes, who proved a constant menace to the security and well-being of the empire. Under these circumstances, the only possible means of maintaining order on the Russian frontier was to bring these tribes into subjugation.

More pithily, an Englishman later described the imperial drive for expansion as 'the natural impulse of the civilised to overrun the uncivilised on their borders'. But although these approaching empires were

both in fact subject to the same compulsion to expand, each concluded that the other was advancing in deliberate menace.

A constant and basic British aim developed; to keep the Russians as far as possible from the plains of India, but the tactics varied in accordance with the attitudes of those determining policy in London and in India, and with the significance these attached to the role of the third factor in all their calculations-China.

There were two principal schools of frontier policy; first, the forward school, which wished to see Britain advance to meet the Russian threat directly and as far away from the plains of India as possible; second, the moderate school, which pointed to the cost and risk of trying to establish boundaries in remote and immensely difficult country, suggested that the limits of British power should be set where they could more easily be supported, and proposed that the aim of keeping Russia back could be served by interposing a third power between the lion and the bear. There were various possible players for that role : Afghanistan was one, sometimes small states such as Hunza looked likely; but, throughout, it was recognized that China, established in the area a century before British or Russian power reached there, would best be fit for the part-if the Chinese were capable of it, and if they could be persuaded to play.

The history of British frontier policy in the north-west is an alternation of the forward and moderate schools of influence in London and India. These shared, however, a common purpose, the creation of a linear boundary. This was something required by modern states, but unfamiliar and even alien to their predecessors; to those, a sovereignty that shaded off

into no-man's land, giving a frontier of separation rather than contact, was both more familiar and more natural. "The idea of a demarcated frontier is itself an essentially modern conception and finds little or no place in the ancient world", Lord Curzon observed at the beginning of this century, pointing out that, until then, 'it would be true to say that demarcation has never taken place, in Asiatic countries except under European agents. But distrustful China was, for the most part, able to resist or evade British pressure, and so, at both ends of the Himalayas, no-man's-lands still separated China and India when these became independent in the mid-twentieth century; their quarrel arose from the need to translate those zones into lines, and from the failure to agree on a method.

In the nineteenth century the border with China in the north-west did not have much concern to the British. Their attention was focused on the border with Afghanistan, and on the Russian threat that was believed to lie beyond it, and the pendulum of official favour; swung between forward and moderate policy in that regard for decades. To the moderates, 'the natural and impregnable boundary of our Empire' was the Sutlej River. But with the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 the British inheriting the domains of the conquered Sikh Kingdom, advanced their power to the mount of the Khyber pass, where they felt imperial logic beckoning them on to Kabul, and from there, perhaps, to Herat. The strategic argument of the forward school could hardly be better put than it was by Lord Curzon:

'India is like a fortress, with the vast moat of the sea on two of her faces and with mountains for her walls on the remainder; but beyond these walls, which are sometimes of by no means insuperable height, and admit of being easily penetrated, extends a glacis of varying breadth of dimension. We do not want to occupy

it, but we also cannot afford to see it occupied by our foes. We are quite content to let it remain in the hands of our allies and friends, but if rivals creep up to it and lodge themselves right under our walls, we are compelled to intervene because a danger would thereby grow which might one day menace our security.....He would be a short-sighted commander who merely manned his ramparts in India and did not look beyond.'

Kashmir fell to Britain in 1846 as a result of the first Sikh War; but, rather than try to occupy it themselves, the British opted to set up Kashmir as the guardian of the northern frontier, without the hostility, expense and added responsibilities which its annexation would involve. Accordingly, they made over Kashmir to Gulab Singh, a local Dogra ruler whom the Sikhs had made Governor of the hill state of Jammu. Thus they created the state of Jammu and Kashmir—setting Hindus rulers over a Muslim people and planting the seed of the bitter quarrel between the heirs to their power on the sub-continent and thus, as that border-conscious proconsul Lord Curzon put it, they 'carried the strategical frontier into the heart of the Himalayas. That happened because the Treaty of Amritsar left Gulab Singh under the suzerainty of Britain and because Gulab Singh, himself no mean empire-builder in a small way, had, several years before, conquered the little kingdom of Ladakh.

Ladakh, lying in the valley of the upper Indus at an altitude of twelve thousand feet and more, was part of Tibet up to the tenth century.

Working in 1846 and 1847, the commissioners drew a boundary from a little north of the Pangong Lake to the Spiti River; but they stopped there, and of the terrain to the north, between the Pangong Lake

and the Karakoram Pass, one of the commissioners observed that it 'must be viewed as terra incongnita, so that in the direction of the north-east the boundaries of Tibet cannot be correctly defined, but his conclusion that, as the area was totally uninhabited, the alignment of the boundary there was not of much consequence was to be believed. It was to be at the heart of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute, just over a hundred years later.

A boundary alignment that filled the gap between the Pangong Lake and the Karakoram Pass was provided by an officer of the Survey of India, WH Johnson, who visited Khotan⁶ in 1865 and then trekked back across Aksai Chin-across the 'desert of white stones'. This high and desolate plateau, 17,000 feet above sea level, where nothing grows and no one lives, lying between the towering ranges of the Karakoram and the Kuen Lun - this desolation was to be the bone of contention between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China in the middle of the twentieth century. But, desolate and forbidding as the region is, for all its total absence of fodder or shelter and its killing winds, it has not been without its human importance. An ancient trade route lay across it; and in its brief summer, when for a few hours around noon the ice melted in the streams to give water for beasts, caravans of yaks crossing it from what is now Sinkiang to Tibet, carrying silk, jade, hemp, salt or wool

6. Khotan was a rich oasts kingdom situated on the famous Silk Route in China and was famous for Jade, silk and carpets. The kingdom was also a famous supplier of precious stones for almost 2,000 years. The Chinese scholar Fa Xlam has left a vivid account of the kingdom through which he passed in the fourth century AD on his way to India to study the original Buddhist Scripture. Marco Polo, the Venice adventurist merchant, also visited the kingdom in 1274 AD.

Aksai Chin, together with a broad strip of territory to the north of the Karakoram Pass, which WH Johnson showed as within Kashmir in a map he drew on the strength of his adventurous journey to Khotan and back.

The Johnson line was shown as the boundary of Kashmir in an atlas published in 1868, and thence found its way on to numerous other maps which drew upon that alignment. The fantastic hope of greatly expanding the flow of trade between India and Central Asia formed British frontier policy in this period, and this was stimulated by a rebellion in China's westernmost territories. By 1866 an independent state, Kashgaria, had come into existence there. By this time the Russians, who had already taken Tashkent were considering sieze Kokand, and were confident that the barriers of the Karakoram and Kuen Lun ranges would exclude the British.

During this period, trade and rivalry with Russia, and for influence and trade in Kashgaria⁷, an independent state, had dominated British frontier policy, virtually excluding any consideration of the actual boundary. The British, however accepted that the natural alignment for such a boundary, when it came to be drawn, would be along the Karakoram mountains from the Changchenmo Valley to the Karakoram Pass; in 1873 the India Office in London prepared a map for the Foreign Office showing that alignment. But the proximity and steady advance of Russian power, the alarming prospect that the Karakoram mountains might soon form the first common boundary the world may ever see between the

7. *Kashgaria in Sinkiang had come into existence after a rebellion in the western china under strong ruler Yaqub Khan.*

dominions of Old England and Holy Russia', encouraged the perennial forward school of frontier strategists. In the same year i.e., 1873, one of these urged that the Kashmir boundary should be pushed up from the Karakoram to the Kuen Lun mountains so as to absorb the no-man's land of Aksai Chin. On this occasion the moderates prevailed, pointing to the immense difficulties of the terrain, to the rashness of claiming a boundary where it was impossible to uphold it, and to the unreality of the Russian threat to India.

It remained British policy, however, to prevent contact between their territory and Russia's territory in Central Asian objective which Russia in fact shared. While the British soldiers were warning their civilian masters of the danger of a Russian invasion of India, their opposites in the Tsar's army were apprehensive of British attack upon them across the Pamirs, highlands of nearly twenty thousand feet. Both Governments might have profited from the advice given a decade earlier by London to the Governor-General in India; 'You listen too much to the soldiers.....you should never trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe.'

The common interest of Britain and Russia in keeping a buffer between their dominions was demonstrated in the Pamirs settlement of 1895, by which they drew out a thin high strip of territory called the Wakhan strip, which they agreed to regard as part of Afghanistan. This was meant to meet the western boundary of China (who had declined to participate in the Pamir settlement); and it became British policy to induce China to fill out and thus complete the buffer, leaving no vacuums into which Russian or even British

power could be drawn. In 1889 the then Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, noted; "The country between the Karakoram and Kuen Lun ranges is, I understand, of no value, very inaccessible, and not likely to be coveted by Russia. We might, I should think, encourage the Chinese to take it, if they showed any inclination to do so. This would be better than leaving a no man's-land between our frontier and that of China. Moreover, the stronger we can induce her to hold her own over the whole Kashgar-Yarkand region, the more useful will she be to us as an obstacle to Russian advance along this line."

For some years after their reconquest of Kashgaria/Sinkiang, the China treated the Kuen Lun mountains as the southern limit of their territory. They had their hands full not only with re-asserting and consolidating their hold on their regained provinces, but in resisting and where possible, pushing back the eastward-thrusting Russians. By treaties in the 1860s, China had lost a great tract of territory in Central Asia to Russia. They explained that they were advancing only to put down dangerous rebellion of locals on their border, and assured China that when she reasserted her own authority in Central Asia they would restore the territory.

In the early 1880s China began to turn her attention to her southern frontier, where the British as well as the Russians were probing. In 1890 Captain Younghusband (who fourteen year later led the military expedition to Lhasa) was sent to the Pamirs with the objective of tracing the theoretical limits of China's claim there and encouraging the Chinese to fill out to them. The Chinese told Younghusband that their boundary ran along the Karakoram range and the watershed between the Indus and the Terim basin.

and in 1892 they gave physical expression to that claim by erecting a boundary marker in the Karakoram pass with an inscription proclaiming that Chinese territory began there. This move was welcomed by the British who expressed themselves in favour of the Chinese filling up the no-man's-land beyond the Karakoram.

The Karakoram Pass thus became a fixed and mutually accepted point on the Sino-Indian boundary, but on both sides of that pass the alignment continued to be indefinite. Further expressing their claim to a Karakoram boundary the Chinese in 1891 dispatched an official, Li Yuan-ping, to explore the whole stretch of their southern border. He travelled up the Karakash River to Haji Langar and thence turned south across Aksai Chin, crossing what seems to have been the Lingzi Tang salt pan and reaching the Changchenmo River. Li was a hardy and determined traveller but he was not a surveyor, and his description of his journey was vague; but George Macartney, an Englishman by then established as Britain's representative in Kashgar, learned of Li-Yang-ping's journey and did not doubt the authenticity of his report.

By the mid-1890s, the Chinese authorities had some knowledge of the border sector from the Karakoram Pass to the Changchenmo River; and they claimed Aksai Chin as their territory. They voiced that claim to Macartney in 1896. He had presented the leading Chinese official in Kashgar with a copy of an atlas which showed the boundary as WH Johnson had drawn it, putting Aksai Chin within British territory. The Chinese objected to this version of the boundary (it appears that its adverse implications to China had been pointed out by Russian officials in Kashgar, to whom the Chinese had shown their new atlas) and

told Macartney that Aksai Chin was theirs. Reporting this to his superiors in India, Macartney commented that probably part (of Aksai Chin) was in Chinese and part in British territory. A British intelligence report of the same year noted Macartney's observation, and agreed with it.

Meanwhile in London, however, an influential strategist of the forward school was urging that in order to anticipate a Russian advance into India, the British should include within their boundaries not only the whole of Aksai Chin, but almost all the territory that Johnson's alignment of 1865 had given to Kashmir. This proposal was made in a paper written by Major-General Sir John Ardagh, an old India hand who was by then Director of Military Intelligence on the British General Staff, and submitted to the Foreign Office and Indian Office on January, 1897. It exemplified the reasoning and apprehensions of the forward school; and, although it was not accepted at the time, it continued for years to exercise influence in the ongoing debate on frontier policy.

Ardagh held 'that China's weakness made her useless as a buffer between Russian and the Northern Frontier of India. Citing the eagerness with which Russia has advanced her borders towards India, he predicted that she would eventually annex at least the eastern areas of Sinkiang and would then endeavor to push her boundary as far south as she can. He noted that the British Government had been accustomed to regard the Karakoram mountains as the natural frontier of India in the north-east, and conceded that in a general sense that form an acceptable defensive boundary, easy to define, difficult to pass, and fairly dividing the people on either side'. But, he went on that the physical conditions of these mountains, their

great extent, high altitude, general inaccessibility and sparse population, render it impossible to monitor the actual watershed; and the measures requisite for security, and for information as to the movements of an enemy, cannot be adequately carried out unless we can circulate freely at the foot of the space formed by the northern slope, along those longitudinal valleys which nature has provided on the northern side at a comparatively short distance from the crest. British policy should be directed to 'keeping our enemy from any possibility of... occupying these longitudinal valleys and there preparing to surprise the passes', he concluded, and therefore should aim at a boundary which would leave the northern approaches to the passes in British possession.

Ardagh's memorandum then specified such a boundary, following not the line of the Karakoram watershed but the crests of a series of ranges to the north of the Karakoram, among them the Kuen Lun. By following the Kuen Lun range, Ardagh's proposed boundary would have included Aksai Chin in India, and the important upper courses of the Yarkand and Karakash river systems as well.

In London the tendency would naturally have been to give full weight to the strategic prescriptions of the Director of Military Intelligence, but comments by officials in India suggest that they saw Ardagh's proposal as no more than the impractical theorizing of an armchair general. The Viceroy, Lord Elgin, warned London that, since the Chinese claimed Aksai Chin, any attempt to implement Ardagh's line would entail a real risk of strained relations with China, and furthermore might precipitate the very Russian advance which Ardagh wished to forestall. Ardagh might be right in his view that the crests of a mountain range

did not ordinarily make a good boundary in military terms, Elgin observed; but in the particular instance of the Karakoram frontier, 'we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted'. He rubbed in the point that his own strategic thinking, unlike Ardagh's, was based on the reports and opinion of officers who had actually visited the region in question:

They unanimously represent the present mountain frontier as perhaps the most difficult and inaccessible country in the world. The country beyond is barren, rugged and sparsely populated. An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country; it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction, where nature has placed such formidable barriers.

While thus rejecting Ardagh's forward solution to the problem posed by Russia's advance, the Viceroy and his advisers were as alive to that problem as anyone. In 1895, two years before he thus rejected Ardagh's proposal, Elgin had, indeed, put forward his own for putting a definite limit to Russia's advance : that Britain should settle the China-Kashmir boundary by a direct approach to Peking. Before any approach could be made to the Chinese, however it was necessary for the British to make up their own minds about the boundary they wanted, and this they did in 1898. Elgin adopted Macartney's suggestion that Aksai Chin should be divided between Britain and China along a boundary following the LakTsang (or Loqzung) range, a line of hills running roughly east west, and dividing the Aksai

Chin proper, on the northern side, from the Lingzi Tang salt plains, to the south. London approved this boundary alignment, and it was proposed to China on March 14th, 1899, by Sir Claude McDonald, the British Minister in Peking. Of the various conceptions held at different times in London and India about just where the north-west boundary with China should lie, this was the only that was ever actually proposed to the Chinese Government, and it has therefore of a particular significance. This 1899 (or Macartney-MacDonald) line was a compromise between Britain's strategic hankering for a boundary forward of the Karakoram range, and the recognition that since it takes two to settle a boundary a practical proposal must also take China's interests into account. Thus it left to China the whole of the Karakash Valley, a trade route and an ancient source of jade, and almost all of Aksai Chin proper; but, by following the Lak Tsang range, it left on the Indian side the Lingzi Tang salt plains and the whole Changchenmo valley, as well as the Chip Chap River farther north. This proposal was put to China in a note couched to sound as magnanimous as possible, and to take account of the known Chinese disinclination to engage in boundary demarcation. This would not be necessary, it suggested; since the boundary would follow the crest of inaccessible mountains, it would be sufficient if this were agreed verbally. But, although the British learnt un-officially that the local Chinese authorities in Sinkiang had intimated that they had no objection to the proposed alignment, China never replied to the 1899 proposal. Elgin's successor as Viceroy, Lord Curzon urged that as China had not rejected the 1899 proposal, she should be told that Britain intended henceforth to treat the line there as the boundary. But the proposal was not followed up, and the fluctuations of British frontier policy were resumed, in

reaction to the two variables: Russian pressure and Chinese weakness.

Through the first decade of the twentieth century, British policy adhered to the 1899 proposal, and aimed at establishing Aksai Chin as part of Tibet, not Sinkiang. The upshot of this was that in 1907 the British negotiated at St. Petersburg a convention by which the Russian as well as themselves were to keep out of Tibet; so, if Aksai Chin were Tibetan, they would have to keep out of that too. The overriding British interest in Aksai Chin was to exclude the Russians from it, and the simplest way of doing that seemed to be to confirm that the region was Tibetan/Chinese.

But what appeared to be the collapse of Chinese power in central Asia, in consequence of the revolution in China at the end of 1911, brought about another sharp change in the tactics of frontier policy in India. The objective remained the same to keep Russia as far from the plains of India as possible but the disappearance of China as a significant power in Central Asia meant that the means had to be revised. Russian annexation of Sinkiang had long been expected by the British; now it appeared imminent, and to anticipate it Lord Hardinge, by then Viceroy, seized upon the forward prescription of Ardagh. He urged London that, to forestall Russian annexation of Sinkiang, Britain should demand recognition of a boundary that placed Aksai Chin not only outside Russia but within British territory. The London Government did not act on that recommendation and no intimation that the British were reconsidering the boundary alignment proposed in 1899 was ever given to China. That the British Government in fact held to the 1899 proposal was indicated in the map

accompanying the Simla Convention two years later, in 1914; this showed Aksai Chin as part of Tibet.

During the period with which this account has been dealing, the sector of the frontier from Afghanistan to Nepal was considered by the British as a whole; but the 1947 partition of the Indian sub-continent, confirmed by the first Indo-Pakistan war in Kashmir, divided it at the Karakoram Pass. To the west, the frontier became Pakistan's responsibility; to the east, India's.

It appears that in 1927 the Government of India again looked into the north-west frontier with China, and decided that the boundary from Afghanistan to the Karakoram Pass (where the Chinese had erected a boundary pillar thirty-five years before) should run along the crest of the main Karakoram range-rather than far to the north, where the Johnson-Ardagh line had placed it. What was decided then about the sector to the east of the pass-which was to be the crux of the Sino-Indian dispute-is not known. But the 1927 decision did not find its way on to British maps; and when India became independent, in 1947, and for several years thereafter, most official Indian maps still showed the boundary in accordance with the extreme forward formulations of Johnson and Ardagh.

After 1899, however, there was, as far as the historical record shows, no further attempt by Britain to get China to agree to a boundary alignment in the north-west. The sector from Afghanistan to Nepal remained undelineated, a problem in the mid-twentieth century for the two inheritors of Britain's power on the sub-continent, India and Pakistan, and for the People's Republic of China.

For all the discussion in London and India about the boundary between Kashmir and China and the variations in conception of where, Britain's interest, should lie, there were no matching moves of troops or administrators. The frontier territory continued as it had always been, bleak, hostile and empty. From the British side came only a few explorer-travellers and political agents, and then 'shikaries', trekking into the Changchenmo valley to shoot yak or antelope, reluctantly, long before the British left the sub-continent both animals, previously plentiful, had almost vanished from the valley. Such travellers had, by the 1940s, arguably established a prescriptive right at least to the lower reaches of the Chengchenmo, up to the Kongka Pass, and perhaps as far as the Lanak Pass, some thirty miles east. But Britain had never attempted to exert authority in Aksai Chin, or to establish outposts in it—far less, to set up posts or exercise authority up to a boundary on the Kuen Lun range on the other side, which would have cut off the headwaters of the Karakash River and the Sinkiang-Tibet caravan route that crossed Aksai Chin. The boundary alignment which would have entailed such an expansion had remained a strategist's theoretical formulation.

The threat that nourished British desire for boundary which would leave covetous Aksai Chin within India continued almost to the end of their rule, however. In 1940-41 the Government of Sinkiang, then under the warlord Sheng Shih-Tsai, and leaning towards the Soviet Union, conducted a survey of Aksai Chin with the help of Russian experts. British intelligence must surely have learnt of this, and the presence of Russians in Aksai Chin might well have been enough to swing official favour in New Delhi back towards a forward claim line.

The Government's Tibet policy was strongly attacked in Parliament. Vallabhbhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister and Nehru's rival, warned that China's move into Tibet 'throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet, on which we have been functioning and acting during at least half a century'. Implicitly accusing Nehru of complicity and vacillation, Patel proposed a fundamental re-appraisal of China's policy, including redeployment of India's forces to guard areas likely to be the subject of dispute. Nehru's reply to this letter has not been published, but its gist might be inferred from what he did; he maintained his policy of friendship to China, continuing to champion her cause in the United Nations; but he had already ordered Indian administration to be extended through the NEFA as the tribal belt beneath the McMahon Line had now been named.

At the end of 1949 the situation in NEFA was much the same as the British had left it, with a post at Waiong, near the McMahon Line's eastern extremity, but Indian positions still well back from the Line in other sectors. Penetration of the Tawang Tract was still halted at Dirang Dzong; Tibetan administration in Tawang was still unchallenged. Within another year, however, many additional posts were set up in NEFA, and in February 1951 an Indian Official with an escort and several hundred porters moved into Tawang and meant to push their boundary up from Se La to the alignment McMahon had drawn. The Tibetan authorities in Lhasa protested, but were simply told by the Indian political officer that India was taking over Tawang. The Tibetans protested again, accusing the Indian Government of 'seizing as its own what did not belong to it'. This 'we deeply regret and absolutely can not accept', the Tibetans went on, and asked New Delhi to withdraw their force from Tawang immediately. The

protests were ignored; the Indians stayed on in Tawang and forced out the Tibetan administration, as the British had forced it out of Dirang Dzong in 1944. With this, the 'dangerous wedge' of Tibetan/Chinese territory that had so worried the British General Staff was at last physically removed, and the McMahon Line was in general transposed from the maps to the ground as the de facto north-east boundary of India.

That the Indian Government should have indicated their intention to take over Tawang to the Tibetan Government at Lhasa-rather than to Peking-is understandable. Although New Delhi now accepted China's sovereignty in Tibet it made diplomatic sense to treat the matter of Tawang as a local question, leaving it to Peking to protest. In the event, the Chinese Government made no comment at all on the Indian move, so far as the record shows. This otherwise puzzling silence can be construed only as China's acquiescence in India's moving up to the McMahon Line.

The move into Tawang met with only verbal resistance from the Tibetans, but the tribal people took a toll in blood for the extension of Indian administration elsewhere in NEFA. A strong Assam Rifles patrol, moving up the Subansiri River in the early 1950s, was warmly welcomed by one of the tribes, feasted and given shelter-and then massacred almost to a man. Seventy-three riflemen and civilians died. The Government dispatched a punitive expedition but seems, to have been content with an overwhelming show of force and did not burn villages and take prisoners as the British would certainly have done.

That the Indian Government would continue its predecessor's policy towards the McMahon Line was

more than natural. The strategic and geopolitical considerations that had formed Britain's approach to the north-east border applied with equal force for the new Government. Strategically, a boundary which put the Chinese on the verge of the Brahmaputra valley was as intolerable to the Indian General Staff as it had been to their British predecessors; a boundary on the crest-line, where McMahon had drawn it, had every advantage over a line at the foot of the hills. It was recognized that the population along the north-east frontier was ethnically and culturally closer to Tibet than to India, but this was seen as greater reason to bring it under Indian administration.

The only question for the Indian government then, was how should it deal with the fact that China had repudiated the McMahon Line? Again, the British precedent provided part of the answer; India would simply treat the McMohan Line as the boundary, leaving it to China to protest if she liked at the fait accompli of Indian administration of the tribal areas. But, moreover, it was decided that India would refuse to open the question to negotiations when or if the Chinese did raise it. To the Indians this later decision may have seemed a corollary of the policy of making the McMahon Line the de facto boundary; but, as later developments will show, the decision to refuse to submit the McMahon Line to the process of negotiations was itself a major step, pregnant with momentous consequences. It was indeed, to make the Sino-Indian boundary problem insoluble. So, the Indian delegation in the 1954 negotiations for a new agreement on trade and intercourse in Tibet made no mention of the boundary question, and indeed went out of their way to avoid the subject. Not only that, the Indians made no allusion to the trade agreement through which it was administered and it was populated by tribes deeply

influenced by Tibetan culture, and for the most by Buddhist.

There was an important trade route through this territory, and the British encouraged it by holding an annual fair at Udalgiri, near its southern extremity. That this singular tract, sixty miles broad was Tibetan was never doubted or challenged by the British, who indeed sometimes found the fact of Tibetan administration a convenience.

The British pre-occupation with what was seen as the menacing Russian advance towards India dominated policy towards Tibet in the initial years of the twentieth century that, like the north-west frontier, Tibet had become a board for the 'Great Game', and in the Younghusband mission to Lhasa in 1904 he staked Britain's claim there. The Lhasa Convention, signed as a result of that mission, bound the Tibetans to refuse entry to the representatives or agents of any foreign powers other than Britain. Thus Tibet was set up, like Afghanistan, as a buffer state mutually accepted by Russia and Britain. In all this diplomacy China had been in the British view a passive, almost a neutral element. China's suzerainty over Tibet was not seen in any way cause for alarm, and the reality of China's and Britain's relative influence in Tibet seemed to be comfortably symbolized in the fact that it was safer and quicker for Peking's officials to go to Lhasa via Calcutta and Darjeeling than by the direct overland route. But in the first decade of the twentieth century, Chinese policy in Tibet sharply changed, and so in consequence did the attitude of the British and especially the Government in India towards China. China embarked on her own kind of forward policy towards her central Asian marches, meaning to turn them from loosely controlled protectorates into full

provinces of the Empire. The Chinese now meant to extend their military presence through Central Tibet, to replace the theocratic and ancient machinery of administration there with more modern institutions, reducing the importance of the Dalai Lama and the power of the monastic orders and to counter and ultimately push back British influence along the Indo-Tibetan frontier. By the beginning of 1910, China had made a good start in this regard; the Chinese were the effective power in Tibet and Britain's policy of keeping the Russians out had been rendered an anachronism, and India had lost her buffer. In London the Morning Post sounded the alarm.

A great Empire, the future military strength of which no man can foresee, has suddenly appeared on the north-east frontier of India.....placed on the defensive resources of the Indian empire.....China, in a word, has come to the gates of India, and the fact has to be reckoned with.

The authorities in India, of course, needed no such warnings. Always sensitive to developments beyond the frontiers, they had watched the rapid reassertion of Chinese power in Tibet with mounting misgivings, and reacted with alarm when in May 1910 the Chinese occupied Rima, demanded taxes from the inhabitants, and gave orders for the cutting of a road through the tribal belt to Assam. By moving into the tribal belt the Chinese would raise an immediate strategic threat to Assam, and here were no wastelands like Ladakh.

A forward school promptly formed and arguments began to be urged both in India and in London for an advance of British administration in the North East to anticipate further Chinese moves. The Lieutenant-

Governor of East Bengal and Assam (then a single province), noting that 'we only now claim suzerainty up to the foot of the hills', recommended a more active patrolling policy, with officials touring in the hills beyond the frontier, and improvement of the trade routes to the principal villages 'so far as they lie within our recognized frontier and further, if unopposed. The retiring Viceroy, Lord Minto, was less tentative, proposing that the Outer Line should be extended to include all of the tribal territory. (At this time, it should be noted, all such forward proposals left the Tawang Tract aside, accepting that it was unchallengeably Tibetan/Chinese and had to be tolerated since it could not be changed).

As a general rule, enthusiasm for a Forward Policy seems to be felt in direct proportion to the distance from the frontier concerned. Those on the frontier are all for pushing it forward, while those at a cool distance see the difficulties more clearly than the advantages. So it certainly was, in 1910. The Government of India, under the new Viceroy Lord Hardinge, rejected the advice of the forward school, declaring that it 'saw no necessity at present for incurring the risks and responsibilities entailed by a forward movement into tribal territory now beyond our control. If the Chinese ever attacked India.' Hardinge pointed out, 'Britain would surely react with an attack on China herself from the sea; he was therefore opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border', was strongly to be deprecated. The Government in Calcutta (which was then the capital) could, of course, take a broader view than did the officials on the frontier, or those directly responsible for it. Calcutta felt more sharply, too, London's aversion to the sort of administrative advances that, experience had taught,

always led to the expenditure of money, sometimes of blood, and consequently to awkward question in Parliament, or even political storms. A very explicit section of the Act under which India was governed laid down that, except under 'sudden and urgent necessity', the revenues of India must not be used to finance military operations 'beyond the external frontiers' and the Government of India was accordingly inhibited from embarking on any policy which promised to entail such military ventures.

But if the Government in Calcutta had the final say on policy, question of implementation had to be decided lower down the administrative scale, and it was there that the forward school often came into its own. Interpretation of a directive, phrasing of an order for an officer setting out on patrol, even sometimes the timing of a departure to make sure that negative instructions were not received; the cumulative room for latitude was wide. Thus it happened that in 1911, despite the Government's refusal to approve patrolling across the Outer Line, a British official, Noel Williamson, was murdered by tribesmen well to the north of it, having crossed to investigate the extent of Tibetan influence beyond. Although Williamson had disobeyed orders to reach the place at which he was killed, his murder could not go unpunished, and London authorized a punitive expedition. But the objectives of the expedition were not purely punitive. It was also ordered to explore and survey as much of the country as possible, thus providing the 'knowledge requisite for a suitable boundary between India and China.....Keeping her as far as possible away from our present administered area'. Explaining the reversal of frontier policy to London, Lord Hardinge said that 'during the past few months there have been further developments in the Chinese policy of expansion which

it is impossible to ignore', citing Chinese moves in the tribal territory. These circumstances, he went on, had forced the Government to revert to his predecessor's proposal that 'endeavour should be made to secure, as soon as possible, a sound strategical boundary between China-cum-Tibet and the tribal territory,' and to make this the main object of our policy.

Spelling out the Forward Policy which had now been adopted, Hardinge took up Minto's proposal that the Outer Line should be pushed north so as to take in all the tribal territory not including, of course, the Tawang tract. There would be no need to demarcate it, he suggested, and the Inner Line, marking the limit of British administration, would not be affected. He considered 'that our future policy should be one of loose political control, having as its objective the minimum of interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the tribesmen from unprovoked aggressionand of preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory. Once the new boundary had been determined to British satisfaction, formal intimation of its alignment should be given to China.'

In 1911 and 1912 several expeditions, in addition to the punitive foray to avenge Williamson's death, were sent into the tribal area, and in September 1911 the General Staff of the Indian Army prepared a memorandum for the surveyors attached to the expeditions, to guide them in their quest for a strategic boundary. It was noted wistfully that a scientific frontier for the north east, which like the Ardagh line in the north west would give Britain control of the forward slopes as well as the passes, was unattainable, since the Chinese had already established themselves in effective occupation of the Tsangpo valley and at the headwaters of several of the rivers which flow down

into Assam. Asking the surveyors to keep the military aspect prominently in view the memorandum proposed a boundary following mountain crests eastward from a point on the Bhutan border a few miles south of Tawang. This proposal looked to annexing the lower portion of the Tawang Tract, but leaving Tawang itself to Tibet. A few months later, however, the soldiers had second thoughts, and proposed more radical change to 'rectify' that sector of the north east boundary to Britain's advantage. The Chief of the General Staff warned that the Chinese would be able to exert pressure or influence through the 'dangerous wedge' of the Tawang Tract. Rectification of the boundary here is therefore imperative, he concluded, and recommended as the ideal line one which would bring into India not only Tawang but a sizeable slice of Tibet above the Tawang Tract, including Tsona Dzong, another Tibetan administrative centre. The Government did not accept the full forward proposal of the Chief of General Staff, but two years later did adopt his recommendation in so far as that looked to bringing Tawang itself within the limits of India.

From 1911, then, the Government in India was embarked on a deliberate advance of the north-eastern boundary, which looked not only to bringing tribal territory under 'loose political control' but also to annexing a salient of territory which the British had recognized to be China's. To let that intention be known, however, it would not only invite vigorous Chinese protests about the Tawang Tract, but also a formal expression of the claim hitherto made only in Chinese maps, to China's suzerainty over the tribal belt. It would also open the Government in London to charges that it was deliberately infringing the provision of the Indian Act which required the permission of Parliament before military operations were launched

'beyond the external frontiers'. In consequence, not only were the expeditions into the tribal belt and beyond, into Tibet, held in abeyance, but when the Government's critics in Parliament did get wind of what was afoot they were deliberately put off the scent. Thus an MP who challenged the Government's right to undertake the operations in the tribal belt without Parliament's permission was told that area in question was not beyond the external frontiers; when he produced official British maps showing that it was, the Government retorted that the maps were not accurate in their depiction of the frontier.

The sudden collapse of Chinese power in Tibet in 1911-12 which, as has been seen, converted Lord Hardinge to the forward school of thinking over the north west frontier with Tibet and Sinkiang, and seemed to open an opportunity to take steps to avert future threats along India's north-eastern boundary. Moreover; having been made uncomfortably aware of the dangers in an active Chinese presence on the frontier of India, the British decided that their interest, political as well as strategic, would best be served by an arrangement that excluded effective Chinese power from Tibet. The Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 had set up Tibet as a buffer between the Russian and British empires; what was needed now was a parallel arrangement which made Tibet serve too the second purpose of being a buffer between the Chinese and British. To further this objective, Britain convened a conference at Simla in October 1913 China attending under constraint, the Tibetans, of course, with alacrity.

The aim of the British was that 'Tibet, while nominally retaining her position as an autonomous state under the suzerainty of China, should in reality be placed in a position of absolute dependence on the

Indian Government, and that there should be set up an effective machinery for keeping the Chinese out on one hand and the Russians on the other. But by this time central Asian relations between the great powers had become intricately complex; the rival interests of Russia and Britain in and around Afghanistan, Mongolia and Tibet were balanced into a delicate and wary detente. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was the pivot of that balance, and this precluded Britain from having any dealings with Tibet except through the Chinese.

The British held the Simla Conference as an attempt, to mend relations between China and Tibet, between whom fighting was going on at that time. In fact the British delegation worked throughout in close co-operation, nor far short of collusion, with the Tibetans, and it was later to be conceded by the London Government that the Simla negotiations failed 'simply and solely because the Government of India attempted to secure for Tibet greater advantages than the Chinese Government were prepared to concede.

The Simla Conference is a story in itself, and an intricate exercise in diplomacy, power politics, and espionage, played out in the queen of hill stations at her very prime, on the eve of the First World War. The British delegation was led by Henry McMahon, the same person who as a young Captain, twenty years ago, had accompanied Durand on his mission to Kabul and then spent two hard years demarcating the Durand Line. McMahon, by now Sir Henry and Foreign Secretary of the Indian Government, was a man of marked moral force, of the kind that Curzon must have had in mind when he spoke of the 'frontier school of character'. McMahon relished the creation and laying down of boundaries.

The main thrust of the open British effort at the conference was to get China to accept a division of Tibet into two zones, Inner and Outer Tibet, such as had recently been agreed between China and Russia in the case of Mongolia. China's suzerainty over the whole of Tibet was to be recognized, but she was to enjoy no administrative rights in Outer-Tibet and would thus be kept back from the borders of India. The Chinese were not prepared to accept the British proposal, but neither did they reject it out of hand; weakness had brought an unwilling China to the conference, weakness and the coercive diplomatic methods of Britain and of McMahon himself kept her there. The Chinese representative and intelligence agent in Calcutta Lu Hsing-chi, put it succinctly: Our country is at present in an enfeebled condition; our external relations are involved and difficult and our finance embarrassed. Nevertheless, Tibet is of paramount importance and we must exert ourselves to the utmost during this conference. The Chinese delegate at Simla Ivan Chen, a polished and experienced diplomat who had served for years in London; but Lu Hsing-chi, who described himself both as Chinese Consul in Calcutta and Chinese Amban (Viceroy) in Lhasa was the key man from the Chinese side. Lu's intelligence work was excellent. His drawback as an intelligence expert was that all his messages to China were monitored by the British.

The Chinese were deeply resistant to the proposal for the zonal division of Tibet, no doubt seeing plainly the purpose it was designed to serve, which in their eyes was simply the separation of Tibet or a great part of it from China. This was the issue upon which the conference finally broke down. McMahon was able in early April 1914 to induce Ivan Chen to initial the draft treaty which had been under discussion, and its

illustrative map, but Chen did so only on the clear understanding that to initial and to sign them were two separate actions and his Government repudiated even this action the moment it learned of it, severely rebuking Chen for his unauthorized compliance.

McMahon was able to draw the boundary line with a reasonable degree of precision thanks to the surveying and mapping done in the tribal territories during the proceeding two years. He was filling out details, on his maps up to the last moment. After the Simla conference opened Captain FM Bailey completed an adventurous track which had taken him up into Tibet, westward along the valley of the Tsangpo, and then south to Tawang, following a difficult but direct trail which was to play a significant role in the Sino Indian border war half a century later. When Bailey got back to Calcutta he found a telegram from McMahon summoning him to Simla, and the details of topography of the Tawang Sector he was able to supply presumably enabled McMahon to draw the western extremity of this line with more confidence.

The boundary line was drawn on two map sheets at a scale of eight inches to a mile, and was accepted by Tibet in an exchange of letters between McMahon and the Tibetan plenipotentiary on 24 and 25 March 1914. The letters included no verbal description of the new boundary, and made no mention of any principle upon which it had been drawn. The only evidence for the McMahon alignment lies in the original maps, of which copies were kept in Lhasa as well as by the British.

Essentially what the McMahon alignment did was to push the boundary northward about sixty miles, lifting it from the strategically exposed foot of the hills

to the crest line of the Assam Himalayas. It did not create a real watershed boundary line, as was later to be argued, since it cut several rivers, including the Brahmaputra, flowing south. As the maps on which it was drawn plainly show, the alignment follows for most of its length the edge of the great Tibetan plateau, where that abruptly gives way to the broken and sharply ridged country which slopes down to the Brahmaputra valley. By following that topographical feature, it became also to a very large extent an ethnic boundary, since the Tibetans had generally found the damp valleys beneath their high plateau uninviting, and had not settled there. The outstanding exception to that characteristic was at the western end of the line where that cut off the Tawang Tract, an area which had been heavily influenced by Tibetan culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

HIMALAYAN BORDER DISPUTE

Our northern frontiers remain undemarcated from Ladakh to Burma. Though the boundary between Bhutan and Burma was delineated by the McMahon Line, the 1320 km long McMahon Line was determined and drawn on map by Sir Henry McMahon in conjunction with the Chinese and Tibetan officials. However, nothing was done to demarcate it on the ground. McMahon as a young Captain, twenty years before had accompanied Sir Mortimer Durand on his mission to Kabul and then spent two years delineating the Durand line, between Afghanistan and India. McMahon, by now a Knight and Foreign Secretary of India, was a man of marked moral strength. McMahon cherished creating and laying down of boundaries and gained good experience in this line. McMahon was able to draw his line with a reasonable degree of precision as in the preceding two years a good deal of surveying and mapping was carried out in NEFA. He was marking details, on his map to the last moment of his tenure of office. At the Simla conference, held in October, 1913, to discuss and finalise the boundary line between India and Tibet the British delegation was also headed by Sir Henry McMahon. After the Simla Conference started, Captain FM Bailey accompanied by Captain Morshead, the surveyer completed an adventurous trek which took him into Tibet and west-ward along the valley of the Brahmaputra (Tsangpo), and again into the tribal

area of Tawang and Bomdila following a difficult trail which was to play an important role in the Sino-Indian border war, half a century later in 1962. When Bailey got back to Calcutta, he found a telegram from McMahon, summoning him to Simla. The details Bailey supplied on the topography of Tawang Tract, presumably, enabled McMahon to draw the western extremity of the line with more confidence. Originally, the 'Tawang Tract', which was called by the name of 'Tawang Salient', was kept out of alignment of McMahon Line but the British military authorities at Delhi considered Tawang Tract as a sensitive and dangerous area and it was brought within the Indian territorial limits. The McMahon Line was accepted by Tibet.

During the conference at Simla the thinking changed as quickly as the weather changes at this queen of the hill stations-sunshine now, cloudy later and so on.

The British conception of the boundary alignment, that would best suit their interests, changed during the Simla Conference with the line being moved northwards. However, McMahon indicated that Britain would have to abide by the Tibetan possession of the entire Tawang Tract. Accordingly, in November, it was decided that the boundary should run through Sela, the high mountain just under twenty miles south-east of Tawang. Finally, in February, the British advanced their demand again so that the line ran about twelve miles north of Tawang, through Bumla. This cut off the dangerous wedge of the Tawang Tract which had so far worried the soldiers. China did not ratify it and blamed Tibetans for surrendering the Tawang Tract to India and the status of this piece of land thus remained unsettled. McMahon himself had proceeded on home-leave and was later appointed British Commissioner in Egypt.

The Governor of Assam wanted a more impressive and permanent settlement, so that the possible intrusion by China into that area could be forestalled. Accordingly, an expedition under Captain Lightfoot of the Indian Army reached Tawang in April 1938. On his return from the mission Lightfoot urged that Tibetan officials be asked to withdraw from Tawang and that the local Monpa tribe be encouraged to take over the Tawang monastery from Tibetan monastic officials so that the influence of Tibet in Tawang Tract could be reduced. As the area had always been orientated towards Tibet geographically, politically and also in terms of religion and had been under Tibetan administration, the Governor of Assam changed the annexation of Tawang on both practical and legal grounds and recommended that the McMahon Line be modified so that it ran through Sela, a salient and towering feature along the watershed. The great monastery and Tawang were, for the Tibetans, the heart of the matter, and if those had been left to them their attempt to retain Dirang Dzong further east and the rest of Tawang Tract might well have been dropped. Due to the breakout of Second World War the matter was shelved. But eventually after prolonged contacts McMahon Line was secretly agreed upon with the Tibetans and Tawang Tract remained as part of NEFA.

On the map which the British and Tibetans signed in Delhi on 24 March 1914 the McMahon Line terminated on bench mark on the boundary with Bhutan at the latitude of 27° 44' 30" N. In this region there was no watershed to be followed and McMahon drew his line along what his maps showed as outstanding ridge feature. But when the Indians explored this north-western corner of Kameng frontier division in 1950, it was seen that if the McMahon Line were transposed from its map coordinates to the ground it would not lie along the highest ridge in the vicinity. The highest feature near the eastern

extremity of the border was the Thagla ridge, three or four miles north of where McMahon had drawn his line. So the Indians decided to treat Thagla ridge as the boundary from the beginning of 1959. It may be mentioned that Thagla and Khinzemane nearby were not mentioned on the maps and the flow of Namka Chu was marked mistakenly north to south, whilst actually it flows west to east.

Apart from the fact that Thagla was deemed to be situated in Chinese territory, the Indian Army's maps showed it as Indian. In May, a wooden board inscribed in Chinese had been found nearby which proclaimed, 'This is our river and our mountain.' (reference to both Namka Chu and Thagla). In fact both China and India were right. If the 'watershed' principle was not to be followed China could be right and if 'highest ridge', principle was followed India was right!

The Chinese attitude to the marginal adjustments which India sought to make unilaterally was consistent. While China observed the McMahon Line as the defacto boundary, that, had to be the line as McMahon drew it, and not as the Indians tried to modify it. There was no written description of the boundary in the Anglo-Tibetan Agreement of 24 March 1914 and it was merely marked on the map attached to the Agreement and so the location of the line, at any point, could be determined only by reading off the longitude and latitude from the original treaty map and transposing to the ground. By this process Khizamane, Dhola Post and Thagla ridge are found north of the McMahon Line and in Tibetan territory. The Indian government held that McMahon's intention was to run the boundary along the crest of the highest ridges and since Thagla was a conspicuous high feature, so the boundary should lie along the Thagla ridge.

Regarding the borders, Nehru had something interesting and practical to say :

".....There are two or three types of cases here. These are border and frontier questions. In regard to some parts of the border, there can be no doubt from any side that it is our border. If any body violates it then it is a challenge to us. There are other parts regarding which it is difficult to say where the immediate border is, although broadly it may be known. But it is very difficult even in a map to indicate it; if a big line is drawn, the line itself covers three or four miles, one may say in a major map".

It is felt that, on the whole, Henry McMahon had correctly drawn the boundry line with due appreciation of the complex and unfamiliar ground realities. It is not understood as to why he was led astray at Thagla. Perhaps he thought the Namka Chu which flowed in west-east direction, was a better line of alignment for a boundary. Only he can explain whether geographically, high crest of ridge, watershed or deep water course was a clear, significant and more lasting boundary.

That the McMahon Line of course, has never been demarcated i.e. marked out on the ground-is agreed by both parties. For a good deal of its length it follows an unmistakable crest-line, but elsewhere it is drawn over indeterminative topographical features and there the only way to determine the lie of the boundary is to trace out on the ground the co-ordinates of McMahon's original map. Often that process would create an inconvenient and absurd boundary, and since the line marked thickly on the original, eight-miles-to-one-inch map covers about a quarter of a mile, even this could produce no precise delineation on the ground.

One of the other places in which McMahon made his line diverge from what his map showed as the highest ridge was near a village called Migyitun, on a pilgrimage route of importance to the Tibetans. In order to leave Migyitun in Tibet the line cut a corner and for about twenty miles, until it met the main ridge again followed no feature at all. As the Indians reconnoitred this area in 1959 they discovered that the topography made out boundary alignment immediately south of Migyitun, rather than about two miles south as shown on the map, was more practical from their point of view, and they set up a border picquet accordingly. The reasons for the Indian adjustment of the line here have not been stated clearly, but it seems probable that it was decided that River Tsari, running roughly west-east just south of Migyitun, should be the boundary feature. Advancing the boundary to the river put a hamlet called Longju, on the opposite side of the valley from Migyitun, within India, while providing a more practical site for the Indian border picquet.

McMahon had also discarded the principle of watershed at the big bend of the Brahmaputra which contained Pemako and Chimindryu areas. he left the high watershed feature near the bend as he ignored the Thagla ridge watershed.

Now let us turn to the Western Sector Ladakh, which lies in the valley of upper north west india at an altitude of 12000 feet. It is a tract of desolate, difficult, uninhabited and uncultivable land. Ladakh has a stunning landscape, sandwiched between barren icy desert and green patches with dotted line of 'gompas': the buddhist manasteries. Upto the middle of the nineteenth century its frontier with Tibet remained fluid and were not defined due to the complexities of terrain. However, in 1865 the boundary

alignment was made by an officer of the Survey of India, WH Johnson.

Ladakh was part of Tibet upto the tenth century when it became an independent country. In the fourteenth century, Muslim invaders conquered Ladakh, and with the decline of Mughals, Ladakh again became independent and being Buddhist veered towards Tibet in the nineteenth century. In 1834, Maharajah Gulab Singh of Kashmir invaded Ladakh and placed it under Sikhs who were then rulers of both Punjab and Kashmir.

Aksai Chin - the name, means the desert of white stones. This high and desolated plateau, 17000 feet above sea level, a wilderness where nothing grows and no one lives, lies between the towering Himalayan ranges of the Karakoram in the west, Kuen Lun mountains in the north, Changchenmo range in the south and Changthang plateau in the east. There was no police or revenue administration; (there was no need of it). Soda plains and Lingsi Tang were also coupled with Aksai Chin.

Remote, black and forbidding as the region is, with a total absence of greenery, fodder and shelter and its killing high speed winds, it has not been without fairy tale human characteristics. An ancient trade route lay across this undemarcated country. In brief summer, when for a few hours in a day, around noon, the ice melted in the streams to give water for animals, traders and pilgrims with caravans of 'yaks', crossed it from what is now Sinkiang to Tibet, carrying silk, jade, hemp, salt and wool. Nomadic graziers also visited the green grassy patches some times, as there were also some good pastures between Pangong lake and Lanak La which the inhabitants of Phobrang and other neighbouring villages in Ladakh frequented during summer. Similarly, lakes of Amtogar were used for the collection of salt and some

hunters ventured in the area in quest of mountain goats and bears.

It will be appropriate to have a few lines about WH Johnson who wrote about Aksai Chin. A stone shelter (langer) was built by Johnson on his journey in Aksai Chin and named after the then ruler of Khotan, Haji Habibullah Khan. The road the Chinese constructed in the 1950s passed this place called Haji Langer. He was one of the British surveyors who pioneered operation in Kashmir in the mid-1850's. He was a Junior Sub-Assistant and was an energetic man with initiative. He visited Changchenmo Valley, Aksai Chin, Kuen Lun and Khotan and prepared a map of the area but there was a doubt about the surveys, as he had undertaken the journey with such speed that he could not spare requisite time for proper survey work. On his visit to Khotan in 1865 Johnson saw Aksai Chin, Lingzhithang plain and Soda plain; so named because of the coarse soda and lime that were lying about. The area, he surveyed belonged to no one and had no claimant but later he contended that it belonged to Kashmir. This claim ran upto Kuen Lun range and beyond and it was shown on British maps and demarcation was called the Johnson Line. Chinese showed no interest in this border at that time. For his good work Johnson was appointed Kashmir's commissioner in Ladakh.

As far as the boundary is concerned Johnson marked the line from Pangong Lake to Karakoram, between Kashmir and Tibet. Johnson showed Aksai Chin within Kashmir on a map he drew on the strength of his adventurous journey. The Johnson line was shown as the boundary of Kashmir in an atlas published in 1868 and cartographic currency was given to the Johnson version of the boundary by the then British frontier policy. There were other famous names connected with

explorations just as McMahon, Baily and Lightfoot gained fame as pioneers in boundary alignment in the east; Boundary Commissioner Vans Agnew, his assistant Captain Alexander Cunningham and Younghusband attained limelight in the layout of boundary in the west. They identified and fixed the Indian national frontiers at Chusul, Demchock, Lanakla, and along the general line of Karakoram range and included the valleys of Shyok, Changchenmo, Galwan and Chip Chap rivers upto Karakoram Pass. The Karakoram Pass became a fixed and mutually accepted point on the Sino-Indian boundary but on both sides of that Pass the alignment continued to be somewhat vague and indefinite. The other persons who distinguished themselves in thier own way were Maharajah Ranjit Singh, Viceroy Elgin and Curzon and the British Major General Sir Johan Ardagh, the famous Director of Military Intelligence on the British General Staff, Khan of Khotan and Rajah of Kashmir. However, it was Mr. Frederic Dew, Governor of Leh in 1870-71, who first drew a detailed map of Aksai Chin based on his explorations as well as those of Hayward, Shaw, Forsyth and others.

At this time the high Pamirs rising to the staggering 20,000 feet also drew attention of three great powers of Russia, China and Britain. These countries had mutual suspicions of aggression, but the Pamirs did not draw any blood. However, to forestall the Russians and Chinese, General Ardagh had also proposed the boundary, following not the line of the Karakoram watershed, but the crest of a series of ranges to the north of Karakoram, amongst them, was Kuen Lun. By following the Kuen Lun range, Ardagh's proposed boundary would have given Aksai Chin to India, and the upper courses of Yarkand and Karakash river systems as well. So when the British quit and India achieved independence in 1947 and for several years thereafter, most official Indian maps still showed the

boundary in accordance with the extreme forward formulations of Johnson and Ardagh.

India had accepted the Johnson Line, the frontier between India and Tibet, which included the whole of Aksai Chin, valleys of Chang Chenmo, Galwan and Chip-chap rivers. China subsequently built a road across the Aksai Chin linking Sinkiang with Tibet as the Gobi desert further north did not provide firm ground for road construction.

The barren Aksai Chin, which was coveted by both China and India, became the cause of dispute between the two countries and kindled the fire of war in 1962.

Incidentally, the Indo-Tibetan frontier from Himachal Pradesh to Nepal had been established by centuries of usage and custom. Traders, pilgrims and graziers frequently moved across this frontier and thus crossing points had been recognised by the two sides and crestline of the Himalaya was accepted as the boundary between the two countries, and this region remained calm in 1962. There were, no doubt, disputes about a few places like Nilang, Yedang and Barahoti where the Chinese claimed certain tracts, of the traditional pastures. With Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, the boundary along the foothills was accepted.

CHAPTER SIX

BUILD UP OF INDIAN ARMY ON HIMALAYAN BORDERS

To re-orientate the reader, a sequence of events regarding build up of the Army in the border areas is summarised.

The Chinese had occupied Tibet in 1951 and the new situation brought new problems in its wake, particularly, on the Sino-Indian border. To cope with the border problems initially, Assam Rifles were expanded and Indo-Tibetan Border Police was raised under the Home Ministry. Then in 1956 the Chinese claimed areas in the border region and they secretly built a road across the Aksai Chin, in Indian territory and officially opened it in 1957. Thereafter, there were pitched battles between the Chinese Army and Tibetan guerillas in Lhasa in 1959 and in the same year the Dalai lama fled Lhasa and entered India. Consequently there were a spate of Chinese intrusions and attacks on our border posts. As a sequel to this NEFA (now called Arunachal) was placed under Army authorities. For some time the Army did not enter NEFA but the Assam Rifles, who were already there, came under the operational command of the army. Later the Army also

entered NEFA. 4th Infantry Division was moved from Punjab for deployment in NEFA. To start with, this formation was given the task of defending the border, covering a distance of 600 KM. But, later around 1960, its area of responsibility was restricted to Kameng Frontier Division.

The actual move of Army units into NEFA started in January 1960 when one company of 1/9th Gorkha Rifles of 7th Infantry Brigade reached Bomdila. Another company of this Battalion positioned itself in Tawang in February 1960. Eventually the whole of the battalion concentrated at Tawang in August 1960.

The build up of regular forces was a slow process as it was tied up with administrative progress, which was to be commensurate with the speed and tempo of construction of new roads, increase in supplies, erection of new accommodation and provision of snow clothing and an increase in the interest of civil population and civil services. The build up was to forge ahead along only with the development of logistics.

Dispositions of 7 Infantry Brigade which entered Kameng Frontier Division in August 1960 were as follows:

Battalion	— Dirang Dzong with two coys at Tawang
Battalion	— Tenga with one coy each at Penkengtong and Shakti
HQ 7th Infantry Brigade	— Initially Misamari, then Tawang and finally Rongla. (Namka Chu)

At that time higher formation headquarters were located as follows :

HQ Eastern Command	— Lucknow
HQ XXXIII Corps	— Shillong
HQ 4th Infantry Division	— Tezpur

In October 1962 when war broke out old HQ IV Corps was resurrected under the command of Lt General BM Kaul at Tezpur and made operationally responsible for NEFA.

HQ 4th Infantry Division moved to Zimithaung to direct operations in Namka Chu sector, HQ XXXIII Corps under Lt General Umrao Singh still remained responsible for Sikkim, Nagaland and East Pakistan.

Dispositions of IV Corps and its formations 2nd Infantry Division and 4th Infantry Division in the fateful months of October November 1962, were as under:-

HQ 2nd Inf Div	Lohit FD
HQ 11th Inf Bde	Lohit FD (Walong)
HQ 5 Inf Bde	Suliansiri FD
HQ 192 Inf Bde	Siang FD
HQ 4th Inf Div	Zimithaung
HQ 7th Inf Bde	Namka Chu/Thagla area, defeated by Chinese in Oct. 1962, and withdrew through Bhutan/Tawang
HQ 62nd Inf Bde	Sela
1st Sikh	Bumla/Sela
2nd Sikh LI	Sela
4th Sikh LI	Sela
4th Garh Rif	Tawang/Sela
13th Dogras	In process of induction
Bty 6 Fd Regt	Sela

Bty 6 Fd Regt	Bomdila
HQ 48th Inf Bde	Bomdila
One Fd Bty	Bomdila
One Sqn Armr	Bomdila
65th Inf Bde	Tawang/Dirang
67th Inf Bde	Misamari
181st Inf Bde	Darranga
One Sqn Armr	Darranga

7th Infantry Brigade under exceptionally adverse logistical conditions had given a heroic fight to the Chinese at Namka Chu/Thagla in October 1962 but had suffered defeat. The Brigade had virtually disintegrated. Then, when the Chinese captured Bumla, Tawang area was also evacuated and the troops had taken the main defensive positions at Sela under the command of HQ 62 Infantry Brigade.

Further east near the junction of Tibet, Burma and India 11th Infantry Brigade opposed the Chinese in Walong Sector. It had 4th Sikh, 3/3rd Gorkha Rifles, 6th Kumaon, 2/8th Gorkha Rifles and 4 Dogras on its order of battle.

In addition in the Eastern Command troops were inducted/being inducted for the defence of UP and Sikkim:

- HQ 9 Inf Bde (Lucknow)
 - 8 Dogra for Joshimath
 - 14 Rajput
 - 4 Maratha
- HQ 20 Inf Div (Gangtok)
- HQ 66 Inf Bde (Gangtok)
 - 3/9 GR
 - 1 Maratha
- HQ 165 Inf Div
 - 16 Maratha

1 Dogra
 3 Jat
 5/11 GR
 HQ 202 Inf Bde
 4 Guard
 15 Punjab
 14 Dogra

As far as Ladakh is concerned two paramilitary units (J & K Militia- was a local force, raised to cope with the Forward Military Policy requirements). They fought so well in 1962 conflict that they were made regular units and renamed Ladakh Scouts. Later the Army Command put in a bid for a full infantry brigade consisting of four infantry battalions, a mountain artillery regiment and a platoon of medium machine guns.

At the time of hostilities 114th Infantry brigade concentrated at Chushul with two infantry battalions and few AMX tanks and some artillery. Another brigade was being inducted at Leh when the hostilities ended in November 1962.

Eventually in Nov 62 ORBAT in Ladakh was:

HQ 3 Inf Div (Leh)
 HQ 163 Inf Bde (Leh)
 HQ 114 Inf Bde (Chusul)
 1 Jat
 1/8 GR⁷
 13 Kumaon
 5 Jat
 Supporting Arms
 HQ 70 Inf Bde (Dungti)
 7 J&K Militia

7. 1/8 GR, 5 Jat, and 13 Kumaon were inducted into Ladakh in Apr 61 and May 62 respectively.

HQ Delta Sector
14 J&K Militia

Besides for the defence of HP Western Command had HQ Sugar Sector with under command 9 Madras.

Amongst a number of the famous Army units which moved to the NEFA borders was 1st Battalion, The Sikh Regiment, called Ferozepur Sikhs, or simply 1st Sikhs. This unit was raised at Ferozepur in 1846 by recruiting selected soldiers from the disbanded royal army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This epoch making battalion which had won eternal fame at Gallipoli, Buthidaung, Srinagar and Tithwal, now headed for NEFA to have another odyssey. Battalion's most brilliant performance in Kashmir Valley was its landing by air in the valley in 1947 is described at Appendix 'F' attached. Whether it was First World War (Gallipoli), Second World War (Burma), Boxer War of China, Indo Pakistan War or Sino-Indian war this Battalion was always embattled. Whenever, dark and ominous clouds appeared on the war horizon its men started to roll their beddings and the unit was invariably found soon in the thick of the battle. In the same manner and spirit it left Jaipur for NEFA in 1962 when the Chinese dragon⁸ had started snorting fire. At Misamari we

8. Dragon is a very old and sacred symbol of China. The ancient Chinese name of the dragon was 'Lung'. The Chinese children believed in 'Lung' just as western children believe in Santa Claus. Legend tells us also that the dragon is the God of thunder. He appears in the sky with clouds which are said to be formed by his breath. Logically, then, the dragon is good because he produces rain that in turn makes good rice crops, which are so necessary to the life of the Chinese people. The pictures of dragon are accompanied by strings of pearls on the ears or on the frames. The story is lost in antiquity. The combining of pearls with dragons in decorative designs is an ancient custom. Originally every self-respecting dragon had a pearl embedded under his chin. This gave him a special rank and status.

lived in thatched huts for construction of which the versatile bamboo was extensively used. Chicken was so cheap that we had altogether forgotten mutton. We could see films in the nearby tea planters' clubs and play golf if someone desired.

Later the unit moved to Dirang Dzong in NEFA, 152 km from Misamari, across Bomdilla. Here the unit kicked its heels to reach Tawang, the other side of 15,000 feet high Sela where it had a rendezvous with destiny. During the unit's short stays at Misamari and Dirang it held promotion cadres for men and NCOs. At Dirang an improvised rifle range was available where men fired their weapons to maintain their skill at firing. A long range patrol was also sent out into NEFA wilderness from Dirang Dzong. Shortly afterwards, the battalion ascended heights to Tawang Plateau where it relieved 1/9 GR and was allotted an operational role and emphasis was laid on patrolling and physical fitness. Six-a-side hockey was very popular at Tawang and the ground was never vacant in the evenings. We had adjusted ourselves to the high altitude environments by playing, running, hill climbing and other physical training for mountain fitness through steady routine.

In the area leeches were galore. They deceptively welcomed us everywhere, and were highly offensive. A leech attacked me even in the toilet at Tawang. The area between Misamari and Tawang is infested with this blood sucking reprehensible worm. They tormented our officers and men. We used very effective weapons- salt and match-sticks to counter them successfully and they never gained the upper hand.

The Battalion was commanded by the stalwart Lt Col BN Mehta, (Brij), a migrant from Pakistan District

of Montgomery. He was a man of high intellect, a good leader, able in man-management and a good sportsman. The Colonel was full of life, specialised in 'Bhangra' and folklore. He had attractive features; an ideally and beautifully formed perfect Roman head; he was a moderate drinker and invariably split a beer bottle. He was well read and was equally versatile with the 'sword and the pen'. Originally he had been commissioned into the Army Education Corps but was later transferred to infantry. He made up in infantry knowledge, tactics, and infantry soldiers sense by hard work as the change over had taken place very early. He blossomed as he climbed the rank ladder. Colonel Mehta was constantly in search of good sportsmen for the Battalion. Similarly he cared deeply for his officers. He tried to get able and efficient officers posted to the unit.

The battalion came under HQ 7 Infantry Brigade which was commanded by Brigadier Dalvi, an equally upcoming officer. He was tall, physically strong and mentally robust and was a handsome man with a sharp wit. More officers should be imbued with this quality. He was commissioned into The Baluch Regiment and after independence in 1947 was posted to the Gorkhas and later transferred to the elite Brigade of Guards. A graduate of Defence Services' Staff College, he was a professionally capable officer. He had entered the Staff College through a competitive vacancy. He had served in Burma in World War Two and received a 'Mention-in-Despatches'. Brigadier Dalvi and the Colonel were course mates at the Staff College. They did not anticipate at that time that together they would face the Chinese on the McMahon Line in 1962.

Outwardly, complete calm prevailed in the area. Usual get-together parties were held in unit messes at

Tawang. Brigadier Dalvi appeared to have a premonition of the impending turmoil. He was very keen on monitoring, unit posted and present strengths and saw that manpower was not frittered away. Colonel Mehta had sent Major Inamdar, the Adjutant, and myself, to jointly to face the Brigadier's sharp and incisive interrogation on the parade state of the unit. But we failed to satisfy him. We all the time were thinking that he was kidding us by trying to find out the number of men the Commanding Officer was using for personal duties ! We had beer sessions with him in our Officers Mess and we considered these fine instances as the same did not adversely affect his fine mental acuity and intellectual powers.

Extensive patrolling was also in progress in the area as it was new to us. I indulgently saw the hefty and tough 2/Lieut Verma going on a long range patrol, heavily loaded with rations and clothing. The sturdy and promising officer was later, tragically killed in Jammu & Kashmir as he strayed into a minefield.

On arrival at Tawang, I was given the task to reconnoitre the Bumla area and submit my assessment for the defence of Bumla approach which was the shortest and obvious one. I was delighted as I was to see the geographically famous 'roof of the world' during my survey of the obvious and vital Bumla-Tawang approach to Brahmaputra Valley. Consequently, I set out with a small and well equipped reconnaissance party. I stayed with the Assam Rifles Post at Bumla and enjoyed their hospitality. I offered them some bottles of rum which were welcomed. Assam Rifles personnel are simple, faithful and sincere. I saw them very closely earlier, when I was posted to 9th Assam Rifles, a new raising, for a short while in 1959. The

platoon was commanded by a fine Naga Junior Commissioned Officer.

The area was surveyed in detail and its geography and terrain were thoroughly studied and grasped. For the outward journey Penking tong/Milak Tongla route was followed and for the inward journey track which passed by the side of the great and fabulous Tawang monastery was taken. I did not enter the monastery but I halted for a few minutes outside its sacred portals and staid precincts and paid obeisance to this great Buddhist place of worship and learning. I had surveyed the area from Bumla to Jang bridge also and had become adequately familiar with the Tawang-Bumla-Jang triangle. If I had the chance and time I would have ventured further west along McMahon Line to Taksang Buddhist gumpa, a day's march from Bumla, 14500 feet Chamling-la, Chutangmu, Khinzamane and Tsangle/Tri-Junction of Tibet, Bhutan and NEFA, and towards east also upto Talungla and Mago regions or even ahead. The famous Baily Trail crossed the main crest line at Talung La in NEFA from the Tibetan side. Though these places were out of our battalion's operational commitment this visit could have provided a much wider aspect of the surrounding area knowledge of which is always essential and paying. This helps in a better understanding of the area of responsibility and opens up wider horizons and avenues in planning. Sticking to one's own limited area tends to isolate, narrow and limit one's view.

Appendix 'F'

(Refer to Page 165)

SRINAGAR EPIC 1ST BATTALION THE SIKH REGIMENT AIR LANDING AT SRINAGAR IN 1947

After partition and independence of India in 1947 1st Sikhs was employed on the internal security duties in the Gurgaon area, near Delhi when Pakistan sponsored tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir was launched. Led by Pakistan regular Army officers the main force pushed on the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar road, with a view to capturing coveted Kashmir Valley. To start with Pathan irregulars spearheaded the advance and on the way they pillaged the towns, set fire to the places including churches, plundered the property of civilian population and indulged in murder and rape. Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian women were rounded up, raped and deported to Pakistan, the so called, 'pure land'. Nuns of Baramulla convent were shamefully raped and murdered. When Indian Army offered stiff resistance Pakistan regular Army also entered into the fray.

The Indian Government woke up to the threat only when Muzaffarabad and Baramulla fell to the raiders and whilst they were knocking at the gates of Srinagar, Jammu and Leh, India took to completion of the 'legal' formalities connected with the accession of the State to India.

As the 'magical' Instrument of Accession was signed by Maharajah Hari Singh the Indian Army, which

was to stand in the back ground in Independent India, was suddenly brought into the picture and ordered to control the worsening situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Army Headquarters laid hands on 1st Sikhs which was available close by, hurriedly assembled it and air lifted to Srinagar on 27 October 1947, at a very short notice. 1st Sikhs had won laurels in Burma in the recently concluded Second World War and won one Victoria Cross and many other decorations.

The gallant pilots of the Indian Air force transport aircraft, carrying the troops in the initial sortie, had conditional orders to return to Jammu airfield if they found that the Srinagar airfield was in the hands of Pakistan raiders. But fortunately the airfield was still in the State Government possession; so, our troops safely landed at the dusty Sri Nagar airfield.

Each landing or taking off of aircraft kicked spiralling clouds of dust high into the horizon rendering landing of next aircraft a hazardous task. Troops quickly got into the civilian transport provided by the Jammu and Kashmir State Government and immediately pushed out to face the invaders. The transport, of all types, including 'rickshaws' and 'tongas' were mobilised. The raiders were driven back from the outskirts of Srinagar. Unfortunately, in the action gallant Colonel Ranjit Rai, the Commanding Officer of 1st Sikhs, was suddenly killed near Pattan on 28 October 1947. But Srinagar was saved. For his outstanding gallantry he was post humously awarded Maha Vir Chakra. However, tragically a great career was cut short.

Maj Harwant Singh MC, the 'D' Company Commander, held the command of the unit, after the death of Colonel Ranjit Rai till the arrival of Lt Col Sampuran Bachan Singh, the Second-in-Command from

Delhi. Maj Harwant Singh (now Col), an experienced and steady officer stabilised the situation. He had fought in Italy with Allied Army and won his Military Cross on the Gothic Line while serving with 2nd Sikhs during the Second World War. Afterwards he commanded 4th Sikhs of Saragarhi fame, which was then located in URI area.

Later after winning a smashing victory at Shellatang near Srinagar the 1st Sikhs captured Baramulla and Uri. Shellatang was turning point in the Kashmir Valley campaign. The campaign of the Battalion in Kashmir Valley will remain unmatched and shining example in the history of the country.

Air landing of 1st Sikhs at Srinagar was a superb act of most courageous military planning on the part of Army and Air Headquarters. The battalion was bestowed with the Battle Honour of Srinagar for its unparalleled performance.

Later nimble footed troops under Colonel Harbaksh Singh captured the strategic town of Tithwal and the following year Lt Col Kehar Singh IDSM flung back the strong Pakistan assault on Tithwal. Here Captain (Hony) Karam Singh MM won Param Vir Chakra and many gallantry awards were also annexed by the Battalion. Both Colonel Harbaksh Singh and Major Kehar Singh ISDM received vir Chakra. Apart from this many other decorations were received by the Battalion. It will not be out of place to record that Colonel Sampuran Bachan Singh and Major Harwant Singh MC deserved recognition for their speedy and excellent operational planning and bold execution. Incidentally, it may also be mentioned that both these brave officers were wounded during the World War II.

Befittingly 27 October is celebrated as the Infantry Day by the Indian Army as this is the first day of the first campaign undertaken by the infantry after independence.

CHINESE ORDER OF BATTLE

For an offensive operation, practically, in all the armies, in the east and west the proportion of strength is 'three to one'. However to ensure outright victory Mao-Tse-tung in his army had stipulated the overwhelming ratio of 'five to one', and at times even that of 'ten to one'. Three waves of assault was the battle drill.

As known, the Chinese had the following formations and units employed against Kameng Frontier Division:

11th Infantry Division	8000
55th Infantry Division	8000
419th Infantry Division	2500

They had one division at Rima on the McMahon Line against Walong in Lohit Frontier Division.

The Chinese had preponderance of fire power as they had automatic rifles and they used artillery which was fed and fired automatically besides 120 mm mortars. They possessed more teeth in proportion to administrative tail and could add more manpower as compared with strength committed in administrative duties. A large proportion of men employed in patrolling and infiltration detachments indicates that the number of troops was heavier than figures estimated and assessed by our intelligence sources.

The Chinese had a network of strategic roads that served the front. Their road heads were much nearer

as compared with ours. Whilst our road head for Namka Chu for 7th Infantry Brigade was sixty miles at Tawang they had their roadhead only ten miles away at Le and a 7 ton road running upto Marmang, a few miles from the border. Whereas their roads were in excellent state our roads existed in name only. Their stocking was done by heavy vehicles - 3 and 7 tonners very close to the McMahon Line. They had vast resources in animal transport (ponies, mules, yaks and porters) and their administrative bases were close to the border. Where vehicles could not operate sturdy 'Yaks' and other animal transport and porters were extensively used.

There was a post called Damslung opposite Bumla. They had an airfield at Narayumta about 50 miles from Bumla.

According to Intelligence Bureau the Chinese strength on our northern borders was eight divisions. In addition to this force, there were three to four divisions stationed at Shigatse, Lhasa, Chamdo, Negechuka and separate troops existed for holding the lines of maintenance. So overall strength of Chinese troops was nearly eleven divisions of which two brigades were north of Thagla Ridge and one was in reserve in the Le-Marmang sector. They were well equipped with semi-automatic rifles, mortars, MMG's and heavy and recoilless artillery. Their inter communication was also good.

Later the Intelligence Bureau said Chinese had about four battalions near Thagla and two companies in the vicinity of Khinzemane. They had moved at least a battalion to Shao and another to subsidiary passes between Thagla and Karpola II. The Chinese troops had been operating at high altitudes for years, unlike our jawans who were pushed up at the last moment

from the plains of Assam or from places like, Ramgarh, Delhi and Dehra Dun in cotton uniforms to fight in sub-zero temperatures. The Chinese had seasoned troops, well-equipped and well-indoctrinated. And they had moved General Ching Hi, who had proved himself in Korea, to command their army in Tibet.

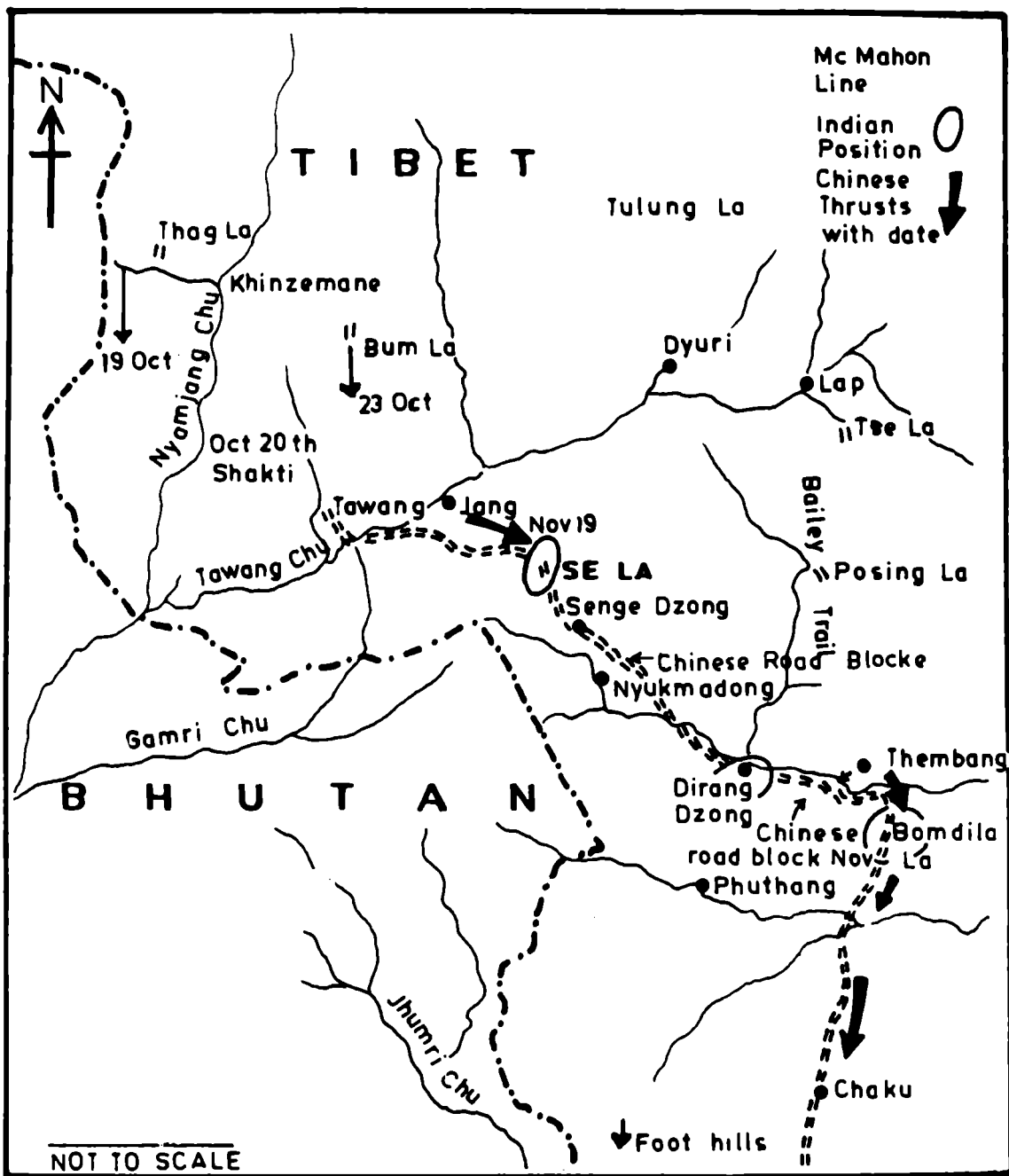
According to Intelligence Bureau there was good information about the Chinese airfields in Tibet and Sinkiang and also in the Yunan province bordering Burma, from all of which air attacks on India could be mounted. On the question of total Chinese Air strength and description of various type of planes and the state of training and supplies of the Chinese Air Force, we were partly dependent on our friends, and we have reason to believe that we got quite accurate information on these matters. The Chinese Air Force at that time was rated to be the third biggest and strongest Air Force in the world, the only countries ahead of China being the USA and Russia. In the absence of any night interceptors in India, their bombers could penetrate as far south as Madras during night and return unmolested after completing their mission. Though shortage due to the withdrawal of Russian assistance was beginning to be felt, the position was not yet too bad. It would certainly come in the way of Chinese Air effort in case of a war with a country with very strong Air power like Russia or America, but not with India. It was also reported that prior to 1961 Russia had supplied to China Mig-21 interceptor, fighters and the Chinese had a large number of the earlier types of MIG-17 and MIG-19 planes which they were then manufacturing. Incidentally, MIG-19 was also a night inteceptor and could make it difficult for our Canberras to operate. Krishna Menon violently disagreed and said that Intelligence Bureau assessment about the Chinese having MIG-21 planes was quite baseless because he

was quite definite that the Russians had not supplied MIG-21 to any country other than India. Shri Mullick maintained that his assessment was correct and pointed out that the Russians had promised to supply MIG-21 to Indonesia also. (Subsequently it was revealed that the Chinese had, in fact, a large number of MIG-21 fighter prior to 1962 and the information given to us was correct.) But Krishna Menon would not agree. Intelligence Bureau also had evidence that the Chinese had at least once practised para-dropping of men in large numbers in western Tibet, but, due to high winds, they had suffered many casualties and probably they would not think of it any more. After discussions, it was decided that rather than escalate the war and endanger our important civilian targets like Calcutta, Kanpur, etc. compared to which we had no corresponding targets in Tibet, and the targets in China were beyond reach of our bombers, it was better to limit the role of the Air Force to that of transportation and supply only.

.....In war, time is the only war commodity that we have to consider. It means every thing that weapons are there in sufficient quantity upto the time that they are ahead of our enemy's weapons; that we can move and operate more swiftly than he can, that we can concentrate more swiftly, indeed, everything comes about to allow us to be there first with the most and the best.

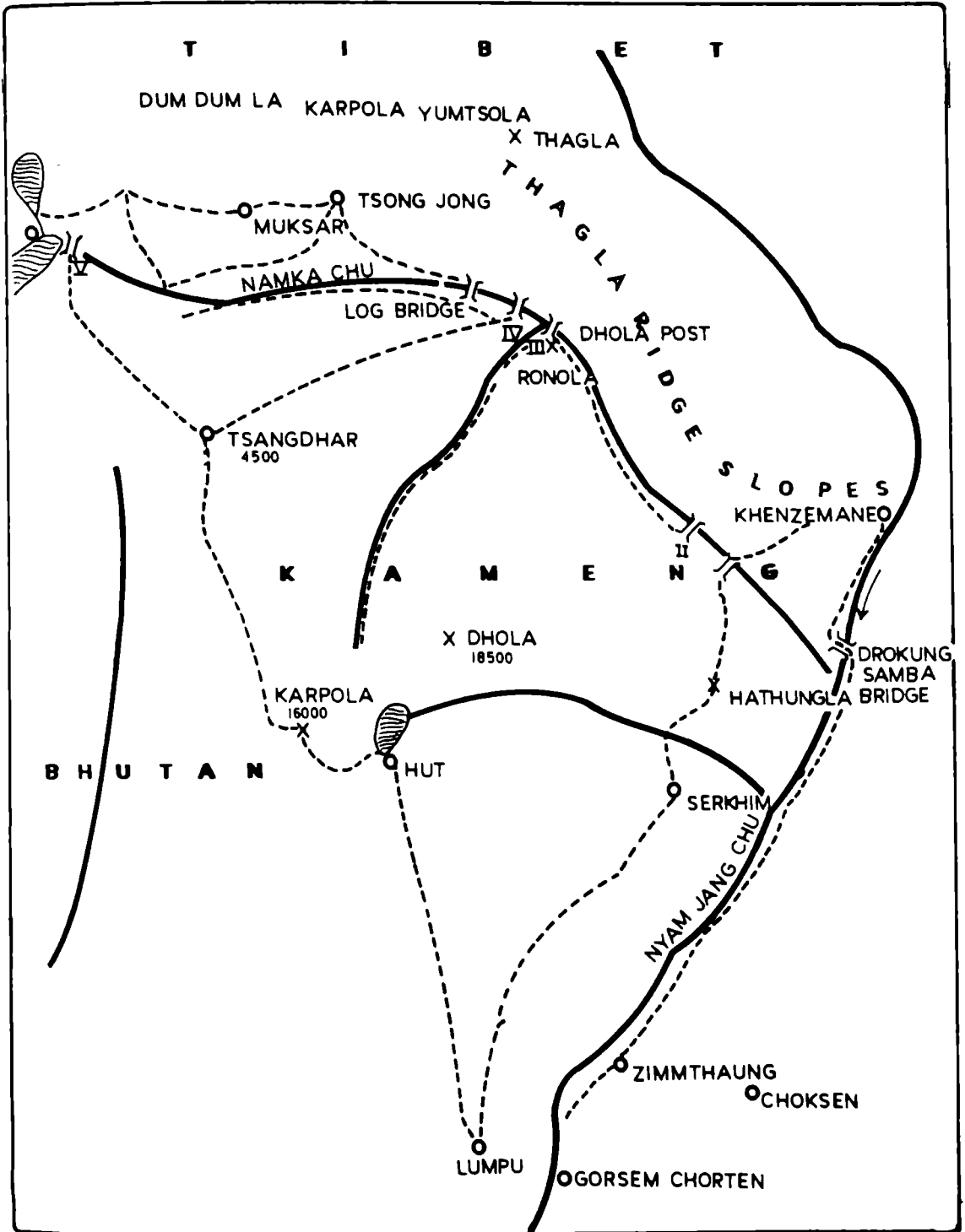
—General Tuler

Sketch-5 Battle of Kameng FD (NEFA) 1962



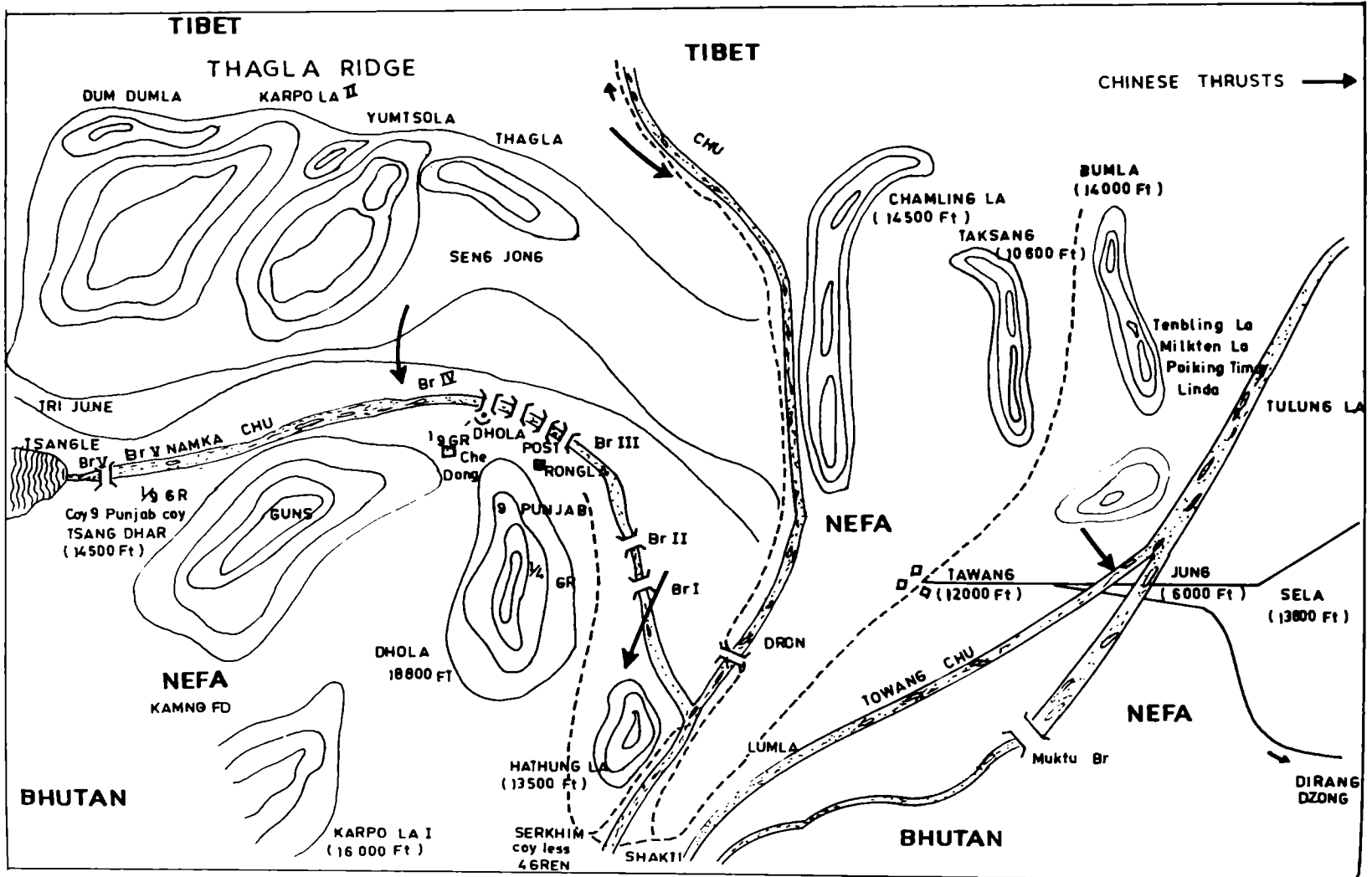
Sketch-6

Thagla Sector

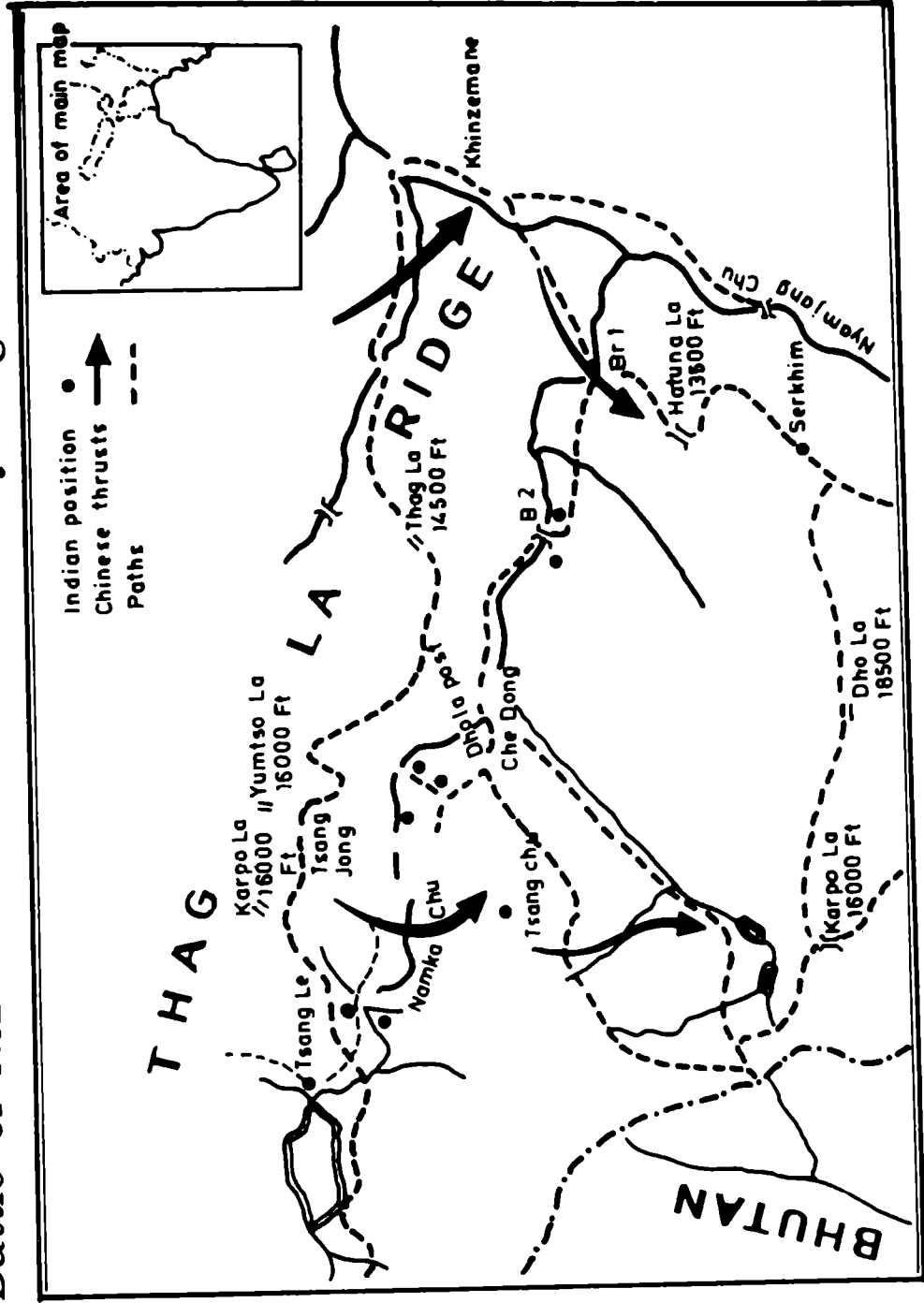


Sketch-7

Tawang Sector - Thagla Bumla Battles



Sketch-8 Battle of Namka Chu— 7th Infantry Brigade



PART-II

CHAPTER SEVEN

WAR IN THE EAST

THAGLA FIASCO

The scene of the initial fighting was Thagla Ridge and Namka Chu gorge situated east of the remote tri-junction of Tibet-Bhutan and India. This area is 200 km away from railhead of Misamari and 60 km from the nominal roadhead of Tawang. In the area a major river called Nyamjang Chu flows from Tibet into the Towang salient in the north south direction and the place of Khinzemane is the first prominent disputed place as it enters the Indian territory. Just it makes further progress it flows under Droking Samba bridge and then by the mountain side of Hathungla (13500 feet), Serkhim. Zimithaung (600 feet), Lumpu (9000 feet) Gorsem Chorten and other lesser known features. It meets Namka Chu one and a half miles south of Khinzemane. Namka Chu has its source at Tsangle lake near the tri-junction. Local graziers used seven improvised bridges to take their cattle across the Namka Chu. The bridges known by the numbers one to five, a Log Bridge and Temporary Bridge. The Thagla ridge which spawls from west to east overlooks Namka Chu and has four prominent passes called Dum Dum La (17000 feet), Karpola II (16000 feet) Yamatso La (16000

feet) and Thag La (14000 feet). The features south of Namka Chu are Tsangdhar (14500 feet) Karpola (16000 feet) Dhola (18500 feet) and Hathungla (13500 feet). Other important places in the sector are Tsangle, Tseng-Jong and Dhola post. Tsangle is just a herdman's hut located at the source of Namka Chu. Whilst Tseng-Jong is a grazing ground across Namka Chu and below the Thagla crest. An ancient trade route from Lhasa takes the alignment Khinzemane, Zimithaung, Lumla, Tawang and Sela to Udalgiri, a trade fair town. Another track bifurcated from Lumla goes towards Tashigong in Bhutan and then shoots off southwards. From Namka Chu it took 4 to 5 days of forced march to reach Tawang on the hazardous track. The Khinzemane route was also followed by the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama when he escaped from Lhasa under Chinese pressure and sought asylum in India in 1959. Important Chinese roadhead of Le was situated ten miles north of Thagla.

The main cause of the fighting in this sector was the controversy regarding the position and ownership of the Thagla Ridge. Chinese thought it was on the Tibetan side but India claimed that it was on their own side of McMahon Line. On the premise that the McMahon Line passed through Thagla Ridge, India decided to treat this ridge as the boundary, and on 9 August 1959 an Indian post manned by Assam Rifles, was set up at Khinzemane. It appeared that according to the Chinese the McMahon Line passed through Hathungla, further south, so they resented the setting up of the post and dislodged it-approximately 200 Chinese pushed back the small and weak Indian detachment. After the Chinese had retired Indians re-occupied the post. The Chinese again tried to dislodge them, but this time the Indians resisted and Chinese

gave up and left Assam Rifles personnel in occupation of the post.

Tsangdhar Massif is in the south of Namka Chu. Its main features are: Tsangdhar (14,000), Karpola (16,000), Dhola (18,000) and Hathungla (13,500 foot) Tsangdhar and Hathungla are roughly in one line and Karpola and Dhola spaced ahead in the south.

Lt General Kaul the Chief of General Staff Indian Army, being the main architect of the Forward policy, ordered opening of some extra posts. One was to be set up on McMahan line, on the western fringe. The party under Captain Mahabir Prasad of 1st Sikhs, who went to locate the post at the junction of Tibet, Bhutan and India, could not reach it's destination, the proposed site of the new post, as the route was rendered inaccessible by exceptionally heavy snowfall. They, therefore, located the post at Che Dong on the southern bank of Namka Chu on 4 June 1962. This post, though dominated by the surrounding high features like Thagia ridge and Tsangdhar, was suitable from the point of view of water, and ease of maintenance. The name 'Dhola', given to the post, was a misnomer; actual Dhola feature being situated a few miles to the south. The post was called Dhola as they thought the McMahan Line passed through the high Dhola. The point for the post was mis-plotted by the Intelligence representative of the survey party accompanying Captain Mahavir Prasad, lent this suited administrative considerations, knowing well that this post like Khinzemane post, also lay in Tibetan territory. Moreover, it was a tactically unsound site. This fact was brought out by Captain Mahabir Prasad when questioned on return from his mission. Considering the orders according to which the post was to be originally set up at the tri-junction, the selection of

present site was circumstantial and was temporary, and it should have been shifted later to a suitable place in the rear within Indian territory, but as was destined this was not done for unknown reasons. Captain Mahabir Prasad had also sent a reconnaissance party to the crest of Thagla, which over looked the large Tibetan village below but saw no sign of Chinese there. Under these circumstances why the Indians did not establish a post on the Thagla as they had set up the Khinzemane post is not known; Chinese might have accepted establishment of the Thagla post since they had conceded the Khinzemane post and there was not much difference between their latitudes. This site of the Dhola post selected by a junior officer was later to become the centre of Sino-Indian controversy. A whole brigade, was most unsoundly deployed and was decimated by the Chinese. Soon after the Dhola post was established the Assam Rifles personnel, who were manning the post, were told by the Chinese to remove it and when it was not done they appeared in strength near the post on 8 September 1962. Presuming that the Chinese were concentrating for an attack the post commander flashed these developments to the rear exaggerating number of Chinese troops by placing the strength at 600. Immediate action was taken on this distress signal and the authorities decided to evict the Chinese who had laid siege to the post. On 22 September the Indian troops (7th Infantry Brigade) were under orders to move and evict the Chinese. The troops had to operate under severe weather condition over the most difficult terrain. There was no airfield and all maintenance had to be done exclusively through airdrops by transport aircraft flying from Tezpur or Darranga over the most risky air route, negotiating high and dangerous mountains enroute. Raw and un-acclimatised troops, inadequately dressed and exposed to chills and other pulmonary ailments during long

approach marches were to be employed for the most ill-planned and unfortunate offensive operation. An interesting order was issued by the Ministry of Defence for the eviction of the Chinese to the Chief of the Army staff is reproduced below:-

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

At a meeting in MMD'S (Minister, Ministry of Defence) room, this morning COAS raised the specific question whether action to evict the Chinese, can be taken as soon as the Brigade (7 Infantry Brigade) has concentrated. 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 Division of NEFA as soon as he was ready.

Sd/-
(HC Sarin)
Joint Secretary
22-9-62

This order was issued under public clamour and urgings of the members of the Parliament. Accordingly 9th Punjab and Assam Rifles patrols from Lumpu immediately proceeded to Dhola to contact the post and ascertain the strength and whereabouts of the enemy. These patrols were followed by a 9th Punjab company from Lumpu and the rest of the Battalion from Tawang. 7th Infantry Brigade with under command 9th Punjab, 1/9th Gorkha Rifles, 2nd Rajputs and 4th Grenadiers supported by symbolic artillery pieces was to conduct the operation and Brigadier Dalvi, Commander 7th Infantry Brigade with his Intelligence Officer reached Namka Chu after six days forced march

over a very steep, most difficult foot path, aggravated by rain, cold, mud and slush on 19 September 1962. For a brigade commander who was to undertake a critical operation the promised helicopter sortie, to his chagrin, did not materialise. When compared with the Burma campaign of World War II additional variables in this campaign were: steep mountainous gradients, excessive height, bitter cold and the absence of roads.

On reaching Namka Chu the brigade commander found his first battalion 9th Punjab stretched over a distance of seven to nine miles along the south bank of the river. Presumably, at that time the Chinese were in position on the north of the river in the vicinity of the Tseng jong feature and the Patsai slope, while the river Namka Chu was the de-facto boundary between the two opposing forces. In order to bring the brigade upto strength 1/9th Gorkha Rifles, 2nd Rajput and 4th Grenadiers were also on move, while the Grenadiers were to take up position on Number One Dronkung Samba Bridges and Hathungla area. On arrival of other units the Punjabis were to readjust themselves at Number Two and Five Bridges. The Rajputs were to hold Number Three and Four Bridges & Gorkhas were to pitch up in depth on the way to Tsangdhar and the feature itself. The Brigade Headquarters was located at Rongla and division Tactical Headquarters was to encamp at Zimithaung. Thus the Brigade was over extended on a frontage of twelve miles or nearly 20,000 yards from Bridge Number One to Tsangle while usually a brigade sector is limited to 3000 yards.

In addition to the brigade commander the divisional and corps commanders had also arrived to direct the operations. Whereas, Shri Nehru the Prime Minister and a pacifist wanted a show of force in order appear to have taken a strong stand to maintain public

confidence, the unorthodox and temperamental General Kaul, the new Corps Commander, wanted to try the doctrine of 'positional warfare' while the more experienced General Prasad, the divisional commander and Brigadier Dalvi, the brigade commander wanted to find a way out of the makeshift and imposed situation since the defensive position was tactically, unsound, being lower than Thagla Ridge and troops were unduly spread out. Secondly, the area was remote and devoid of approach and maintenance roads and thirdly, the brigade was poorly supplied and equipped and troops were not acclimatised. On the other hand the Chinese were well equipped and better placed on more favourable ground. The Chinese concentrated more than a division at Thagla. The Indian side had no proper supply, ordnance, and medical arrangements. While the Chinese had a preponderance of artillery we had only a few pieces for which ammunition was still to be collected from Tsangdhar dropping zone. In fact there was a crisis of munitioning, victualling and warmth.

Before the Tseng-jong incident common sense had prevailed and the Indian side abandoned the slogan of "Evict the Chinese" and it was now decided to defend Namka Chu. So far the idea of moving back and holding a better ground of tactical importance had not found favour with the Indians. Contrarily General Kaul wanted to avail of the opportunity of putting to trial his "positional warfare maneuver". He got down to practice minor infantry battalion tactics which he is said to have missed as a junior officer. It appeared he was now using this as an opportunity for practical training under war conditions. In fact the plan was novel and consistent with the genius of Kaul's complex character.

This set the stage for the first clash. The Corps Commander's operational conference regarding this

operation began on schedule on the morning of 8 October at Bridge IV. As described by Brigadier Dalvi and others it was a rather unorthodox type of operational conference. General Kaul himself has described it as a long and interesting "pow-wow". Various moves were discussed, interspersed with anecdotes from the Corps Commander. At one stage the conference broke up suddenly after a burst of fire was received from the direction of the Chinese 400 meters away. The whole assemblage took cover, wondering "what was coming next"; when nothing followed, he ordered all present to reassemble and the conference continued. To everyone's surprise, General Kaul finally came up with an appreciation that due to the physical impossibility of evicting the Chinese from their strong positions on Thagla, he had decided to try his pet at warfare manoeuvre". In that the 2nd Rajput would occupy Yamatso La, west of the Thag La peak, as the Chinese had not yet occupied it. He chose the Tseng-jong approach for the battalion's move.

The Corps Commander's announcement astonished his audience; as the idea though bold was suicidal. Brigadier Dalvi was stunned and rendered speechless for some minutes. The plan meant moving a battalion in cotton uniform from the floor of the valley to a peak 16,000 foot above sea-level under the noses of the Chinese and without even artillery support when armour or other support was out of question. The enemy could massacre the attackers en route. The first snows had already fallen; even if the enemy allowed the move to take place, the men would freeze to death. The Chinese could starve the battalion after it was in position by merely cutting off its line of communication. When these possibilities were brought home to the Corps Commander he brushed them aside, but agreed to Brigadier Dalvi's suggestion that as a first step a

patrol be sent that day from 9th Punjab. The battalion knew the area and the patrol's mission would be to find a suitable crossing-place for the Rajputs and take up a position at Tseng-jong so as to cover their move to Yamatso La. The Rajputs (Less company at Bridge Number One) were to advance at first light on 10 October. Brigadier Dalvi has commented in his book "Himalayan Blunder". 'It was a weary advance to set up a post on the Thagla Ridge. Exhausted by days of marching over massive heights and under appalling weather conditions, troops badly in need of a breather and the tools for war, were merely ordered to keep going to "Yamatso La". Things were done hurriedly. The principle of speed, was misunderstood and became, disorderly "haste" the bane of operational planning.

Except for the stray burst that day, the Namka Chu valley had been dormant since 30 September. Both 1/9 Gorkha Rifles and the Rajputs had begun to concentrate on the forward slopes of Tsangdhar above Bridge III on the morning of 8 October. The platoon-strength patrol from the Punjabis left under Major Choudhry soon after the decision to send it was taken. By 3 pm it had established itself on Tseng-jong. By the evening two companies of the Rajputs had concentrated in the Bridge IV area, with the remainder of the battalion (less one company) in the Dhola post area. The battalion was still as unprepared as it had been when it had arrived at Tsangdhar on 7 October. It possessed only 90 sleeping bags. It had its 3-inch mortars but could not bring any ammunition for them. Its own men had to return next day to carry as much ammunition and rations as they could.

That night the Corps Commander sent a signal to Army Headquarters announcing the commencement of preliminary operation and the occupation of Tseng-

Jong without opposition. He further indicated that he would be moving up 4th Grenadiers (who had by then reached Tawang). He recommended that in view of the Chinese reaction anticipated by him 11th Infantry Brigade should be despatched to Lumpu in the first instance and arrangements made for its air-maintenance. He also asked for the maximum number of arctic tents as Karpo La and Tsangdhar were snowed down.

9 October was quiet except for a grenade thrown during the early part of the night into the Bridge IV area, where the Corps and Divisional Commanders were camping. During the day one more platoon of 9th Punjab had reinforced their detachment at Tseng-Jong. This platoon was sent from troops already stationed in the Bridge V area, and one section from it was sent to the spur of Karpo La II. The Chinese too were reinforcing their positions. General Kaul had seen two of their battalions taking up positions in the vicinity of Bridges III and IV. According to him, they now had a division arrayed against 7th Brigade.

The Corps Commander received a message that day from Army Headquarters carrying a reliable intelligence report that some 300 men with guns had been seen moving near Tsona-Dzong towards the McMahon Line and that their objective could be Tawang. Kaul replied that in view of the fact that he was "already facing much heavier odds than could be coped with the resources available" he presumed that Army Headquarters would be taking suitable steps to meet this threat.

The Corps Commander had been asking repeatedly for close air-support as it would have, to some extent, neutralized Chinese artillery. The only response the

Corps Commander received on this score was a wireless message from Eastern Command that day. It referred to his earlier signal and asked him to clarify what he meant by the "marshalling of all military and air cover". He had taken on the mission of evicting the Chinese without appreciating the difficulties or even visiting the theatre; now, when he had seen for himself what others like General Umrao Singh and Brigadier Dalvi had been saying for some time, he wanted all the military resources of the country, including the Air Force, to come to his aid. The Government did not, however, want the border dispute to escalate into full-scale war by ordering air action. The country was not prepared for war. The government's aim was only to make "an impact"

Guns, warm clothing and aeroplanes apart, General Kaul did not lack one commodity: Good-will in high places. He received a message that day from General Thapar to say that both he and the Government of India had full confidence in him.

For those who fought on the Namka Chu and lived, the morning of 09/10 October was a time never to be forgotten. At first light, while General Kaul was shaving outside his bunker and his batman was boiling water for tea, the calm of the morning was shattered all of a sudden by small-arms fire. A short while earlier a patrol from Tseng-Jong had reported a large concentration of Chinese on the north and east of the post. Soon after the patrol had come under fire but retaliated; thereafter, intermittent firing continued. Around 8 am, six hundred Chinese attacked the post. Our strength at the position was a total of 56 men; they had pouch ammunition only and had no time to dig themselves in but they beat back the assault.

Around 9.30 am the Chinese reformed for a second attack. By then the 9 Punjab section on Karpo La II under Havildar Malkiat Singh, had moved closer to the flank of the Chinese who were forming up. While the latter had emerged, exposed themselves for assault, it opened up on them, inflicting heavy casualties. The Chinese reacted by bringing down fire from heavy mortars.

When the first shots rang out, the Rajputs were strung along the south bank of the Namaka Chu in compliance with their orders and were hurrying up on their way to Yamatso La. The forward company was about 450 meters from the Temporary Bridge and Lieutenant Colonel Rikh was following the second company with his group. When he reached Bridge IV he saw Kaul. With him were his Brigadier General Staff Brigadier K K Singh, some other members of his staff, the Divisional Commander and Dalvi. Describing the events of the morning, Rikh says; I was ordered personally by the Corps Commander not to advance further as the situation had now changed and the enemy had reacted more violently than he had originally appreciated. He felt that the strength of the enemy immediately opposite us was far beyond our capacity to take on with our resources. He ordered us to go temporarily into defence and told me that my unit would hold the south bank of the Namaka Chu with one company each at Temporary Bridge and Bridges III and IV. I told the Corps Commander that these positions were dominated by the Thag La ridge, and in the event of an attack it would be impossible to hold out. I was told we were going into defence only temporarily and that the enemy would not attack if we remained on the south bank of the Namaka Chu. I was further told that after a few days we would again carry out offensive actions; in the meantime, not a single inch of territory that was now

held would be given up. After saying this the Corps Commander, his staff and the Divisional Commander left. The Brigade Commander remained at Bridge IV.

Having exercised personal command at the front since his arrival on 6 October General Kaul had handed back 7th Brigade to Brigadier Dalvi. "It is your battle," the general is said to have told him. He was himself leaving for Delhi to place before the Chief of Army Staff and the Government a first-hand account of the situation. 'Frankly speaking, I had now fully understood all the implications of our predicament', he was later to say in his memories.

It was about 10 am when General Kaul and his party left. Dalvi had a battle on his hands, but his first concern was to provide an escort for the Corps and Divisional Commanders. He ordered a company from 1/9th Gorkha Rifles to accompany the party; after completing their mission the Gorkhas were to stay at Bridge I till relieved by 4th Grenadiers who were expected to arrive there shortly.

When Major Chaudhary had been asking for mortar and machine-gun fire to extricate his tiny force from Tseng-jong, Brigadier Dalvi was standing next to the machine-gun and mortar detachments at Bridge IV. They comprised two 3-inch mortars and two machine-guns; their commanders were eager to bring them into action. However, he decided against their use. He did not want the clash to escalate into an all-out battle, which was sure to follow if fire was opened up from the south bank. Moreover, Tseng-jong was out of effective range of these weapons.

It was a painful decision for Dalvi not to open up as he could see Chinese reinforcements moving to

Tseng-jong after their first assault had failed. We could have tried to take them on, but in doing so he would have attracted murderous fire on the Rajputs who were milling about trying to find cover and take up positions between Bridges III and IV and Log Bridge. Chinese guns across the Namka Chu would have mowed them down as the mortar and machine-gun detachments were deployed on a small open patch right in front of the Chinese, who were in a position to wipe them out with small-arms fire. The mortars had 60 bombs each, and the machine-guns barely had ammunition for half an hour of fire at normal rate. The rest of his force was also not in a fit state for a major engagement. Another consideration that weighed heavily with Brigadier Dalvi was the safety of the Corps Commander and his party trekking along a route that lay parallel to the Chinese positions.

The Chinese attacked again at noon. They attacked from the north, east and west, supported by heavy mortars. Half an hour later Brigadier Dalvi ordered Chaudhry to disengage and withdraw and then the enemy assaulted the position and hand-to-hand fighting developed. Though he had been wounded, Chaudhry showed remarkable courage and leadership in extricating whatever was left of his two platoons for which he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. One of his jawans, Sepoy Kanshi Ram, brought back a Chinese automatic rifle; during the melee; he had snatched it from a Chinese soldier and he too got Maha Vir Chakra. Man for man, the Punjabis had given a good account of themselves inspite of the fact that they were outnumbered 20 to 1. Their losses totalled 6 dead, 11 wounded and 5 missing. Peking Radio admitted a hundred casualties on the Chinese side. But for the gallantry of Naik Chain Singh, the Punjabis would have lost many more men. When the order to withdraw was

given he told his men to break contact and himself covered their withdrawal with a light machine-gun. Hit by an enemy automatic, he continued to fire his weapon till another burst from an enemy machine-gun killed him on the spot. He completed the hat trick and won the third award of Maha Vir Chakra. The Indian Press and government made much of the skirmish. Though our troops had made a good showing, it was not something to be jubilant about. The Chinese had, in fact, held their hand. They could easily have cut off the Punjabis route of withdrawal, but they allowed them to pull out and evacuate the wounded. They were apparently keen to give the impression", that they did not want war, but that if we crossed the Namka Chu they would resist."

Later that day the Chinese buried our dead with full military honours. From the south bank our men could watch the scene; they were certainly impressed but actually the ceremony was enacted to beguile the Indian troops into complacency. Soon after the firing began, Brigadier Dalvi had recommended to the Corps Commander and General Prasad that they take a realistic view of the situation and not persist in our attempts at evicting the Chinese from Thag La and pull back to a more defensible position, leaving flag-posts on the south bank of the Namka Chu. However, the verbal orders that General Kaul gave before he left were that till his return from Delhi the offensive was to be held in abeyance, but that our positions on the south bank of the Namka Chu were to be held so as to ensure the security of the crossing from Temporary Bridge to Bridge I at all costs. The holding of Tsangle was left to the discretion of the Divisional Commander, with the stipulation that there was to be no withdrawal till the post was actually threatened. Hathung La was

to be held and the line of communication via Lumpu was to be protected.

On that day General Kaul and his party reached the foot of Hathung La at dusk. He spent the night there in great pain; the Corps Commander was in the throes of pulmonary oedema, a malady that he brought on himself by disregarding the basic precaution of acclimatizing himself before venturing into high altitudes. Next day he had to be carried up the Hathung La heights, and by the time he left Tezpur he was running a high temperature.

Every aspect of the campaign had received meticulous attention from Chinese planners. They had moved to Lhasa, between March and May 1962, arranged interpreters in all major Indian languages. There they were acclimatized and taught the characteristics and customs of various classes recruited in the Indian Army. Camps for 3,000 prisoners of war had been set up. Thoughtfully, they were provided with padded suits, beddings and essential clothing.

On 10 October the Chinese had occupied Tseng-jong and Muksar in strength. They had also occupied the north bank of the Namka Chu opposite Log Bridge and Bridge IV, deploying a battalion in that area. Chinese heavy mortars had been moved to Muksar, facing Tsangle, and also between Log Bridge and Bridge IV. Mules had been bringing their mortars and machine-guns right up to river; they were using panjls and wire to strengthen their positions on the river, and wheeled guns had been sighted on Thag La by our observation post. On the night of 15/16 October the Chinese had begun to probe our position at Tsangle and had sent a platoon-strength patrol which took offensive action. In the engagement that lasted about half an hour, one

Chinese was killed and some were wounded. On the same night there was an exchange of fire at Bridge V also.

On our side too there had been an increase in the force under HQ 7th Infantry Brigade with the arrival of 4 Grenadiers under Lieut Colonel KS Harihar Singh at Bridge I on 11 October. Soon after, one of their companies was deployed at Drokung Samba bridge and another at Serkhim and Hathung La. After the Grenadiers arrival Brigadier Dalvi sent the Rajputs and Gorkha companies, so far on detached duty, back to their battalions. By 16 October, 7th Brigade Headquarters had been established at Rong La, less than a kilometer from the Assam Rifles post at Che Dong. On 12 October the tactical headquarters of Fourth Division had been set up at Ziminthang. On that day the Signals had completed laying telephone lines connecting Tsangdhar with Che Dong and all positions on the Namka Chu, barring Bridge V with brigade headquarters.

The Grenadiers too had come poorly equipped. They were the least acclimatized and had in consequence to suffer the most. They did not even have matchets to cut trees for bunkers. The, Chinese, who could see our troops, derided our jawans pathetic efforts to cut logs with entrenching tools. They themselves had enough of mechanical saws for the purpose.

There had been another addition to 7th Brigade: the long awaited pioneers from the Border Roads Organization, whom General Kaul had 'commandeered' almost immediately after his arrival at Tezpur on 4 October. The first batch numbering 150 had arrived on October 13; in another three days their total rose to

450 but they had all come without snow-clothing. They were mostly employed for the maintenance of Tsangle and had, therefore, to be issued with essential snow clothing items in preference to troops deployed on the Namka Chu. This was resented by the jawans as they were already undergoing extreme hardship with three blankets shared between two men. Tsangle and Tsangdhar had been getting snow regularly and the sick-rate was increasing. By 17 October about fifty per cent of the pioneers from the Border Roads Organization were sick.

Brigadier Dalvi had repeatedly made representations to the Divisional Commander that he be allowed to withdraw the Punjab company at Tsangle as its maintenance was causing a severe drain on his slender resources. He was of the view that Tsangle would be the first objective of the Chinese in case they decided to attack. Also our company there, could be easily cut off.

General Kaul was fully aware of our difficulties at Tsangle. He sent a message to Army Headquarters straight away, advising against any further reinforcement of the post. On the other hand, he recommended the withdrawal of the existing company there to the south bank of the Namka Chu. At the same time he pointed out the difficulty of maintaining posts established under the Forward policy, and stated that unless provision was made for additional aircraft for supply drops, some of these posts should be withdrawn. To those who had been watching the Chinese build-up day after day it was clear that a battle was in the offing. The evacuation of the Corps Commander at this juncture was, therefore, unfortunate. But this mishap became disastrous when General Kaul was not admitted to hospital on arrival

in Delhi as he should have been in the normal course. Instead, he went straight to his residence and continued to exercise command over embattled IV Corps from his sick-bed. His Brigadier General Staff had to refer all important matters to him for a decision.

Army regulations are very clear on the assumption of command by the next senior in the chain when someone becomes a casualty, as General Kaul was. That General Kaul continued to exercise command after evacuation to Delhi may look strange today, but in the Army of 1962 anything was possible though the regulations remain unchanged.

Brigadier Dalvi has very aptly said in his book 'Himalayan Blunder' that the atmosphere in our higher echelons at the time was more appropriate to a Ruritanian army than the Army that had brought victory to British arms in two World Wars. He recalls that while the Chinese were preparing to annihilate his brigade, and his men were doing all they could to strengthen their defences within their meagre resources, some of the staff at Divisional Headquarters seemed to be blissfully ignorant of what was happening at the front. The Division (Rear HQ) had for some time been organizing the annual celebration of Sidi Barrani Day in commemoration of that great victory of World War II. One day his headquarters received "a most severe reprimand" and demanded an explanation for not sending the brigade's contingent for the celebration. Then there was the influx of staff officers from the Divisional Headquarters, who were sent to assist him as they had no job to do at their own headquarters. The situation was truly Ruritanian. It had an unfortunate sequel though; one of the staff officers lost his life at Tsangdhar when the Chinese attacked.

Chinese preparations were intensified on 18 October. Their senior officers were seen holding conferences and pointing to our positions on the Namka Chu and Tsangdhar. They were also seen taking bearings of our positions. On the night of 17/18 October they kept firing at our Tsangle post and Bridge V for 90 minutes. By then there was a foot of standing snow at Tsangle and Brigadier Dalvi withdrew-snow-clothing from the men on the Namka Chu to send it to the men holding Tsangle.

19 October saw the climax of Chinese preparations. Large number of mules were seen coming across Thag La to the north bank of the Namka Chu carrying stores and equipment. The Rajputs observation post above Temporary Brigade saw large number of Chinese soldiers coming across Thag La to the north bank of the Namka Chu carrying stores and equipment. The Rajputs observation post above Temporary Brigade also counted about 2000 Chinese soldiers coming down and concentrating in the area between Tseng-jong and Temporary Bridge. Our jawans on the river could see Chinese marking parties at work, preparing for a night-advance. All this activity was meticulously reported to Divisional Headquarters. According to Brigadier Dalvi, he asked General Prasad on 17 October that he be allowed to withdraw his brigade from the Namka Chu as quickly as possible as he could not maintain his troops there. The General Officer Commanding promised to speak to the Corps Commander but nothing came of this as the Corps Commander meanwhile had been taken ill and flown to Delhi. On the other hand, Brigadier Dalvi was ordered on 18 October to send a company of 1/9 Gorkha Rifles to reinforce Tsangle, in piecemeal compliance of the Defence Minister's order. This was the proverbial last straw for 7th Brigade. Though his earlier protests had brought no positive

response, Brigadier Dalvi again represented that with the available porters it was not possible to maintain the company already at Tsangle and sending the Gorkhas there would be suicidal. He also argued that by moving out a company of the Gorkhas he would be denuding Tsangdhar, a vital spot. As it was, his brigade was stretched over 12 miles and had no depth whatsoever. The protest was relayed to General Kaul in Delhi, and the only reply that Dalvi got was that officer who failed to obey orders would be court-martialled.

On the evening of 19 October Brigadier Dalvi made a last attempt to convince General Prasad that in order to meet the impending attack, which he visualized would begin next day with a strike against Tsangle, his brigade must be redeployed tactically. As an immediate measure he recommended the withdrawal of Rajput companies in the Log and temporary Bridges area to provide depth to the remaining Rajput positions. He told General Prasad that in its existing positions it would be easy for the Chinese to wipe out the brigade. He also added, that rather than stand by and watch the massacre of his men he was prepared to resign his commission. The Divisional Commander told him that he would have to refer the matter to Corps Headquarters.

After a while General Prasad rang up to say that the Brigadier General Staff at Corps Headquarters did not feel he was competent to give a decision but agreed to contact the Corps Commander in Delhi to get his orders.

With the doom of his brigade staring him in the face, Brigadier Dalvi asked the Divisional Commander to relieve him of his command immediately as he was

not prepared to continue in the situation in which the actions of his superiors had placed his troops. According to Brigadier Dalvi, General Prasad was so overwhelmed with emotion that he broke down and promised to be with him next morning 'to share the fate of the brigade'. Though a mere visit from the General Officer Commanding was no solution to his problems Dalvi promised to receive him at the Tsangdhar helipad next morning.

Brigadier Dalvi's forecast regarding the Chinese D-day proved correct. But he apparently could not gauge the speed or strength of their attack. In his telephone conversation with the General officer Commanding he had indicated that the Chinese would take about three days to finish his brigade. They did not go for Tsangle. According to Survey maps Tsangle was in Bhutan. The Chinese did not want to antagonize the Bhutanese; their activities in the Tsangle area had merely been part of a deception plan.

That night (19/20 October) the Chinese went into their forming-up places on commanding ground. In utter contempt of Indian troops facing them across the narrow river, which was now fordable all over, they lit fires to keep themselves warm. They needed to keep themselves warm as the Namka Chu valley had its first snow fall. The Chinese knew we had no artillery supporting our troops and could ignore their presence with impunity. For our officers and men, it must have been extremely humiliating to watch helplessly while the enemy warmed themselves around bonfires before them.

On 7 October, IVth Corps had estimated that the Chinese had deployed two infantry divisions and two regiments against NEFA. However, the information

gathered after the cease-fire indicated that the force they had used against Fourth Division itself consisted of their 11 and 55 Divisions and 419 Unit. Of this force they used one division against 7 Brigade, its mission being to destroy this formation and then advance on Towang. There it would link up with the second division, which was to advance by way of Bum La.

For dealing with 7th Brigade, their plan was to start with a heavy battering ram to break through in the centre and the left flank of the brigade and then capture Tsangdhar and Hathung La. With these key positions in their hands, the remainder of the brigade on the riverline would be cut off and could be dealt with by mopping up operations, or finished as the disorganised troops made for the passes.

Two red very lights signalled the Chinese attack, which started at 5 am on 20 October. A heavy barrage opened with over 150 guns and heavy mortars taking part. Our positions at Bridges III and IV, Log and Temporary Bridges, Tsangle, Tsangdhar, brigade headquarters and the posts at Khinzemane and Drokung Samba came in for heavy shelling. The Chinese used 76-mm guns and 120-mm mortars.

Before we describe how the Chinese attack developed let us take a second look at the dispositions of 7th Brigade on that morning:-

4 Grenadiers less two Coys	— Bridge I
One Coy	— Drokung Samba (directly under Div HQ)

One Coy	— Serkhim, with one of its pls at Hathung La
9 Punjab less one Coy	— Bridge II
One Coy	— Bridge V and Tsangle
2 Rajput less three Coys	— Bridge IV
One Coy	— Bridge III
One Coy	— Temporary Bridge
One Coy	— Log Bridge
1/9 GR less - two Coys	— astride the Che Dong- Tsangdhar track
One Coy	— behind Bridge II (near brigade headquarters)
One Coy (less pl)	— Tsangdhar
One pl	— between Tsangdhar and Bridge V
One pl of 5 Assam Rifles	— Che Dong
34 Hy Mor Bty less pl	— Tsangdhar
Tr 17 Para Fd Regt	— Tsangdhar

Coy 6 Mahar (MG), less a pl	— pl with 1/9 GR
	with 2 Rajput at Bridge IV
100 Fd Coy (less a pl)	— Rong La
Bde HQ	— 100 yds behind Dhola post. (Rong La)

The shelling lasted an hour. It was followed by well co-ordinated infantry assaults that came almost simultaneously against the Rajputs, the Gorkhas and the Grenadiers' post at Drokung Samba.

Several versions of the Namka Chu battle having appeared in recent years but none from the Chinese side being available; one can only make a surmise regarding their strength and plans. It appears that they used one regiment against the Rajputs. Possibly a battalion or more had infiltrated between Bridges V and IV on the night of 19/20 October and outflanked the Rajputs; later their positions having been attacked from the south as well as the north. Another regiment appears to have been used against the Gorkhas. It is likely that the force that had been demonstrating earlier against Tsangle infiltrated during the night of 18 October and attacked the Gorkhas on the morning of 20 October. They employed their third regiment on the Khinzemane approach; a part of it seized Hathung La, using a direct approach between Bridges I and II. The seizure of Hathung La cut off the Punjabis and Grenadiers from Lumpu, and the Chinese column

advancing down the Nyamjang Chu soon threatened the Divisional Headquarters at Ziminthang.

'Events took place with such bewildering swiftness,' says Brigadier Dalvi, 'that it is difficult to piece together an accurate account of the tactical battle. 'At another place he expresses a doubt as to whether the 'massacre' that occurred on the morning can be 'dignified' by the title of battle. According to the other version of battle our units fought back fiercely against the overwhelming odds; one after another their positions were overrun.

Not all of Brigadier Dalvi's units were ready for battle or told that a battle was coming. The Rajputs had seen the enemy preparations of 19 October. They knew they were the most threatened unit, and Colonel Rikh had warned his company commanders on the evening of 19 October that in case of attack they must fight to the last man and the last round. The Grenadiers were still in the process of preparing defensive positions and some of their elements were still fetching up. From their commanding positions the Gorkhas saw the feverish Chinese activity, but their impression was that the Chinese were trying to 'show force to frighten us'. Though they were under orders to be vigilant, they were also told not to do anything to antagonize the Chinese or to escalate the situation. This must have prompted the commanding officer, Lieut Colonel Ahluwalia, to order his battalion to unprime their grenades when he was informed on the evening of 19 October that all his companies had primed their grenades. He had also given orders that no sub-unit or individual would open fire without his personal orders. Every morning, from 5 to 5.30, the battalion held a 'stand-to' when each man would get into his battle-position. On the morning of 20 October also, the 'stand-

to' was carried out. That day the ritual turned into the real thing.

The plight of the two guns of 17th Para Field Regiment and the four mortars of 34th Heavy Mortar Battery at Tsangdhar, needs to be recounted. There are divergent versions of the part played by the former. The guns had 412 rounds with them. According to some account, the two guns opened up but were soon silenced by accurate fire from Chinese artillery. According to other accounts, they did not fire a single round. The official history of the Regiment of Artillery says that the para field troops had 'no orders for the firing of the guns. The Battery Commander of 34 Heavy Mortar Battery, the senior gunner at Brigade Headquarters (at Rong La), was unable to contact the guns or his mortars because the telephone lines had been cut. The radio frequency allotted to the gunners was jammed by the Chinese. The state of affairs can be judged from the fact that the four mortars had no ammunition at their gun positions. The ammunition (417 rounds) had been dropped on October 14 but it remained at the Tsangdhar dropping zone awaiting an allotment of porters.

The Chinese had taken care to cut the telephone lines in the early hours of October 20; not very difficult as the lines were overhead. Brigadier Dalvi could not communicate with his battalion commanders, nor could the latter communicate with their companies. Unit wireless operators closed down their sets as they had to man the defences. However, Brigadier Dalvi was able to maintain wireless contact with General Prasad and with 1/9th Gorkha Rifles till about 8 am. He kept telling the General Officer Commanding all that was happening. But he was unable to influence the battle

in any manner. 'Within a few minutes of the Chinese attack 7th Brigade lost its cohesion,' he recalls.

The Rajputs bore the brunt of the Chinese attack. They suffered the maximum casualties, but they lived up to the highest traditions of their regiment. The opening salvoes of Chinese artillery blew up the Signals' bunker; all the signallers, including signal officer, Captain Mangat, were killed. Their mortar platoon suffered a similar fate.

The company holding Bridge IV repulsed two Chinese attacks but the third attack overwhelmed them. This company included a platoon of Bengalis under Jemadar Biswas. This gallant junior commissioned officer was killed while leading his platoon in a bayonet charge against heavy odds; his entire platoon was wiped out.

The company holding Temporary Bridge fought equally well. Naik Roshan Singh's section, located on the south-west approach, clung to its position till every man was killed. A platoon under Subedar Dashrath Singh repulsed three enemy attacks. It had only seven men surviving when the fourth wave came. Undaunted, he met the enemy with the bayonet. Four more of his gallant men were killed and the remaining three and he himself, all wounded, were taken prisoner. The third platoon, under Jemadar Bose, had only ten men surviving after three waves of the enemy had been repulsed. This gallant Bengali led them in the final charge and went down with most of his comrades before the Chinese could occupy his position.

Major Pant had taken over command of this company after Major Sethi, the company commander, who had been buried and died under the roof of his

bunker which collapsed with the first few shells. Despite the shelling and heavy fire from enemy small arms Major Pant went from position to position to cheer up his men. In the process he was wounded in the left leg, but he continued to hobble around shouting to his men; 'Show these Chinese what stuff you Rajputs are made of;' His demeanour inspired his men to perform superhuman acts of valour. Even when he was wounded a second time he dragged himself to a point where he could watch the battle. The enemy had seen that he was the rallying force behind his company and directed maximum fire on him and he was badly wounded. Major Pant's men heard him utter with his last breath the regimental war-cry.

The company at Log Bridge, under Lieutenant Subhash Chandra, held out the longest. He fought with great courage and skill. When his position was outflanked he carried out a quick reorganisation. Wounded by small-arms fire, he was later burnt to death by an enemy flame-thrower.

Major Gurdial Singh, the second-in-command of the battalion, rallied the remnants after most of the sub units had been overrun. He personally led them in an assault. Most of these men died fighting or fell wounded. Major Gurdial Singh was overpowered and captured.

The battalion's command-post was the last to be overrun when the enemy surrounded it and called upon Colonel Rikh to surrender. But, he together with his adjutant Captain Bhatia, his intelligence officer, Lieutenant Bhoop Singh and his batman, continued to engage the enemy. Though Bhatia was killed in the fighting and Rikh received multiple injuries the post refused to surrender. The Chinese finally used a pole-

charge. Lieutenant Bhoop Singh and Colonel Rikh were captured. The latter was by then unconscious; he was put on a stretcher, and a Chinese nursing orderly later dressed his wounds.

After the Rajputs had been overrun, the Chinese Divisional Commander came across at Bridge III. Many of the Chinese admitted to Colonel Rikh during his captivity that they had suffered the maximum casualties of their NEFA campaign in the first battle.

Of a total of 513 all ranks on the strength of 2 Rajput that morning the battalion lost 282 in killed, including four officers and six junior commissioned officers; those wounded and captured numbered 81, including two officers and three junior commissioned officers; those captured unwounded numbered 90, including three officers and two junior commissioned officers. It is a pity that the many acts of valour performed by this battalion went unrecognized. 'The wave of indignation that swept the country engulfed their claim to fame.'

The main positions of 1/9th Gorkha Rifles were above Che Dong, astride a track that led from the Assam Rifles post to Tsangdhar. The central position was held by a platoon from "D" Company, which had two of its remaining platoons at Tsangdhar. The position on the left was held by 'C' Company and that on the right by 'A' Company. The latter had despatched a platoon on 18 October to Tsangle. The fourth company was above Bridge II, protecting brigade headquarters.

The Gorkhas had been surprised when their daily 'stand-to' coincided with the first salvos of Chinese guns. They were more surprised when the shelling was followed by a two-pronged assault on their positions.

Enemy infiltration during the night of 19/20 October had gone unnoticed. When Colonel Ahluwalia heard the sound of light machine-gun and rifle fire from the direction of one of his positions he sent his adjutant, Major (later Brigadier) Shrikent, to investigate. The Gorkhas' telephone lines were also dead.

Despite the initial surprise the battalion fought well. Their 3-inch mortars-four of them were in position-opened up, but were soon silenced by Chinese heavy mortars. When Major Shrikent reached the Chauri Hut area, where the platoon from 'D' Company was located, he saw the enemy forming up for attack. At the same time he saw a large number of Chinese moving towards 'A' and 'C' Companies. He, therefore, rushed back so as to report on the wireless set. When he reached the command-post he found that Colonel Ahluwalia had already gone to 'C' Company which was under attack.

At that time, in the adjutant's own bunker, were the battalion's second-in-command, Major Charak, and Lieut Colonel (later Major-General) KK Tewari, Commander Divisional Signals. The latter had come on a visit to 7th Brigade two days earlier and had spent the night of 19/20 October with the Gorkhas. He was giving Brigadier Dalvi a running commentary on the battle over the wireless.

Soon after, when the battalion commander returned to the command-post, he brought the news-that 'C' Company was under attack by about 500 of the enemy; the company commander, Captain Gambhir, had been killed; and Second-Lieutenant Dogra, a platoon commander, was wounded. Colonel Ahluwalia now ordered Subedar Major Jit Bahadur Chetri to take all available men to reinforce Dogra's platoon.

It was around 6.25 am now and the Gorkhas had another surprise when they saw a Dakota come over for the morning drop. No one had informed the Air Force about the battle. The enemy fired at the plane but it managed to escape.

By 7.15 am Dogra's platoon had been overrun. Though wounded, he took up a light machine-gun and kept the enemy at bay while the remnants of his platoon fell back. By then the Chinese were milling all over. The Commanding Officer and his Second-in-Command had gone to watch the battle in 'C' Company's area. Sensing the danger they were in, Subedar Dhan Bahadur Chand covered their withdrawal with a light machine-gun.

A last bid was made by Major Shrikent to plug the gap in 'C' Company's defence. He arrived with a dozen men, but by then the company had been overrun and the party was encircled in the dog-fight, but managed to get back.

By about 7.30 am 'A' company was under severe attack from the rear as well as from the front. A large enemy force had come down the slope to attack battalion headquarters and this company from the rear. Colonel Ahluwalia was wounded in the right shoulder and hand-to-hand fighting ensued. Realizing that the position was lost, the commanding officer ordered a withdrawal to Tsangdhar. Information had by this time reached battalion headquarters that Subedar Major Jit Bahadur and the thirty men who had gone with him to reinforce 'C' Company had been encircled and captured; also that Captain Mahabir Prasad and Second Lieutenant Mahindra had been wounded and were missing. Captain Prasad from Ist Sikhs had earlier set

up the Assam Rifles post at Che Dong and had been attached to 1/9th Gorkha Rifles on 4 October.

The withdrawal of the Gorkhas was quite confused. It appears that they split into two main lots; one took the Bingo- Tsangdhar track and the other took the track to Bridge II, hoping to reach brigade headquarters. The commanding officer and his adjutant were with those who withdrew towards Tsangdhar. Colonel Ahluwalla was in need of immediate medical attention; he started for the advance dressing station at Tsangdhar, telling Major Shrikent to hold the Tsangdhar ridge meanwhile. He had not gauged the depth of the Chinese attack and even before he and his small party had negotiated the Tsangdhar slope, the assault on Subedar Harka Bahadur's platoon on the ridge was already under way. The platoon put up a stiff fight, but when its ammunition was exhausted Harka Bahadur ordered his men to break contact and withdraw. About 15 men got away. The assault on Tsangdhar had begun around 8 am. Survivors of the second platoon of 'D' Company, under Second-Lieutenant Kutty, managed to escape along the Tsangdhar-Karpo La track. They later joined the brigade headquarters party. Major Shrikent also decided to take his party towards the dropping zone. His aim was to reach the Karpo La I track, but the enemy had meanwhile sealed off this route. The only alternative now was to make for Rong La. However, when the party had gone halfway down they met Major Charak who told them that the enemy had already occupied Rong La. By then it was quite late and the Gorkhas decided to stay where they were; they had found a hideout below the dropping zone. On a rough tally it was found that three junior commissioned officers including Subedar-Major Jit Bahadur Chetri and 190

other ranks had been killed or were missing. Of the officers, Colonel Tewari, Captain Sood and Second Lieutenant Dogra were missing besides those already mentioned.

Colonel Ahluwalia was bleeding profusely and was in great pain. The men did not want to leave without him, and stayed in their hideout on 21 October. They had found a crate of tinned milk, which everyone shared.

Here a tribute must be paid to a gallant Gorkha junior commissioned officer, Subedar Bhab Bahadur Katwal who had been wounded in the fighting on 20 October. In the early hours of 21 October he decided to make for Karpo La I with the 15 odd men he had with him. The Chinese had placed a medium machine-gun to block this route, but Bhab Bahadur was not deterred. He and his men charged the machine-gun site; the Gorkhas hiding below the dropping zone heard their war cries, loud and clear. Then the machine-gun blared and nothing more was heard of Bhab Bahadur and his men. All of them were killed or taken prisoner.

By 22 October the number of men in the hideout had swelled with more people coming in to seek its shelter; they included men from other units also. That day it was decided to, split the men into five parties and escape into Bhutan via Dum Dum La. Colonel Ahluwalia was carried a short distance on an improvised stretcher, but he refused to be carried any further as he was delaying the rest of the men. In accordance with his wishes he was put on a makeshift bed with a couple of men to look after him. He was later taken prisoner.

Spending the night of 23 October at a height of 17,000 feet under rocks, the Gorkhas trekked into Bhutan. They were lucky to have found food, padded coats and some blankets abandoned by the porters accompanying the platoon of 'A' Company that had set out for Tsangle on 19 October from Tsangdhar. When the shelling began on the morning of 20 October the platoon had got scattered; the officer in charge and some other men crossed into Bhutan and the remaining managed to sneak through enemy lines and reached Lumpu. The trek through Bhutan was extremely arduous. They had to be left in villages en route, to be evacuated later on ponies. Bhutanese villagers were helpful. When the Gorkhas reached Tashigong Dzong on 31 October the military commander of the area, Major Yangdi, looked after them; he was very hospitable

When a final tally was made, the battalion's casualties totalled 226. Of these, 80 (including two officers and a junior commissioned officer) had been killed or were presumed to have died; 44 (including one officer and two junior commissioned officer) had been wounded; 102 (including one officer and two junior commissioned officers) were prisoners of war. The Gorkhas won a number of awards for gallantry.

Before we close the story of Tsangdhar a word must be said of the para gunners there. The Chinese attack on Tsangdhar had begun from the west. After the two Gorkha platoons had been overrun the enemy advanced on the para gun position. The gunners took on the Chinese with light machine-gun and rifle fire. The Chinese called out to the gunners to surrender, but they took no notice and fought on until one-third had been killed or wounded and their light machine-gun knocked out. The rest were captured.

Tsangdhar had been captured by 12-20 pm. While the fighting there was in progress two Bell helicopters had come over. The first helicopter landed but its passenger, Major Ram Singh (second-in-command of the Divisional Signal Regiment), was killed on the spot by a shell burst. The helicopter never took off as it was damaged. The second helicopter circled low over the dropping zone but managed to get away. According the Brigadier Dalvi, Major Ram Singh had come to make a personal assessment of the situation on behalf of the Divisional Commander.

The last moments of 7th Brigade's headquarters were equally pathetic. About 8 am, a few stragglers from 1/9th Gorkha Rifles had come to Brigadier Dalvi's headquarters with the news that the battalion had been overrun. This meant that his left flank now stood exposed. The middle defences had already crumbled, and his headquarters was under small-arms fire. Two other ranks of his headquarters had been killed and four others wounded. There was no longer any point in his staying at Rong La so he decided to fall back on Tsangdhar and obtained the Divisional Commander's permission to do so. His plan was to reform with the Gorkhas and fight the next battle at Tsangdhar. He had, however, no means of informing the Gorkhas or the Rajputs. The brigade's war diary states that since the Commanding Officers of both battalions knew his mind well they would automatically fall back upon Tsangdhar. As 9th Punjab and the Grenadiers were still in touch with the Division, Brigadier Dalvi asked the GOC to convey this information to them.

As Brigadier Dalvi tells, he left Rong La at 8.15 am; with him were his GSO 3 (Intelligence), two Artillery officers, an Engineer officer, his own protective detachment, two type 62 wireless sets and a portion of

100 Field Company. The BM, the DAA and QMG and the rest of brigade headquarters left a short while later after destroying secret documents. Artillery fire harassed Brigadier Dalvi's party as they followed the track to Tsangdhar. Soon after he left Rong La, Brigadier Dalvi came to the conclusion that the fate of Tsangdhar was sealed and decided to make for Serkhim so as to join the Grenadiers there. On the following day the party split as some of the officers and men could not keep up due to sickness or exhaustion. Without any map to help him, Brigadier Dalvi lost his way several times, but he and his small group kept going despite the fact that they had not had any food since their last meal on 19 October.

At 6 am on October 22 Brigadier Dalvi saw a Chinese column making for Lumpu. He, therefore, decided to head for Ziminthang and join Divisional Headquarters, not knowing that General Prasad and his headquarters, were at the time trekking towards Tawang. Brigadier Dalvi's wanderings ended a few hours later when he ran into a company of the enemy and was taken prisoner together with his companions. The party had been without food for 66 hours. Major Kharbanda and his party were more lucky; on 31 October they reached the reception camp that had been set up at Darranga.

At Bridge II, 9 Punjab's position had not been shelled on the morning of October 20. After wireless communications with brigade headquarters were interrupted, the battalion remained in contact with its rear at Lumpu and with the company at Tsangle. At 11 am General Prasad ordered the battalion through its rear wireless link to withdraw and take up a lay back position at Hathung La. The withdrawal began at 12.30 pm. The Chinese then brought down heavy mortar and

small-arms fire on Bridge II and followed up with an attack on the position held by 'D' Company under Major Chaudhry. Casualties were heavy on both sides, and Major Chaudhry was among those who went down fighting.

Twenty volunteers from the battalion under Havildar Malkiat Singh were on their way to Tsangle with ammunition and other essential supplies, when the Chinese attack had begun. They ran into a large Chinese force. In the unequal engagement that followed, the Punjabis gave a good account of themselves, though they suffered heavy casualties, Malkiat Singh was among those killed.

The Chinese had reached Hathung La before 9 Punjab. The battalion, therefore, changed its route of withdrawal to Lumpu- Tawang. The main body withdrew through Bhutan when Lumpu and Tawang were found to be already occupied. The company at Tsangle also withdrew by way of Bhutan after getting orders to pull out.

The position at Drokung Samba was held by 'C' Company of the Grenadiers. After shelling by heavy mortars it was attacked from three sides by a battalion of the Chinese, who soon blew up the bridge over the Nyamjang Chu. Second-Lieutenant Rao, the company officer, showed exemplary leadership and courage in repulsing wave after wave of the enemy; with the bridge gone, there was no prospect of a withdrawal and Rao and his men fought with their backs to the wall. He and a score of his men were killed; many more were wounded or captured; a few escaped to Ziminthang.

The Assam Rifles post at Khinzemane was caught between the Chinese who attacked it from the south

after overrunning 'C' Company of the Grenadiers and a force that attacked from the north. After reducing these two positions the Chinese advanced on Soktsen, ready to cross the Towang ridge and proceed to Sumatso.

The main body of the Grenadiers at Bridge I had received orders to pull out at the same time as the Punjabis. It withdrew through Bhutan and reached Tashigong Dzong after 17 days. The company at Serkhim also withdrew through Bhutan.

Thus ends the story of 7 Infantry Brigade of Fourth Division. Its officers and men fought with patriotic fervour; only they were let down by those who were supposed to exercise 'higher command.' Call for throwing out the Chinese was a bluff and the men paid for it.

Sikh gunners belonging to the elite Parachute Brigade were positioned between Dhoia and Tsangdhar. They were called upon to fight an infantry battle. They fired with their guns, over open sights, and broke enemy charge after charge till their ammunition was exhausted.

Above were some of the accounts of bravery shown by Punjabis, Grenadiers, Rajputs, Gorkhas, Sikhs, gunners, Engineers, EME, AMC, Assam Rifles and other units against overwhelming odds. Units fought back fiercely.

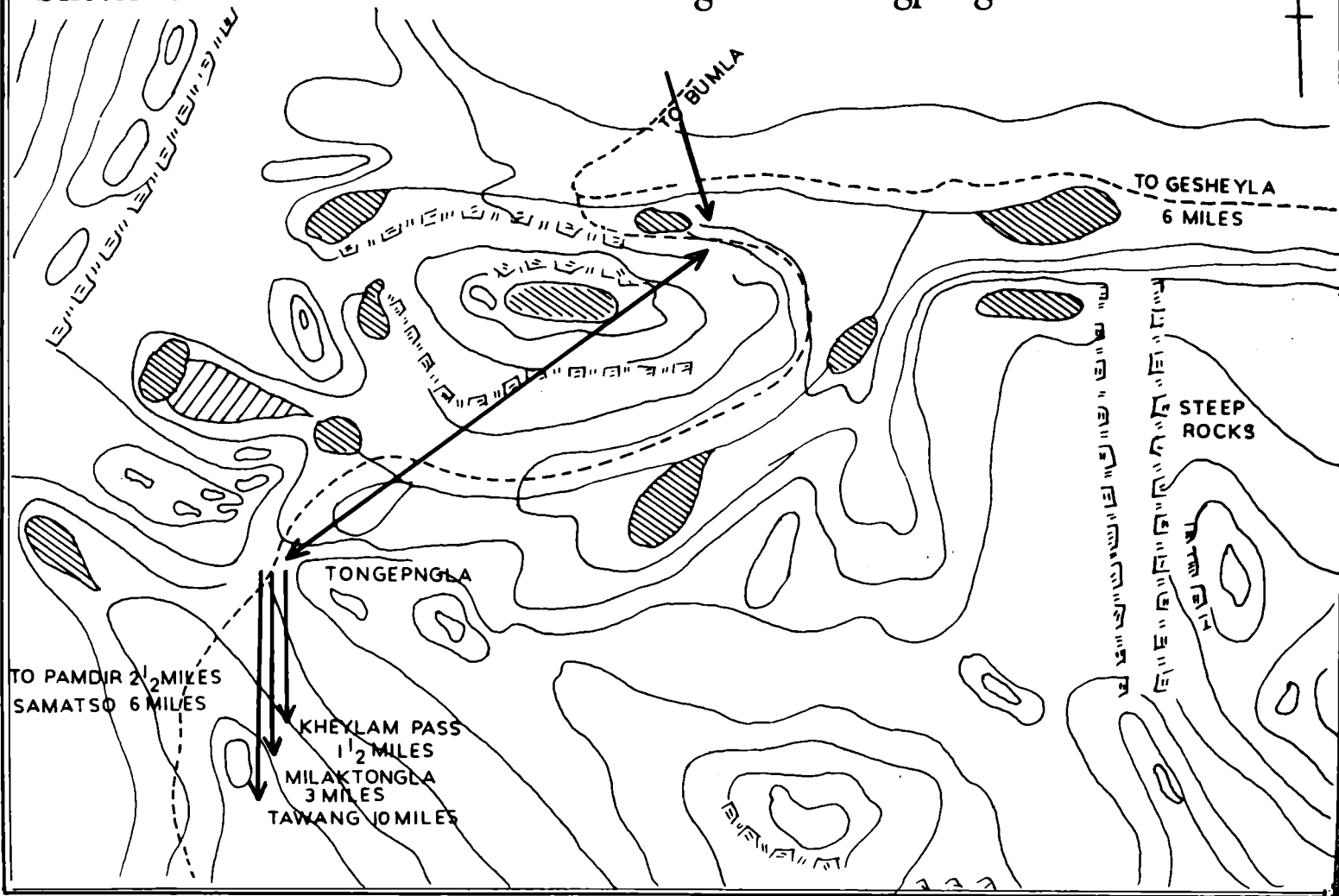
When the war ended Brigadier Dalvi was repatriated in May 1963. He had been separated from the other captured Indian officers, indeed in solitary confinement, but was brought together with his compatriots of the rank of major and above for

repatriation. The Chinese, explaining that they thought the route back through NEFA taken by Indian prisoners would be too tortuous for the officers, took them by road to Kunming, where they were picked up by an Indian Air Force plane.

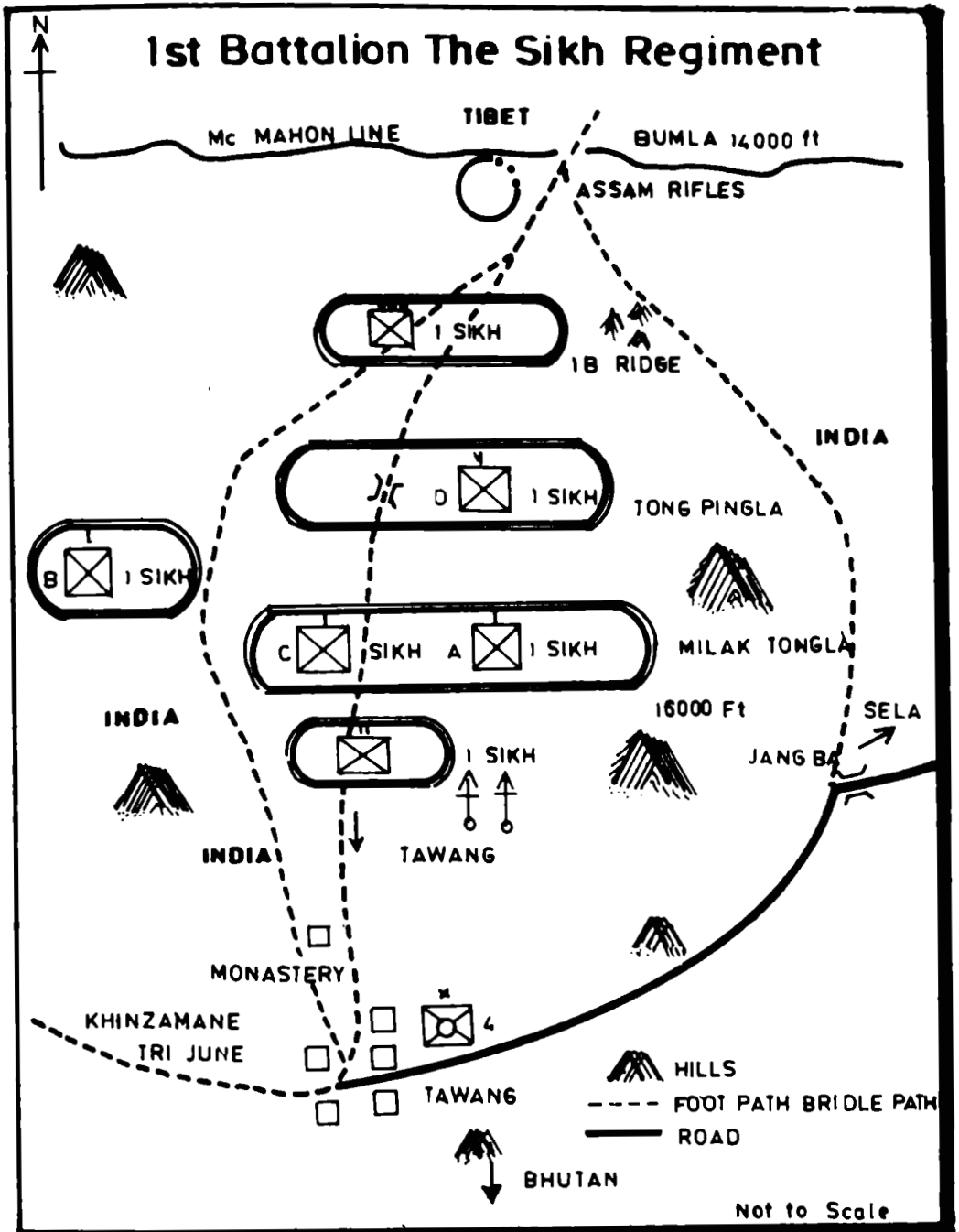
Dalvi was later given two substantive promotions, and commanded a brigade in action in the 1965 war with Pakistan. He appeared to be on his way to high rank, but in 1966 was superseded for promotion and he resigned. The Indian Army thus lost an outstanding officer, but there may be wider compensation in the account Dalvi later wrote of the Namka Chu operation and its background, under the apt title of 'Himalayan Blunder'. This may come to be regarded as a classic of military literature, epitomizing the predicament of an officer under orders which he knows must lead to the destruction of his command. Apart from the fact that he lost the battle of Namka Chu, was taken prisoner of war, superseded for promotion; the most cruel stroke of destiny was that he later died of cancer at a young age.

Sketch-9

Bumla - IB Ridge and Tongpengla Area



Sketch-10 Bumla Defences



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|--------------|
| | BATALION | | HYMORLAR |
| | COMPANY | | GUN MOUNTAIN |
| | PLATOON | | |
| | PLATOON AREA | | |
| | ARTILLERY BRIGADE | | |

BATTLE OF BUMLA

In the wake of the Thagla battle came the attack on Bumla Pass. As the Chinese were pursuing 7th Indian Infantry Brigade in Thagla sector they detached a column for the capture of Tawang also. At the same time they launched major offensive for the capture of Tawang via the direct Bumla axis running through Penkeng Tong and Milktongla, the major passes.

As stated earlier a good track from Bumla bypasses Tawang along the Tawang Chu and connects with Jang Transit Camp. Yet another track runs from west of Bumla towards Tawang from Somatso. Though Bumla has five figure height, it has plain locale. Also, though Bumla is almost as high as Sela it is not as awe inspiring as the latter which stands out as a giant in comparison. From the Bumla Pass one can see miles of the almost flat land of Tibet which forms a nice upland plateau. The 'roof of the world' lies before the visitor giving a look of unlimited vastness.

1st Sikh Battalion which was initially located at Tawang, moved to its operational location at Bumla area on McMahon line in September 1962. When 7th Infantry Brigade of Brigadier Dalvi moved to Namka Chu-Thagla region 1st Sikhs came under the ad-hoc 4th Artillery Brigade in infantry role commanded by the steady and great Rajput warrior Brigadier Kalyan Singh. Shortly afterwards 4th Garhwal Rifles had also reached Tawang. They were moved towards Bumla at very short notice due to sudden Chinese threat.

1st Sikhs was employed for the defence of the important Bumla-Tawang approach. Whilst one company of 4th Garhwal Rifles was located at Milk

Tongla, sub units of 1st Sikhs were located as follows:

- (a) 11 platoon, commanded by Subedar Joginder Singh, was in position at IB Ridge which was situated on the northern slopes of Twin Peaks hill being the highest in the area. From this dominating feature one could have a good and clear view of the McMahon Line and the tracks emanating from it. Twin Peaks area was also skirted by a rugged escarpment. So, the setting afforded an excellent tactical situation which suited Joginder's macabre pact with his platoon for the supreme sacrificial bid and glory. They were afire with valour.
- (b) Commanded by Lt Haripal 'D' Company less 11 platoon, was entrenched at Tong Pengla.
- (c) 'B' Company was located in area Pamdir with 6 platoon at Samatso.
- (d) Rest of the battalion had its dispositions at Milk Tongla.
- (e) One platoon of Assam Rifles was stationed in front right on Bumla pass to man an observation post and pass back information about the enemy movements and the direction of its advance and attack. Another platoon of Assam Rifles was located on the left at Sulla.

11 platoon at IB Ridge had two second lines of ammunition and four days rations. So far there were no arrangements for-

- (a) Casualty evacuation-medical treatment was limited to first aid only.
- (b) drinking water.
- (c) snow clothing.

Brigadier Kalyan Singh took great interest in the operational task of his brigade. He frequently visited the 'D' Company position and troops in front on the McMahon Line. Some of the artillery troops were given the role of infantry as there was a shortage of infantry and the requisite number of artillery pieces could not be mustered at Tawang. Thus infantry became a predominant and preponderant arm in NEFA as in Burma in the Second World War and in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947/48. There was no support from other arms except artillery. Even artillery support was not commensurate with the operational task and the use of tanks was out of question.

Artillery support for the Battalion was supposed to be provided by 97 Field Battery deployed in Tawang area, 7 Bengal Mountain Battery, located in Milaktongla area and 116 Heavy Mortar Battery was in position at Pamdir, Tong Pengla and IB Ridge; with OPs at Pamdir, Twin Peaks, Tong Pengla and Milk Tongla. Capt Gurcharan Gosal and Capt Birbal were OPs. Though the array of guns was impressive eventual fire cover was not very effective due to some technical flaws.

4th Garhwal Rifles, after intensive operations in Nagaland, was moved to Ramgarh in September 1962 for a peace stint. Before, the battalion settled down it was suddenly reallocated as 4th Infantry Division reserve, to Charduar in Assam, for operations in Kameng Frontier Division. As 7th Infantry Brigade,

which was located at Tawang so far, moved forward to Namka Chu valley, 4th Garhwal Rifles was rushed to Tawang on 9 October 1962 and was deployed as:-

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------------|
| (a) | Bn less 3 Coys | Tawang |
| (b) | 'B' Coy
(Directly under the
Division) | Janithang |
| (c) | 'C' Coy | Landa Pong-Churi |
| (d) | 'D' Coy less Pl | Milk Tongla |
| (e) | Pl 'D' Coy | Gazilla |

Troops in Tawang/Bumla area were now ready to take on the adventurous Chinese and the day of the supreme test had come. Fighting started between 7th Infantry Brigade and the Chinese in the adjacent Namka Chu Valley on 20 October; extending their area of operation the Chinese offensive was unleashed in Bumla Sector on the dawn of 23 October. Their aim was to encircle all troops in Tawang area and destroy or capture them. The Chinese started their concentration opposite Assam Rifles Post at Bumla and a shoal commenced digging and preparing their positions in shifts in the afternoon, in full view of the Assam Rifles Post. A tornado was approaching from the North, the enemy appeared pugnacious, and challenging and tough, the Assam Rifles Post became cautious, it did not get unduly panicky or offensive. It was a tense situation with anxious moments. The platoon post was continuously 'standing to'. Men could not eat or sleep. There was a funeral silence. Soon the enemy positions were ready. During the night of 22/23 October the Chinese fanatics scythed through the Assam Rifles Post, and, as expected, next attacked

the IB Ridge in the small hours of dawn from the right flank. Subedar Joginder had sent a section under Havildar Sucha Singh to support the Assam Rifles Post from the left flank but before the section took up position the former was annihilated. The section of Sucha Singh now retired and rejoined its platoon. The situation was grim. Chinese advanced on the platoon. They soon formed up and assaulted with high numerical strength of five to one or higher in three waves, each of about 200 men. 11 platoon under the inspiring leadership of Subedar Joginder Singh remained steadfast and beat back the enemy charge inflicting heavy casualties and stood their ground. The attack ebbed away with temporary setback to the enemy. Though artillery support was not forthcoming due to some technical snag platoon weapons which were well sighted took a heavy toll of the enemy. Subedar Joginder Singh sent an urgent message to his Company Commander for more ammunition and also re-assured him of his determination to fight to the last man and last round. He even detailed a patrol of one NCO and three men to fetch ammunition from the main company position but the enemy had encircled the position to prevent any re-inforcements, so the detachment had to fight its way through the enemy gauntlet. Within half an hour the second wave of Chinese assaulted and blazed the platoon position with heavy automatic fire but this sally was also flung back and the enemy had to lick their wounds once again. However, during the second assault Subedar Joginder Singh was grievously wounded when he leapt out of his command post to personally direct fire and his platoon indomitably and stubbornly stuck to their positions. In the meantime, communications with the company headquarters snapped and for the time being it turned out to be platoon battle. Shortly after, the third wave of Chinese with unusual determination,

surged forward for the 'coup de grace' and tried to engulf the platoon position. At this juncture the Platoon position had become untenable since half the platoon had been wiped out and the balance had run out of ammunition. In spite of his serious wounds Subedar Joginder Singh refused to be evacuated and manned a light machine gun himself when its commander, and both number one and two were killed. A relentless, pitched and bloody battle ensued; when no ammunition was left with the platoon, Joginder Singh and his remaining men jumped out of their trenches and, as a last resort took to bayonet charge and disposed of many of the enemy. But they were eventually massacred by the enemy's superior numbers though the platoon fought doggedly and with incredible ferocity. Now, Subedar Joginder Singh fell unconscious and was captured by the enemy. It was a battle of LAST MAN LAST ROUND. It was the gallant leadership of Subedar Joginder Singh which resulted in heavy casualties being inflicted on the Chinese. There were many acts of individual bravery. When 2 inch mortar bombs were exhausted L/Naik Santokh Singh leapt up and killed two Chinese soldiers with the barrel of the 2 inch mortar. He himself was killed when a Chinese soldier shot him in the chest.

The saga of this gallant fight against the third Chinese assault on the Twin peaks would never have been told had it not been for the remaining Assam Rifles personnel and a number of patrol of Havildar Sucha Singh who saw this fight unto death from an adjacent feature. A most gallant act of bravery and sacrifice had occurred on the 'roof of the world'. Subedar Joginder was taken a prisoner of war in a gravely wounded state by the enemy. As per usage of war the Chinese gave him all possible medical treatment and performed necessary surgery. In the process one

leg upto the thigh had to be amputated. For some time he responded to medical treatment; unfortunately his condition took a turn for the worse and he died in Chinese captivity. He was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra, the highest gallantry award, for valour. The Chinese impressed by the hero's superb courage, returned his ashes, with reverence. These were delivered to his family with proper battalion escort and honours at his home.

Out of a platoon strength of 23, only three persons had survived. They had come back to the company headquarters to replenish ammunition which was expended at an intense rate in the face of the ferocity of the enemy attack, and narrated the tale of their platoon's heroism; there were three prisoners of war, who fell into Chinese hands along with Subedar Joginder Singh. This episode probably surpassed the famous, Saragarhi sacrifice of 4th Sikh Battalion and the 1st Sikh epic of Gallipoli. The Saragarhi battle is given at Appendix 'A' for quick comparison.

Subedar Joginder Singh and his men managed to delay the Chinese advance adequately. This provided time for activating company defensive position at Tong Pengla. The company waited for the outcome of the platoon clash with bated breath and at the same time tidied its defences, checked readiness of weapons and exhorted troops with the citations of Gallipoli, Saragarhi and Tithwal to confront the enemy with the traditional spirit.

After trampling and advancing over the dead bodies of 11 platoon the Chinese swarmed forward and made contact with the main 'D' Company defences at Tong Pengla, in the early morning of 23 October. The company, now reformed by 'C' Company platoon held on to its defences against heavy enemy small arms

and mortar fire. The Chinese bid to attack the company position from the north-west with the intention of breaking through to Tawang, was foiled in the preparatory stage by the timely action of a protective patrol of the company. The enemy mistook the protective patrol as part of the main company defensive position. Now, the company's small arms and the mountain artillery fire was directed against the enemy and the assault was blunted. The clash lasted till noon:- a duel of medium machine guns, small arms fire with guns booming and roaring. Mountain guns and mortars mortified even the bravest. The serene and sleeping mountains suddenly came to life and reverberated, echoed, re-echoed under the long and sweeping bursts of medium machine gun fire and mortars that ravaged the high mountains. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy inspite of the fact that our field artillery could not open up due to a technical hitch and the company had to rely on its own supporting fire.

However, contrary to expectations, the invading enemy did not show any signs of mounting an assault to capture the company position. At this stage, it transpired that the Chinese were upto a ploy. While tying down the company there and using this as a sort of smoke screen to deceive us they were detouring towards the bridge at Jang to encircle the Battalion and all the 4th Artillery Brigade troops in Tawang bulge. The enemy's posture of not attacking 'D' Company and their act of bypassing the entire Battalion defences and Tawang garrison was full of dangerous consequences. To avert this, general withdrawal from Tawang area was wisely ordered to the Sela massif which was selected as a subsequent Main Defensive Position, under the orders of the HQ 4th Infantry Division, as part of the Corps plan.

At about 11am when the enemy was thrown back 'D' Company received orders to withdraw to the Main Battalion Defensive Position at Milk Tongla. The Company successfully withdrew and brought back all the heavy weapons including Medium Machine guns, mortars and other equipment although it was in actual contact with the enemy and fire was being constantly exchanged. The withdrawal was well supported by mountain guns and conducted in broad day light under the skilful leadership of Lt Haripal, the Company Commander. He was ably supported by Captains Gurcharan Gosal and Birbal of Artillery. I was delighted that the company had a good fight at the position which I had chalked out for a company defensive locality during my reconnaissance when I had explored the area initially on our arrival at Tawang.

The same evening, the Battalion retreated to Jang/Sela. This was a brilliant withdrawal action against heavy odds. The withdrawal from Bumla/Tawang can be aptly compared with any successful withdrawals staged in the annals of military history in the face of enemy. The unit took up a defensive position at Sela on 26 October and the enemy could not interfere with the movement of the Battalion. The unit formed the nucleus for 62 Infantry Brigade for the defensive position organised at Sela. It facilitated new units being inducted as reinforcements to establish themselves at the New Main Defensive position.

Ist Sikhs had fought its first battle of this war at IB Ridge/Tong Pingla⁹ in the tradition of Sri Nagar and Saragarhi epics which embellish The Sikh Regimental History and added another Param Vir Chakra, and Vir Chakra to its long list of gallantry award, that included

9. The unit has been denied the Battle Honour as the action was considered isolated one. Contrarily it was a wilful brigade action and Joginders platoon an integrated part of the brigade position.

two Victoria Crosses, one Param Vir Chakra, many Maha Vir Chakras, Vir Chakras, Military Crosses, and other awards. The Chinese "tac-au-tac" had succeeded at Bumla not due to any extraordinary gallant action, fire power or infiltration tactics but only due to sheer weight of numbers. Gallantry of comparable, if not higher order, was displayed by the Indian troops; the redoubtable 1st Sikhs had once again exhibited their unique mettle. It is the turn of the Indian Government to reward the 1st Sikhs with the Battle Honour of Bumla before the event is lost in memory. Let the wandering of souls of dead soldiers cease. Moreover, Battle Honours and the highest gallantry award normally go hand in hand. It was not an isolated* action but part of a brigade.

As stated earlier for the action at IB Ridge, Subedar Joginder Singh had won the coveted Param Vir Chakra; the night of 22/23 October 1962 was momentous as the Battalion won the second Param Vir Chakra. Lieut Haripal, an Olympic hockey player, was awarded Vir Chakra and Capt Gosal received Mention-in-Despatches. Victoria Cross had been won in the hilly area of Burma in World War Two by Naik Nand Singh. Both the Param Vir Chakras that the battalion possesses were won by the unit in the snow regions above the "tree line". First Param Vir Chakra was won at Tithwal heights in Kashmir in 1948 by L/NK Karam Singh MM (Later Hony Capt).

Subedar Joginder Singh was imbibed with the spirit of Mudki and Ferozeshah battles which the Sikh Army of the post Maharajah Ranjit Singh era fought against the British, in the middle of the nineteenth century and had nearly won. Subedar Joginder Singh had his home, Mahla Kalan in the region of Mudki and Ferozeshah.

Subedar Joginder Singh was an unassuming handsome, smart and sincere JCO with a strong physique. He was soft spoken but firm and a hard task master. He got regular promotions and became Jemadar Adjutant, a prestigious appointment amongst young junior commissioned officers in an infantry battalion. I was then the Adjutant of the battalion. I could discern Joginder's rising star. Having been cleared for promotion as next Subedar Major, he was just marking time till the present Subedar Major went on pension and he took over his new appointment. However, destiny had something else in store. The Commanding Officer had, especially selected him for 'screen' duties at the IB Ridge and he laid down his life and became immortal.

This is also the right place to make a special mention of the exemplary courage and dedication to duty of the lovable, smart and gallant Captain Mahvir Prasad, the Adjutant of the Battalion. In July 1962 he was sent on a special mission to make a reconnaissance of the route leading to the tri-junction of India, Tibet and Bhutan and select a site for a forward post in the most difficult country. He later established the famous 'Dhola' post, under the Forward Policy of the Army. The actual site of the post was a place called Che Dong located on the southern bank of the mountainous Namka Chu; but the post was christened, Dhola after a pass nearby as the site of the post was doubtful. This post subsequently sparked off the Sino-Indian conflict. When hostilities commenced the officer was loaned to 1/9th Gorkha Rifles. As he knew the area well he attended Lt General Kaul's conferences and briefed him on the topography of Namka Chu Valley and Thagla. Later he fought with a platoon of 1/9th Gorkha Rifles at Namka Chu near Thagla ridge. His tenacity and gallantry in defying the repeated enemy assaults earned him the posthumous award of Maha

Vir Chakra after he was killed at the Namka Chu defences. The Battalion lost an energetic and illustrious warrior. The Officer, with his very high order of valour and sacrifice, has ensured an immortal niche for himself in the annals of fame. The battalion intensely laments the death of this gallant son of India. He shall ever remain a source of inspiration and a guiding light to the young officers of his unit and the rest of the Army.

The sudden extension of their maintenance lines put a stop to any further quick Chinese follow up and the two contestants settled down face to face for almost a month-The Indians in Sela- Nuranaung area and the Chinese in Tawang-Jang region. They had flexed their muscles and patrolling skirmishes continued unabated in the man's land. The Chinese also started construction of the Bumla- Tawang road link and Indians awaited, direly needing reinforcements, and got busy in consolidation and stocking of Sela. Air maintenance came to the forefront as the road from Dirang to Sela was in poor state.

At this stage there was a great deal of conjectures about further intentions of the Chinese. It was said that the Chinese had achieved their military objectives, and they would not resume the offensive and there would be no further attacks. There was also an apprehension that they might adopt a direct approach and advance through Bhutan or Sikkim. The Nepal sector was also not ruled out. There were political initiatives too and a cease fire was also mooted. Eventually, it was known that the Chinese were planing offensive towards Sela, Bomdila and Brahamputra Valley.

(Citation of award of Param Vir Chakra to Subedar Joginder is given at Appendix 'G' attached.)

CITATION
AWARD OF PARAM VIR CHAKRA
TO JOGINDER SINGH

EXTRACT FROM THE 'GAZETTE OF INDIA'

New Delhi, the 12th Nov 1962

No 68/Pres/62 - The President is pleased to approve the award of the PARAM VIR CHAKRA, for the most conspicuous bravery in the operations in Ladakh and N.E.F.A. to:-

- 1.
2. JC-4547 Subedar JOGINDER SINGH,

The Sikh Regiment (Missing)

(Effective date of award-23 October 1962)

Subedar Joginder Singh was the commander of a platoon of The Sikh Regiment holding a defensive position at a ridge near Tongpenla in N.E.F.A. At 5.30 A.M. on October 23, the Chinese opened a very heavy attack on the Bum La axis with the intention of breaking through to Towang. The leading battalion of the enemy attacked the ridge in three waves, each about 200 strong. Subedar Joginder Singh and his men mowed down the first wave, and the enemy was temporarily halted by the heavy losses it suffered.

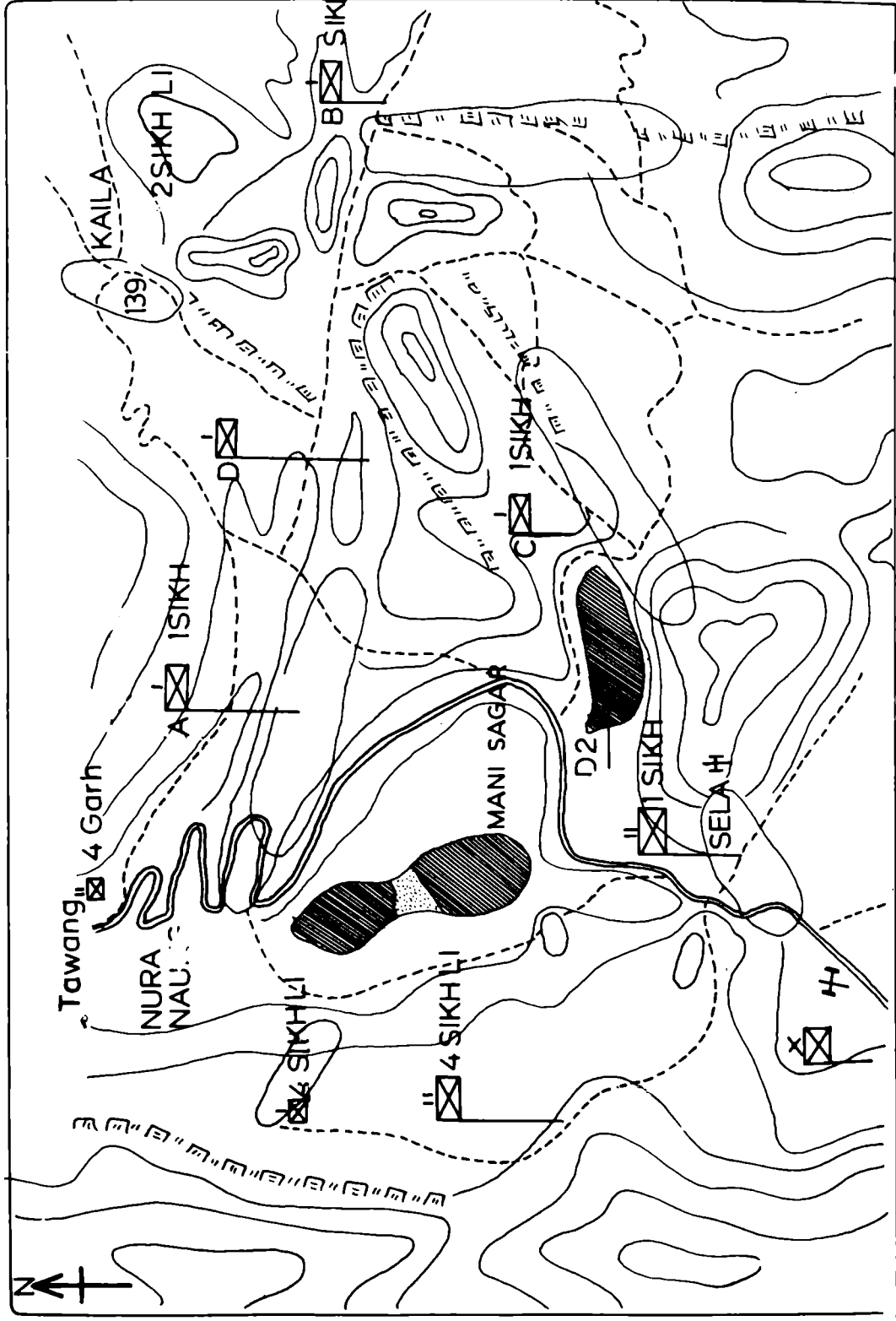
Within a few minutes a second wave come over and was dealt with similarly. But the platoon had by then lost half of its men.

Subedar JOGINDER SINGH was wounded in the thigh but refused to be evacuated. Under his inspiring leadership the platoon stubbornly held its ground and would not withdrew. In the meantime, the position was attacked for the third time. Subedar Joginder Singh himself manned a light-machine-gun and shot down a number of the enemy. The Chinese however continued to advance despite heavy losses. When the situation became untenable Subedar Joginder Singh and the few men left in the position fixed bayonets and charged the advancing Chinese bayoneting a number of them before he and his comrades were overpowered.

Throughout this action, Subedar Joginder Singh displayed devotion to duty, inspiring leadership and bravery of the highest order.

Sketch-11

Sela Defences 1962



When the enemy comes forward, I withdraw
When the enemy withdraws, I go forward,
When the enemy settles down, I destabilise him
When the enemy is exhausted, I fight him.

—*Mao Tse Tung*

DEFENCE OF SELA AND WITHDRAWAL

The Sela mountain massif is huge in height and extent. Though the Sela Pass is only 13,400 feet high its shoulders rise up to 16,000 feet. The giant feature is rugged and presents a mix of bare rocks and earth. The great mountain dwarfs all features in the vicinity and controls and affords good observation all round. Sela provides a good defensive position for an infantry brigade of five battalions with full supporting arms including armour and controls the ancient trade route from Tibet which touches it on its way to famous Bumla and Tawang. The feature is a formidable barrier for the movement of any army and its supplies. It was a good dropping zone and has lakes that afford sweet drinking water. Kela peak nearby provides good mutually supporting localities which can be well compared with those of Sela. However, the Pass also has some serious drawbacks. Its steep gradient and altitude are great handicaps. The access to the top of the mountain is marred by extensive land slides during rain and snow seasons. There are no trees or vegetation, that can provide concealment or logs for defence work. Strategically the greatest weakness of Sela is that Bhutan's territory starts immediately from Sela's rear. This precludes building of depth positions behind Sela.

Equally important is the nearby harsh Kela Pass which lies in the north east. Both features are of comparable altitude and magnitude. Kela is a twin to Sela and is vital for the defense of Sela. Infact they are complementary to each other. Kela dominates animal tracks leading to Poshingla, Dirang Dzong, Mandala and Bomdila. Kela also overlooks the road to Tawang-

Sela and dominates the dropping zones and sweet drinking water lakes below Sela.

There are a number of foot and bridal paths which outflank Sela and Kela. These track ways are only fit for mules and "Yaks". On the east, one could outflank through Poshingla-Chhangla; enemy could debouch at Bomdila. On the west, foot route enabled a force to reach Dirang Dzong detouring south of Bonge Junga.

Chinese had captured Tawang wedge and had completed the first phase of their offensive. It was apparent that now their intention was to capture Sela and advance towards the Brahmaputra Valley. After giving a tough battle to the enemy at Bumla and evacuation of the Tawang Salient Indian troops retreated and consolidated at Sela as the high mountain was selected for the Main Defensive Position of 62nd Infantry Brigade to guard the Bumla/Tawang approach though some persons initially regarded it as a breather only. But to the consternation of many it was decided to finally halt our main force halfway at Sela and not at Bomdila. Many eyebrows were raised when the high command embarked on this bizarre plan.

At this stage there was also a diplomatic overture by China. On 24 October China set forth three proposals and a statement released in Peking. The salient parts of the proposals were that the dispute be settled peacefully, both sides withdraw 20 km from the line of actual control and the two Prime Ministers should meet for friendly settlement. No heed was paid to this proposal by India; preparations for operations were continued.

Troops were disposed of at Sela as follows -

1st Sikhs was holding "in-depth" position east of the Pass at the main Sela Ridge, the back-bone of the mountain, since 26 October when it was ordered to withdraw from Bumla. The battalion Headquarters was located at Sela itself. After withdrawal from Tawang area 4th Garhwal Rifles, commanded by the tall Lt Col Bhattacharjea, took up positions in front in order to guard the main road and functioned as screen, in the area of Nuranang. By this time the two Battalions, 2nd and 4th Sikh Light Infantry also arrived. Before moving to NEFA, 4th Sikh Light Infantry was stationed in Western Command. In a swift move the battalion assembled at Ambala and Agra on 22 October 1962 and was airlifted to Tezpur on 23 October. Within twenty four hours it was transported to the prospective battle field of Sela. No one can deny that it was a superb feat of planning and execution by Q(Mov), Quarter Master General and his staff deserve full praise for their efficiency. 2nd Sikh Light Infantry, who had moved up from the plains at short notice, had also joined the Brigade at Sela. 2nd Sikh LI, commanded by Lt Colonel Irani, was to guard Kela approach on the east and 4th Sikh LI, under the command of the gallant Lt Colonel Nanda, was to hold the western flank, with two companies deployed at Twin Lakes at Tsogya, to counter any out-flanking movement.

As far as the company dispositions of 1st Sikhs were concerned "A" "B" "C" and "D" company localities, more or less, cohered side by side, starting from the main road, and extending in a north-easterly direction: "C" and "D" companies added depth to "A" and "B" companies, which were in forward dispositions. Support and Administrative Companies, along with Battalion Headquarters, formed another defensive locality, verily

on the Pass. They gave further depth to the battalion dispositions. 3 inch mortars were deployed a little below the pass so that the flash and puffs of smoke did not give away positions when the mortars went into action. The defences were spread across the ridges, rocks, and terraced outgrowth. The battalion position was nearly compact except that "B" Company had an unduly large frontage. Gaps, if any, were covered by light machine guns and mortar defensive fire in co-ordination with neighbouring battalions. The battalion had no MMG support. There was, no element, whatsoever, of armour at the Pass and no offensive air support catered for. As for artillery support a troop of heavy mortars was plonked right on Sela, A battery of 6th Field Regiment was deployed in the rear of Sela near Brigade Headquarters. There was an Engineer company also, but this had a question mark, as they were never seen carrying out their functions. A dropping zone was operating almost at Sela in front of our Battalion on the shores of tranquil blue water main lake. Another dropping zone was operating at Senge Dzong behind Sela; troops made up their requirements of rations and ammunition out of stacks of ammunition and supplies at Senge Dzong, when withdrawing from Sela.

Cooking was done company wise and drinking water was obtained from the Mani lake in front and often frozen water had to be melted as it solidified due to sub arctic conditions at night. Daily a very large quantity of water and ice was scooped out of the lake, the life source of troops at Sela.

However Colonel Mehta was not happy with his battalion holding defences at Sela after it had given a fight at Bumla and lost much of its equipment and weapons during withdrawal. Besides, out of permanent company commanders only one was posted, and there

was shortage of other officers also. He pleaded for relief, but due to shortage of troops no one listened to him. However, he too understood the fundamentals of war and realised that troops could not be relieved before they were completely worn-out. During the thick of the battle when there is a great demand for troops all round there is no chance of taking out units for the luxury of recuperation, rest and re-equipping. In the adverse and needy circumstances there can be no limits to duration of employment of a unit. So 1st Sikhs was not relieved from Sela though the unit was badly mauled in the fighting at Bumla and suffered heavy losses during its retreat to Sela and there was acute shortage of officers and equipment.

At Sela the air supply was fairly satisfactory, as the days were mostly sunny: weather was sparkingly clear, and the transport aircraft had a good run-in. The Air Force and the Army Service Corps deserve all praise for dropping heavy tonnages. The Air Force pilots are entitled for special mention for their meritorious performance.

The resourceful troops could lay their hands on rum bottles and other attractive eatables, above the scale, when ever they needed these to do away with their killing fatigue and exhaustion.

Apparently, Sela mountain was selected as the second Main Defensive Position due to only two factors in its favour, i.e. height and as the road connecting Tawang plateau with Bomdila Range and route to Brahmaputra plan passed through Sela. The unfavourable factors were excessive altitude, steep gradient, incongruous locale; absence of suitable helipad, and the trammeled and cobbled line of maintenance. Moreover, Sela is situated in a distant

and remote corner of the important area of Kameng, has an awkward position in relation to other important features of the Kameng Frontier Division. All high ridges which could impart depth to Sela lie in Bhutan. Sela does not provide a square and proper shield to the vital ground of Bomdila-Mandala which in turn caters for the security of Tezpur-Udalgiri region, a strategical part of Brahmaputra Valley. In spite of these serious drawbacks the troops had no inhibition regarding their task. This Brigade had only four infantry battalions, one artillery regiment and one Engineer company on the day of withdrawal. 13th Dogras¹⁰, the fifth unit was moved by road to Naga Hills on 3 October 1962 and then it came to Rangapara (North) and was put under Headquarters 4th Infantry Division on 16 October and later shifted to Charduar on 20 October. Col Uberoi with a platoon was flown to Zimithang, the location of Tactical Headquarter of 4th Infantry Division during operations of 7th Infantry Brigade at Namka Chu Valley. Two companies moved to Tawang by road to rendezvous with Colonel Uberoi. Another company was airlifted to Dirang the next day. On the defeat of the 7th Infantry Brigade in Namka Chu Valley the whole Battalion concentrated at Senge Dzong by 10 November as it was put under command of 62nd Infantry Brigade.

10. There was no other Battalion located on the Sela mountain, 13th DOGRA, had arrived at the fag end and was detained at Senge Dzong nine km short of Sela, with the wrong notion that the Chinese were likely to cut off the brigade at Senge. Senge is a part of Sela spur and our troops coming down from Sela could easily annihilate the intervening Chinese. Senge is not a separate, distinct and independent feature like Nyukmadong ridge where the enemy, eventually, caught the Brigade off balance. 13 DOGRA never showed up at Sela defences. 65th Infantry Brigade which was supposed to be at Sela was detained at Dirang Dzong, in the bowl, for the defence of HQ 4th Infantry Division which was misplaced as the same was neither positioned at Sela and nor Bomdila. Eventually the third brigade of the 4th Division was located at Bomdila and the division was so widely spread that the defences were not strong and stout enough to stop the Chinese.

During a very short span of time there were numerous moves of the sub units of the battalion, which can be termed "wanderings" of the unit. There were as many as 22 moves within a period of one and a half month. These are listed at Appendix "H" attached for those interested. This is an interesting record of moves. I complement the Battalion on its patience and undertaking the quick moves as these came.

I had rejoined my Battalion at Sela from Senior Officer's Course and resumed my duties as Second-in-Command of 1st Sikhs. When I reached Sela the tempo of work for the preparation of defences was at its peak and at feverish pitch. I had instructions from Colonel Mehta to co-ordinate the Battalion light machine gun, artillery and 3 inch mortar defensive fire tasks. Colonel Mehta and myself had served together in the 1st Sikhs since 1953. We had taken part in many battalion exercises together in Nowshera Sector of Jammu. He had great faith in my tactical capability and had appreciated it off and on. He was optimistic that defences would be revamped under my supervision. Later on, while I was checking the forward company, right on the road, Brigadier Hoshiar Singh Commander 62nd Infantry Brigade appeared in his jeep and stopped beside me. He alighted from his vehicle, shook hands and enquired about the state of defences of the Battalion and the Senior Officer's Course being called off halfway due to war. He asked me a few other connected questions. He wanted me to check the battalion dispositions and ensure co-ordination with other neighbouring battalions. He was of the opinion that I could do that better since I was fresh from the Senior Officer's Course. This was my first encounter with the famous soldier. He impressed me with his soldierly bearing, fearlessness, self confidence and composure. He was cool and collected

as also good natured and good tempered. He was an extraordinary and lion-hearted man. He had all the pre-requisites for further advancement in his career. He was much perturbed over the Garhwal positions in front at Nuranaung, which had come under heavy Chinese pressure. One company strength patrol of 2nd Sikh LI had also been very badly mauled in the 'no-mans land'. He told me that the Brigade would still fight to the last man and last round inspite of heavy concentration by the enemy against our defences which lacked essential defence stores and equipment. While the strong, experienced and full strength Chinese Army under direction of the greatest guerrilla general of the age Mao-Tse-tung converged on the Indian border an under strength, ill equipped Indian Army of pacifist Nehru was hurriedly assembled to oppose it.

When a few fresh units reached Sela from the plains, they were fresh in name only as they had arrived for the first time. They looked haggard as they had travelled long distances-by air, train, road transport and finally trekked on foot. They had accumulated the dust and filth of the journey. There were no shelters on Sela but hill side laps protected them against strong winds. In case a kit parade was held and clothing and equipment was laid out one could see that sixty percent of the items were deficient. The items, that were mostly missing were snow clothing, blankets, raincapes and boots not to mention tentage and bivouacs. Anyhow these troops were absorbed into the crevices and fissures of the great Sela mountain like ants; immediately the place was humming with defence building activities. Usually quiet except for the whistling of winds, now the mountain throbbed with human life and industry. As the troops were not acclimatised, initially, they could not eat and exert

much and were gasping for oxygen but slowly with practice and acclimatisation these handicaps were overcome, although more time was needed to become versatile, efficient and mountain mobile.

In retrospect I saw that from the last week of October till the third week of November the indefatigable troops worked very hard, prepared defences laboriously and strict stringent defensive measures and discipline were enforced. We had a very busy, and crowded routine. Troops braced up and went roundly to work to forestal and face the enemy with ready defences. Every day saw the continuous pick and shovelling. Incessant digging and dressing of fire and crawl trenches continued. I did not have a moment's respite since my arrival from the plains from Mhow without any acclimatisation on the way up. From Sela, I had to climb up, every day, to a height of 16000 feet to reconnoitre the shoulders of the pass to find any weaknesses in the defences and plug loopholes. Systematic reconnaissance of all ridges and the highest peaks at Sela was carried out. Slowly the arid cold effect crept towards the inner tissues of my legs and ultimately, I was afflicted with acute frost-bite on account of exposure during the withdrawal. The company and platoon localities were-rechecked, weapon pits and crawl trenches were deepened, fire and communication trenches were dug, concealed and camouflaged, light machine gun and mortars were re-sited where necessary. Light machine gun fire was co-ordinated and range cards prepared, mortar and artillery defensive fire tasks were selected. Overhead protection was provided by logs of wood which were brought up from the lower reaches of the Sela as the actual defences were above the 'tree line', and there was no timber at the site. 3 inch mortar defensive fires were co-ordinated and anti-personnel mines were laid

in front of the screen. All possible concealment and camouflage was also done. Where possible, co-ordination in the layout of localities and enfilade fire with neighbouring battalions was also tied up. Ranges were laid at which fire was to be opened. Strict fire discipline, to cater for the element of surprise, and to conserve ammunition, was enforced. Killing grounds were fixed. Due to the shortage of troops maximum of defiladed positions were made. As the positions were prone to plunging fire good sense was needed to avoid it's pitfalls.

Great attention was paid to the details of the preparatory stage of the defences at Sela. No loose ends or loop holes were left and the Brigade was now ready to take on the enemy. The foregoing is not a fantasy but the actual and hard facts. However, it should be made clear that though defences were galvanised, Sela could not be developed into an impregnable fortress as time was short and no-reinforcements had come during the entire period. The position was never transformed into, a real stronghold. It was not a complex defence structure. It was an ordinary defensive position prepared with great care but was, devoid of sufficient barbed wire, mines, booby traps, sand bags, pillboxes, weapon emplacements and dug in hull-down tank positions. There was no time to bore fox holes. There were no concrete and steel defences likes French Maginot Line or German Seigfried Line type of concrete fortifications. There were no labyrinth or catacomb model structures as the Japanese had in the Second World War in Burma, which were much publicised at that time. There were no fences or ditches at the perimeter. There were no means of illuminating the battlefield either. No counter attack force was available. On about, 10 November, there was a very good chance of a counter attack by the reserve

brigade if we could concentrate it speedily when the enemy was struggling and climbing up the tortuous Sela height and was unbalanced. At that time, possibly they could be caught off balance. We had at that time a golden chance as we were to roll down to attack from the height of Sela. We missed this opportunity as there were no counter attack force plans. We did not have spare troops even to plant a single road block on the enemy's line of maintenance.

Every one was anxious to know how the defences would stand up against enemy artillery bombardment and infantry assaults. Prospective fighting at Sela caused a shiver of excitement; confidence and high spirits were the common refrain in the defensive set up at Sela and the absence of the humdrum of daily routine and the all pervasive enthusiasm was encouraging. Preparations were made against intense bombardment and assaults for both day and night. Patrol programmes were prepared and co-ordinated with neighbouring units and implemented. There was a grim struggle for domination of 'No Man's' land. This was a most desperate period in the operation, when the Chinese patrols were on rampage in front. Nevertheless the line beyond which no enemy penetration was to be allowed, was drawn but due to serious adverse patrolling, defences at Sela remained crisis ridden.

As ammunition and rations were received through air supply, there was not much chance of making up scales. On 17 November, there was one and a half first line, of ammunition and seven days stocks of rations stored in the bunkers.

Though the morale of the troops was high it was adversely affected by the severe Siberia like cold and rarefied air at extreme altitude. If General Palit and

Brigadier Dalvi¹¹ had nearly frozen by simply crossing Sela one can well imagine the plight of a common man in battle position or on patrolling with unsuitable and inadequate clothing.

It is for consideration whether a very high altitude and extremely cold region should be held by sinewy and elaborate defensive positions or by strong mobile patrols backed up by long range artillery, air support and missiles. A defensive position at such a high altitude is a very heavy strain on men and their nerves. It had been seen that workable and strong defensive positions are viable upto the 'tree line only'. Fighting at heights devoid of oxygen and under terrible cold is 'magnificent but, it is no war'.

At an important stage Lt General Harbakhsh Singh VrC, who had taken over the temporary command of IV Corps in the absence of Lieut General Kaul, who fell ill due to high altitude effects, paid a visit to Sela and inspected the defences in the formative stage. He also addressed officers and Junior Commissioned Officer of all units of the Brigade. This gesture inspired the troops and raised their morale. But his period of command was brief and General Kaul resumed command of the Corps while General Harbakhsh Singh took over the command of the nearby XXXIII corps in Sikkim. Apart from the Corps and Divisional Officers, Brig Palit the Director of Military Operation, Army Headquarters, also visited Sela, at that hectic time. He is known to be a

11. General Palit and Brigadier Dalvi have written classic books 'Fighting in High Himalayas and 'Himalayan Blunder' respectively. Both these great soldiers had commanded 7th Infantry Brigade in Kameng Frontier Division. These capable and renowned officers criss-crossed the great Sela during their command of the formation and suffered the debilitating effects of cold of Sela. Mention of the severe cold has been made in their said books.

brilliant military mind and writer. As a Director of Military Operations he greatly influenced the operational thinking at the Army Headquarters. General Kaul, the Corps Commander, visited Sela once only. He remained occupied with the Walong Sector.

In the meantime the Chinese were kept at bay along the main road, by the heroic action of the 4th Garhwal Rifles. There was a grim struggle to dominate 'No man's' land.

My commanding officer used to visit the Brigade Headquarters below Sela more or less every day and return late at night. We often kept awake till his return as he briefed us about the activities of the Brigade, especially, regarding 4th Garhwal Rifles which was functioning as a screen to the Sela defences. Patrol activities of the Brigade were also discussed. Bumla-Tawang road construction activities of the enemy were also gone into as these had a bearing on the proximity of the enemy offensive. We could also hear the blasting of the rocks by the Chinese engineers to clear the way for laying the new road. We were also roused by our artillery taking on enemy targets in front. Information of any new units coming into our area and joining the Brigade was also welcome. Some officers narrated stories and spun yarns about the tactics Mao adopted against Chiang-Kai-shek's troops during the Chinese civil war and the Americans in the Korean war. Many thought such talk was valueless while others felt there were valuable lessons, to be learnt. Sometimes there were interesting debates and arguments on the form of our defences and the course that the Chinese would take to attack them.

At one time I wrote to my wife that we were well entrenched at Sela and would give a befitting reply to

the Chinese. The defences at Sela would not suddenly cave in as at Namka Chu. This portion of my letter was expunged by Army Censors. My wife later told me that my little son and daughter who were only two to three years old then, vied with each other to get hold of my letters from the postman and hand these over to their mother. My wife used to narrate tales of war and valour to the children who thought that these emerged from the letters.

Later when we had to withdraw from Sela, back at home there was no news of our whereabouts for a long time; rumours were taking the rounds of the house that either I was killed in action or was missing. My little and lovely daughter Ranu, after listening to the constant gossip in whispers, innocently, questioned my wife in a most innocent and pathetic voice as if she was missing a most loved child's fatherly love. 'Ki hoea Daida nahin ae'? (What happened that daddy has not come?) My son Gikka was guilelessly asking why Diwali lamps were not illuminating the house as these were doing in other homes.

Road transport could barely supplement air maintenance. The newly built road was not fit to ply three tonner vehicles which normally transport supplies and men in the Armed Forces. Even lighter vehicles like one tonners and jeeps found it difficult to negotiate the steep gradient of the soft and zigzag road. These often got bogged down. Under normal circumstances when even a small part of road was washed away, it took weeks to restore it and make it traffic worthy. There was no alternative road available or diversion possible. This road could be compared to the American General Stilwells's Ledo road which was hurriedly laid in Burma in the second World War. During the rainy (also snow period in NEFA) season both the roads were

a mass of deep mud and slush. These were new and narrow and were easily and frequently blocked by land slides.

Essential defence stores like ballies, barbed wire, mines, booby traps, and sand bags were not available. There were serious deficiencies in light machine guns, wireless sets and telephone cable. To counter the Chinese in night operations, pistols signal, 2 inch mortar illuminating bombs, verey lights, 'trip flares' were not supplied at all.

High explosive 36 hand grenade, an important weapon for the infantry, was in short supply to such an extent that outgoing patrols had to wait for the incoming patrols to swap over the vital item. The deficiency of hand grenades for even patrolling reflected the seriousness that it could cause during the impending intense close quarter fighting at the main defences. The provision of other types of ammunition to the Brigade was also not satisfactory. The Brigade received its ammunition mainly through airdrops. This could not be fully retrieved as the dropping zones were restricted and these had steep edges due to which many drops were lost.

All units were new to the area and were unfamiliar with the topography. Shortage of maps further accentuated this weakness. More so a few quarter inch maps which were available were not accurate and of not much use.

As mentioned earlier, proper depth was lacking in the divisional defensive sector as in the rear of our Brigade dispositions lay the territory of Bhutan which could not be utilized by the Army due to political compulsions. Moreover, there was a serious dearth of

troops to strengthen the somewhat lightly held brigade defences. The road-lines of maintenance ran more or less parallel to the border and were liable to be easily cut off by the enemy.

For unknown reasons our Air Force was not employed in the offensive role though interdiction and offensive air support were very badly needed for defence and for the difficult withdrawal operation. Offensive air support was not forthcoming though it was easy to provide as our Air Force was based at Tezpur-within convenient striking distance. Also, our air fields were accessible to the Indian Railways for purposes of ammunition stocking and replenishment. Tezpur air-field was located at petroleum and ammunition Rail Heads. Our Air Force was in a much more advantageous position as compared with the Chinese since their airfields and railheads were far behind. However, while the army suffered, the Air Force was kept idle. Not a single fighter or bomber even revved up. When Army personnel were dying, the fighter aircraft pilots were given only practice sorties to perform and then allowed to take off their uniforms and rest.

Extensive patrolling, was carried out around Sela. 4th Garhwal rifles patrols were active and aggressive and engaged forward Chinese posts in sensitive area beyond Jang and Tawang Chu. The unit made all out and persistent efforts to seize a Chinese soldier as a prisoner, though they could not achieve this mission they captured at least a Chinese rifle in a scuffle with a Chinese sentry who was killed. All other commanding officers also directed their attention to intense and serious patrolling. Patrolling gives eyes to own side and blinds the enemy. Vigorous, cunning, wide ranging and bold patrolling is the foundation of good operational planning. Patrolling extends the system of

mobile defence to 'no man's land' and keeps the enemy away from our defences and tied to their own periphery.

Ist Sikhs area of patrolling was Dzalungla, Dzajirongla, Yangyapla and Lunguthang in the north-east of Sela. These places were aggressively patrolled; patrol programmes received special attention. Forceful and round the clock patrolling was conducted and many patrol clashes took place.

On 1 November a company patrol from 4th Garhwal Rifles was sent to destroy the Rho Bridge and 2nd (DERAJAT) Mountain Battery Commander accompanied this patrol as Forward Observation Officer. Though the bridge could not be demolished the Fire Controller Officer engaged the bridge and the enemy on both the banks, where they were present in strength. The patrol remained out for four days.

2nd Sikh LI sent out a patrol of one officer and 4 other ranks to reconnoiter areas along Magu Chu. This patrol was ambushed by a Chinese patrol and casualties were suffered.

On 7 November when Jemadar Jit Singh of Ist Sikhs took out Number 10 platoon from 'D' Company on fighting patrol to Dzalungla, the patrol bumped into a 500 to 700 strong enemy column which was heading towards Sela. There was an intense exchange of fire which lasted for twenty minutes. The enemy tried to surround our patrol but the patrol reacted immediately and foiled the enemy's attempt. 3 inch mortar fire of 2nd Sikh LI from Kela was timely and handy. The enemy column retired in its face. On 10 November a 200 strong enemy force prowled in reconnaissance bid and for probing mission in front of 'B' Company of Ist Sikh locality and opened small arms

fire. When they suddenly formed up for assault, we in return engaged them with small arms and 3 inch mortar fire and they took to their heels. It transpired that they also wanted to capture an Indian Army prisoner who could disclose details of Sela defences which were blared on Indian media as unassailable.

Each battalion carried out local patrolling and in addition sent out nearly one patrol of about platoon or company strength on orders of the Brigade. Patrols remained out from three to five days at a time. While 4th Garhwal Rifles patrolled towards south west and 2nd Sikh Light Infantry mostly towards north.

On 13 November 4th Garhwal Rif has sent a night patrol across Mago Chu to Rho village. The patrol crossed the nullah with the help of a log, captured a Chinese sentry standing outside a hut, then lobbed hand grenades inside the hut killing or wounding all the occupants. The patrol brought the prisoner upto the log bridge, but due to alarm and firing by the Chinese, he could not be carried over the narrow and unstable log bridge and was let off.

When our unit patrols reported the presence of the enemy force in strength in the area in front, the patrol report was disbelieved. Then it was suggested to the Brigade Headquarters that our report could be verified by patrols from the other units. Consequently, a strong two company patrol from 2nd Sikh LI was sent out. This patrol was led by Major Jaspal, their second-in-command (my course mate at Officers Training School), and was provided with artillery support, a Fire Observation Officer and a heavy wireless set with high voltage batteries. Carriers for signal equipment and other patrol loads were provided by my battalion as no porters were available. Initially, the

men showed their reluctance to act as porters and had to be coaxed to do this unseemly duty. We provided another rifle company in support of the patrol. As the patrol was getting into harbour for the night ahead of Dzalungla it was suddenly attacked by the enemy and had to withdraw with heavy losses, Lieutenant Khera and 30 men of 2nd Sikh LI were killed. This was a big setback to the brigade.

There is also a Brigade version of the story also. Upto 15 November, most of our patrols suffered heavy casualties at the hands of the enemy, thereby, creating an impression of Chinese invincibility. It naturally had an adverse effect on our morale. To verify it Commander 62nd Infantry Brigade decided to send out a strong raiding party. Consequently a three company strength raid was organised, with two companies from 2nd Sikh LI and an other one from 1st Sikhs. It was sent towards Lungthang to carry out reconnaissance in force and give a hard knock to the enemy. This force established a firm base with the company of 1st Sikhs near Dzalungla and two 2nd Sikh Lt Infantry companies went towards Lunguthang. These two companies were attacked in their night harbour short of Lunguthang at about 10pm. This force came back at 11pm in badly disorganised manner. In the meantime, the firm base had also been attacked. When 2nd Sikh LI men returned to the firm base, hoping to get protection they got a hot reception from the Chinese instead and suffered heavy casualties. Artillery support, though catered for, could not be provided as the Forward Observation officer could not communicate with the guns when the time came.

On 12 November intense enemy movement with 'yaks' and mules was again noticed towards Melling. Again movement reported from Rho towards Melling in

small groups of 20 to 30 men. It was estimated that about 1000 Chinese had moved towards Melling. It is believed that more enemy may have moved during the hours of darkness and bad visibility.

A large number of vehicles were observed parked in the Political Officer's office compound in Tawang Dzong. It confirmed that road Bumla-Tawang had been made ready in 20 days, a fantastic feat of fore-planning, and human industry. The Chinese brought large numbers of Tibetan labourers with them. They used very few local labourers for the construction of the road.

At 2 pm on 17 November 4th Sikh LI companies at Twin Lakes area reported more than 100 Chinese moving along Bhutan Border towards south-east. They were moving roughly between Bhutan Border and track Chembrala-Jungl. The column was engaged by a full artillery field regiment, but due to bad visibility the effect was negligible.

With further successes in patrolling the Chinese attained complete domination of 'no mans land'. Before this 62nd Infantry Brigade held back the Chinese might for almost one month. However, the Indian General Staff did not exploit success or reinforce it. The six lakh strong Indian Army and Air Force never ventured forth in support and rescue of the heavily outnumbered and beleaguered formation. But when 62nd Infantry brigade withdrew according to a proper plan of the Corps/division every one raised a loud hue and cry. The Brigade bore the brunt of the full fighting around Sela. Thinking that the Chinese would be contented with the capture of the Tawang Wedge and would not proceed with further offensive towards the

foothills, the Army Headquarters cancelled the move orders of reinforcements knowing very well that our defences were feeble, and our force, needed at least to counterpoise the Chinese, if not achieve superiority. On the other hand the Chinese undertook the construction of Bumla-Tawang Dzong road down the old trade route, a missing road link between Tibet and Tawang Dzong. In early November their heavy reinforcements started pouring in on the new road which had a gentle gradient and was conducive to mechanical transport traffic. Loaded Chinese trucks were seen moving towards Tawang Dzong. Soon the Chinese also started improving the road ahead of Tawang towards Sela and simultaneously, their patrols started infiltrating over the passes and trails to the north-east of Sela. It appeared that like 7th Infantry Brigade, 62nd was now also being offered as a human sacrifice to the Goddess Durga.

At 0500 hrs on 17 November, the forward company of covering troops of 4th Garh Rifles was attacked by 700 to 900 Chinese. Leading elements of the enemy were in local dress. Troops were 'standing to' and ready, and the attack was repulsed. Within half an hour the same company again came under attack which was also beaten back. The third assault came on the company at Bridge 3 from the left which also foundered, although some Chinese managed to get as close as the company cook-house before they were annihilated. Upto 11 am the Chinese launched four attacks on this position which were all repulsed. 4th Garh Rif bravely stood their ground and fought valiantly, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. They also captured one medium machine gun. It appeared that these were only spoiling attacks, and the main attack was expected the same day or the next day.

At about 5 pm the Chinese had prowled in strength on the right flank of the Sela Defended Sector and it was felt that 62nd Infantry Brigade may not be able to hold the defences for a long period. Therefore, the Brigade was asked to withdraw to Dirang. Bomdila. Commander 62nd Infantry brigade declined to leave the prepared defences and told HQ 4th Infantry Division that the possibility of being cut off had been foreseen and he was quite prepared to fight provided he continued to be supplied by air. HQ 4th infantry Division told him that air support could not be guaranteed and that he must withdraw during night 17/18. Brigade Commander said that, it was not possible. The earliest this could be done was during night 18/19 Nov.

Division Headquarters then ordered the brigade headquarters that two companies be sent to Dirang Dzong by the fastest means for protection of the Division headquarters. Consequently two companies from 13th Dogras at Senge were sent during the same night.

The battle of Walong was now also in progress and the Corps commander was away to that sector. During the day, Commander 4th Infantry Division asked HQ IV corps for permission to withdraw from Sela. Chief of Army staff and the Army commander, who had arrived in Tezpur and were at the Corps Headquarters, gave no decision and told him to wait till the return of the Corps Commander who was in Walong. Commander 4th Infantry Division contacted the Corps Commander on telephone later in the evening and he painted a grim picture and asked his permission to withdraw. In reply, he was told to fight on and they would take a decision the next morning. However, he was also told that he may withdraw at his discretion if the situation

was very bad. After this telephone conversation, the Corps Commander sent the following message to Commander 4th Infantry Division on 17 November.

- (a) You will hold on to your present position to the best of your ability.
- (b) When any position becomes untenable, I delegate the authority to you to withdraw to any alternative position you can hold.

Before discussing further events, it is imperative to explain the frame of mind of Commander 62nd Infantry Brigade:

- (a) He was clear of his tactical concept from the very beginning. He knew that Sela would be out flanked and cut off but he was convinced that Sela defences were strong enough and could be held even if cut off.
- (b) Wherever he went, he took the troops into confidence telling them besides other things, that Sela was impregnable and even if the Chinese outflank and cut them off from their axis of maintenance they must hold on to their defences in the area.
- (c) At no stage had he thought of withdrawal.

According to one source Brigade's outline plan of withdrawal formulated on the evening of 17 November was as under :-

- (a) To withdraw covering troops (4th Garh Rif) during night 17/18 November to Senge.

- (b) On night 18/19, 2nd Sikh LI to withdraw and occupy area Nyukma-dong.
- (c) The remaining troops to withdraw in stages, till 1st Sikhs finally abandoned Sela after mid-night 18/19 November.
- (d) All troops to be clear of the Bridge 2 by morning of November 18/19.

Later at about 2200 hrs on 17 November the Brigade Commander changed the orders for 2nd Sikh LI and instructed them to withdraw on the same night (i.e. night 17/18 November) from Kela and take up defensive position at Nyukmadong. He informed 1st Sikhs and Commander 4 Infantry Division the same night about this change in the plan. At 4 am on 17 November, the Brigade Commander left Brigade Headquarter for Sela to watch the progress of the withdrawal of 2nd Sikh LI and 4th Garh Rif and to brief the respective Commanding Officers. On reaching Sela he only met me and none else and instructed me to interrupt the withdrawal and resume it after the demolition of the guns near the Brigade Headquarters.

As line and wireless communication with Headquarter 4th Infantry Division was disrupted after 5 am progress of the withdrawal could not be communicated to the Division Headquarters.

According to the Brigade report the marching column reached Senge at approx 9 am while the vehicle column with the guns had already concentrated in the area less the guns which were demolished below Sela.

At Senge, the Brigade Commander ordered the transport column to proceed straight to Dirang Dong

and report to the Commander Artillery. For the marching column, the order of march was; 4th Garh Rifles, Brigade Headquarters, 2nd Sikh Lt Infantry, 1st Sikhs and other minor units, while 13th Dogras less two companies were ordered to act as rear guard. When the column reached Bridge Two, 4th Garh Rifles was sent along Nyukmadong track to cover the eastern flank. The rest followed the main road.

At about 1100 hrs the Brigade column came under small arms fire at Bridge Two. When the fighting started, 13th Dogras was heavily engaged in the rear and could not, therefore, be brought forward to assist 2nd Sikh LI or 4th Garh Rif. Another cause of the disruption of command and control at this time was that there was no wireless communication from Brigade headquarters to the Battalions. Above is the Brigade version of events. Our Battalion version of fighting is somewhat different (we were positioned at Sela top)—

As we saw at Sela, operations were progressing satisfactorily till the second week of November 1962. Till then the patrolling scores were somewhat even. After that we suffered some reverses when our patrols were beaten in 'No man's land' and were pushed back and were confined to our defences. This was a serious jolt and rebuff to Sela defences. When the enemy had come upon the main road in front and their patrols were moving freely on flanks and in the rear, Sela was beleaguered and in a state of seige. The defences were jeopardised and foundered. Yet, the politicians aroused the public and there was chorus for fight to the last man and last round irrespective of the most unfavourable military situation. Patrol reverses presaged hard and gloomy days ahead, and adverse circumstances precipuated the situation. Our patrols had also reported that the Chinese were negotiating

high ridges on the eastern flank with 'yaks' loaded with rations and ammunition and moving southwards. The Garhwals, who were in contact with the enemy, however, gave an excellent account of themselves and beat back repeated enemy assaults. They stood up to the concentrated, blistering and heavy Chinese artillery bombardment. Their Commanding Officer won the second best decoration of Maha Vir Chakra. Severity of the fighting can be judged by the following instance:

The Chinese made frontal attacks on the Garhwal positions just before day break on 17 November. The attack was preceded by infiltration by the Chinese in Monpa cloaks. One of the Garhwal Rif listening posts managed to rush back after lobbing a grenade at the poised enemy. As the Chinese advanced for an assault on the forward Garhwals company positions anti-personnel mines at the perimeter started exploding. There were four consecutive enemy assaults but the Garhwals stood their ground and repulsed all the enemy attempts to rush positions. In their support the enemy managed to deploy two medium machine guns barely thirty yards away from the Garhwali light machine gun post. In a daring swoop Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat grabbed one of the enemy machine guns but was killed when he was dashing back with his prize, but one of his companions, though wounded, brought back the weapon to his company position. About 200 Chinese lay dead around the Garhwals positions while our casualties were only two dead and eight wounded. Now orders were received by the battalion for withdrawal for a close defence at Sela proper. The other units did not lag behind in acts of bravery. Though 4th Sikh LI fought very well it could bag only one Vir Chakra as other citations could not go up due to the casualties amongst senior battalion officers. In turn the Chinese were also subjected to

heavy artillery battering and suffered severely on account of the minefields. However, when our artillery gun barrels turned backward to take on the infiltrating enemy to the rear our troops became skeptical and there was an undercurrent of pessimistic whispers. At night we could see strange torch lights in a single line moving along the narrow steep and difficult hilly paths to our rear. It was also heard that a detachment of our armour moving ahead of Bomdila towards Sela had been intercepted, ambushed and destroyed by the infiltrating enemy. The roar of artillery guns on both sides were heard at all times.

Battles seldom go according to a set plan and things do not always turn out to one's advantage. Many times nothing goes the way one plans. There is an ebb and flow as far as destiny is concerned. The war is full of ups and downs, twists and turns and triumphs and tragedies. Likewise the battle of Sela also took an unexpected and curious turn. The climax was reached when the Chinese crept closer in front at Nuranang and hooked round to cut off Bomdila-Dirang-Nyukmadong road by laying roadblocks and ambushes and did what the Japanese had done to them twenty years back. The Chinese were now repeating it on the Indians. A midnight conference by the Commanding Officer let the cat out of the bag. The brigade was to withdraw to Dirang/Bomdila positions under orders of HQ 4th Infantry Division, though the troops had never hesitated to take on the enemy at Sela. Since the last one month our officers and men were being inspired, doctrinated and pitted for a fight. They had developed new bonds of comradeship and association. They were aroused and stimulated, to produce new military history. They were exhorted to imbibe a militant spirit. There had been no talk of withdrawal inspite of serious and sombre reverses in patrolling. It was said that

only on orders from the higher authorities, Brig Hoshiar Singh had decided on his Brigade's, hamhanded withdrawal from Sela against his mind, conscience and will. It is not easy to make such a fateful decision and only those who have been faced with immediate choices or similar grim alternatives can understand how a decision weighs on a commander. So when the Commanding Officer divulged the sudden plan of withdrawal every one turned glum faced. Even a new outpost was established at a height of 15,000 feet on the ridge opposite Kela, just on the evening of withdrawal and the troops had enthusiastically, dug and prepared their new post positions. The post was commanded by Jamadar Jaspal Singh who was killed when the post was attacked and overrun by the Chinese. He was a simple and obedient soldier. His valour should have earned him a gallantry award. In view of the foregoing withdrawal orders were a surprise and shock to every one as they were to miss a long awaited opportunity to fight.

In the withdrawal orders, Bomdila was casually indicated as the New Main Defensive Position. The 2nd Sikh LI Battalion was to take up Intermediate Defensive Position at the Nyukmadong ridge behind Sela to cover the Brigade's withdrawal. Our Battalion was to withdraw last i.e. immediately after 'stand to' time on the dawn of 17 November. The other two battalions were to precede us in the main body. Till then we had to keep the Chinese at bay. The Commanding Officer gave the Check and Rendezvous Points and other assential instructions. I was appointed the Rear Party Commander for the battalion. Sniper Section and Battalion Headquarters Platoon and some other Battalion Headquarters troops were allotted to me for the purpose.

When the Commanding Officer was issuing orders on 16/17 November, the fateful mid-night for withdrawal, the faces of the officers betrayed their surprise. They were bewildered at the thought of withdrawal. Some were dispirited and others disdainful. It was thought that the efforts we had put in preparing defences at Sela were only a part of mock exercise and not the real operation. Though the Commanding Officer said that the Brigade was withdrawing to Dirang/Bomdila, he did not disclose which positions were to be occupied. Would these be 'in depth' positions in the rear of the other troops or would these be entirely new positions? No reconnaissance parties were sent out either. We did not know about the new formations or units we were to come across. We were not told whether the road on which we were to move, would be protected by other troops; or we had to secure the features dominating the road ourselves. Orders about who were to direct the units were not explicit on the provision of guides for sub units, to their earmarked positions. Administrative orders were not issued as to the provision of food and replenishment of ammunition. There were many mute points. One point was crystal clear and glaring. This was not the hour for withdrawal but the time for fighting at Sela when the enemy had come in close proximity. To justify withdrawal a rosy picture of the supplies at Bomdila was painted as the location was so close to the base in plains. Bomdila ridge, having less altitude, was not considered as cold as Sela. It was surmised that the environments would be comparatively much less severe on the troops in defence and the enemy in the open, would have a great disadvantage. At Bomdila, it was thought, that there was to be greater concentration of troops and weapons and much more cohesion between formations

which Sela lacked. In fact we had a feeling that the formation was to close its ranks; the whole of 4th Infantry Division was to be redeployed at Bomdila to fight a close and compact battle. but all these dreams and hopes were belied and shattered and we were disillusioned when the withdrawing column had come under hostile fire and units went out of control and in disarray, as we approached Bridge Number Two below the Sela mountains. We were out of the frying-pan into fire.

Now let me dwell on the withdrawal plan. In accordance with the Brigade withdrawal plan 2nd Sikh Lt Infantry was to take up Intermediate Defensive position on the Nyukmadong ridge behind Sela to cover the brigade's withdrawal. During the withdrawal of the Brigade from Sela the order of march was :

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 2nd Sikh LI | — To take up Intermediate defensive Position at Nyukmadong ridge. |
| 4th Garh Rif | — Advance Guard |
| 1st Sikh | — Part of main body (Senge Dzong onwards) |
| 4 Sikh LI | — 4th Sikh LI took over screen duties from 4th Garh Rif. The nature of the detailed order to the unit were not clear. Perhaps, they were to delay the Chinese beyond Sela for as long as possible to enable the brigade to take up the Second Main defensive Position. |
| 13th Dogra
less two Coys | — Brigade Rear Guard (Singe Dzong onwards) |

1st Sikh — To provide a Rear Party (at Sela when all brigade troops had cleared off the pass).

(This arrangement did not work as the enemy had cut off the road).

Our Battalion was to withdraw last. The other three battalions were to precede us. Till then, we had to keep the Chinese at an arms' length. During the sensitive hours of the dawn, I left the Officer's Mess bunker, where we had made plans for the forthcoming fight, with a heavy heart. The incandescent bunker heater, operating on kerosene oil, which was emitting a warm blue flame had become a pet adjunct of the bunker around which officers crowded and basked in its warmth. As I left the bunker, I sadly put it off. Before that I had been called to attend to a call at the rear wireless link, located at the exact top of the Sela under the cover of big rocks since the Commanding Officer and Adjutant had departed to see the check and rendezvous points. They were asking about the situation at Sela. I informed the Brigade Headquarters about the orderly progress of the withdrawal amidst some disturbance with the wireless transmission. No clarifications or questions were asked. the conduct of the wireless operator was very praiseworthy. He walked about with his usual uprightness and swagger. He had called me from the bunker with sobriety, unmindful of the rapidly unfolding events. He was unruffled. The Officers' Mess servants also conducted themselves, coolly, calmly and smartly as if they were performing their functions during a unit reception at a peace garrison. There was no anxiety or fear on their faces. The signallers, mess servants, batmen and runners did not abandon their dignity and steady gait. Their behaviour was a fine example of steadiness, coolness

and courage. I noted that non-combatants or those who have less to do with arms, comparatively, remain more calm and composed in crisis. They had given me a much needed hot cup of tea with due care for my preoccupation with operational duties. This hot cup of tea greatly exhilarated my activities and sharpened my senses by imparting much needed warmth. I further informed the Brigade Headquarters that we were also to commence withdrawal after some time as calm prevailed at Sela and the situation was conducive to abandoning Sela. But if the Chinese challenged us we were to stay put and fight it out and inflict casualties on them with the aim of delaying them. If need be we were to offer a last ditch battle on Sela positions and were to avoid a running battle. But so far there was no sign of the enemy, on Sela proper or in its vicinity except the sound of distant fire in the direction of Kela. The morning was ideal with thin mist. There was the quiet dawn stand to and Silhouettes of soldiers were discerned against knolls in the twilight.

Suddenly the enemy fired green signal very light over the Kela Pass. The very light which is a illuminating cartridge available in various colours is a good means of communications in mountainous area when action was joined. Perhaps the Chinese vanguard signalled to their main body that the Indian troops had evacuated the Pass and it was in their hands. It was true, the 2nd Sikh LI had pulled back from Kela to take over the Intermediate Defensive Position functions at the Nyukmadong Ridge and the approach to Sela was now exposed, from Kela side. Tail of 2nd Sikh Infantry passed Sela at midnight and 4th Garhwal Rifles an hour later.

After some time the close crackling sounds of the enemy small arms fire was heard from Kela slope facing

Sela. But there was no sign of the Chinese force and physical storming of the Sela defences by the enemy.

I saw that some of our withdrawing men were bleeding. There were, however, no deep wounds as the men were hit by distant fire, and the Chinese automatic rifle bullets had comparatively less force; consequently, the wounds were only skin deep and appeared superficial. But the psychological effect of the automatic rifle with its firework type noise was enormous. It created fear, confusion and disarray.

By this time, the abandoned positions of the two forward battalions were had a clear break were occupied by the enemy. Now our defences also came under effective enemy small arms fire. When it was apparent that the enemy was closing in, and inching forward, I engaged the 3 inch mortar defensive fire tasks. With steadiness and without any panic the 3 inch mortar platoon subjected defensive fire tasks with accurate fire till the platoon was ordered to withdraw. However, I could not get hold of the artillery observation post officer allotted to our unit. Probably, he had been prematurely withdrawn by his regiment without prior information to us. Two forward battalions had withdrawn when our unit was also ordered to withdraw. 1st Sikhs withdrew in accordance with the laid down sequence. there was no panic and mixing with 2nd Sikh LI as was said in HQ 62nd Infantry Brigade report. 2nd Sikh LI had cleared much earlier, as they had to take up Intermediate Defensive Position. I was present, at Sela till 2 Sikh LI and 4th Garh Rifles pulled back. Sela Pass was never crowded, there was no stampede as said in certain quarters, it was an orderly exit. However, there was no sign of 4th Sikh LI at the appointed time. It was said that they had replaced 4th Garh Rifles at Nuranaung and had got entangled with

the enemy. When 4th Garh Rifles and 2nd Sikh LI were clear of Sela, keeping to the schedule of withdrawal, at the first light, now majority of 4 Sikh LI personnel also crossed over, 1st Sikhs main body also went past Sela. I had hardly started withdrawing the Rear Guard or Rear Party, when, suddenly, Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, accompanied by Captain Abraham, one of his staff officers, posted to the Brigade Headquarters from 4th sikhs, appeared at Sela. (Captain Abraham later commanded 8th Sikhs). The Brigadier told me to suspend move back of the Rear Party as there was delay in the demolition of artillery guns. The Battalion Rear Party was now to be withdrawn when the guns were destroyed. The Brigadier also took me into his confidence and told me that withdrawal of the Brigade was not in his plans but he had no other option than to comply with the wishes of the higher command. This generated feelings which were full of emotional tidings. This was my second meeting with the Brigadier. I deferred the withdrawal of the Rear Party till the guns were destroyed. At that time the handsome, youthful, and exuberant Lieut Surrender Dagar of our Battalion joined me. Looking frustrated due to unexpected withdrawal, he pleaded with me to stay put and fight out at Sela. I appreciated his suggestion and spirit. I wish I had acceded to him and fought at the Pass. However I thought that discretion was the better part of valour. With a heavy heart, I told him that changes in the plan were not possible at that late hour, and asked him to join his platoon and control it. I never saw him after this incident. In withdrawal control of troops has to be very rigid. I knew that young Surrender was displaying only Dutch courage but still he gave a great boost to my morale. But I found it very difficult to control the troops. I may mention here that, ironically, I had to pull out my pistol to control and stop the men and put them into

firing positions since the withdrawal 'bee had bitten them' and they were panicky and were not listening.

After the artillery guns were demolished, withdrawal of the Rear Party was resumed. It continued without any incident or interruption till we reached the foot of the Sela mountain, after a steep descent. The Chinese did not climb to the crest of Sela to pursue us. Perhaps our mortar defensive fire deterred them from rushing up or their main body was regrouping at their forming up place below the Pass.

We continued our uneventful further journey down the Sela massif. As we were now nearing the fateful Nyukmadong Ridge we could hear firing from ahead. Number Two bridge was found demolished and we became conscious of a great commotion in front. We had an inner feeling that the withdrawal had gone awry. Further we saw that troops were running around for cover and firing positions and there was a free for all scene as in a movie.

Appendix 'H'

(Refer to Page 246)

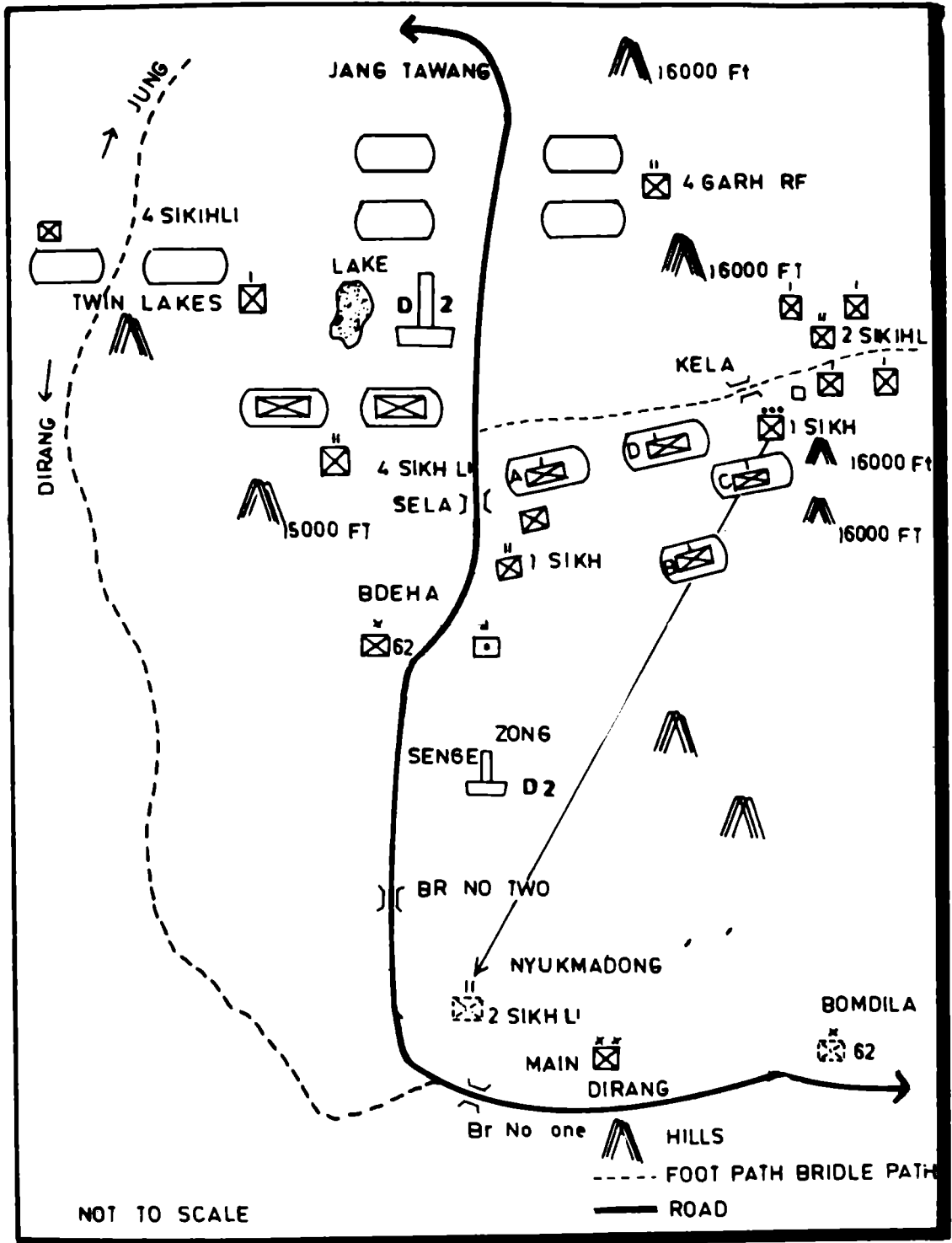
WANDERINGS OF 13 DOGRA NEFA OPERATION 1962

Sr. No.	Date	Tps	Mode of Travel	Destination	Task
1.	3 Oct 62	Bn	Road	Naga Hill	Ops
2.	16 Oct	Bn	Rail	Rangapara (N)	Conc
3.	20 Oct	Bn	Road	Charduar	Conc
4.	20 Oct	CO & Pl C Coy	Heptr	Zimithang	Ops
5.	20 Oct	C Coy Less Pl	Heptr	Dirang	Ops
6.	21 Oct	C Coy Less Pl	Heptr	Tawang	Ops
7.	21 Oct	A & D Coy	Road	Tawang & then move towards Shakti	Ops
8.	21 Oct	B Coy & Part Bn HQ	Heptr	Dirang	Conc
9.	21 Oct	Pl C Coy	On Foot	Chuthangmu	To cover with- drawal of 7 Inf Bde
10.	21 Oct	Pl C Coy	On foot	Shakti	To Cover with- drawal of Tac 4 Inf Div
11.	23 Oct	B Coy & Part Bn HQ	Road	Charduar	Conc

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12.	23 Oct	CO & Pl C Coy	On foot	Lumla	Lumla & Tawang being with enemy, CO and Pl C Coy entered Bhutan
13.	27 Oct	A&D Coys	On foot	Senge	Conc
14.	28 Oct	CO & Adj	Heptr	Dirang	Ops
15.	28 Oct	Pl C Coy	On foot	Dirang	Conc
16.	28 Oct	Adj	Heptr	Charduar	Ops
17.	31 Oct	Pl C Coy	Road	Charduar	Conc
18.	19 Nov	CO & Adj	Road	Senge	Ops
19.	12 Nov	B Coy & Part Bn HQ	Road	Senge	Ops
20.	16 Nov	Two Coys	Road	Dirang	Ops
21.	17 Nov	Bn less Two Coys	Road		With- drawal

Sketch-12 2 Sikh LI Abortive Intermediatory Defensive position at Nyukmadong



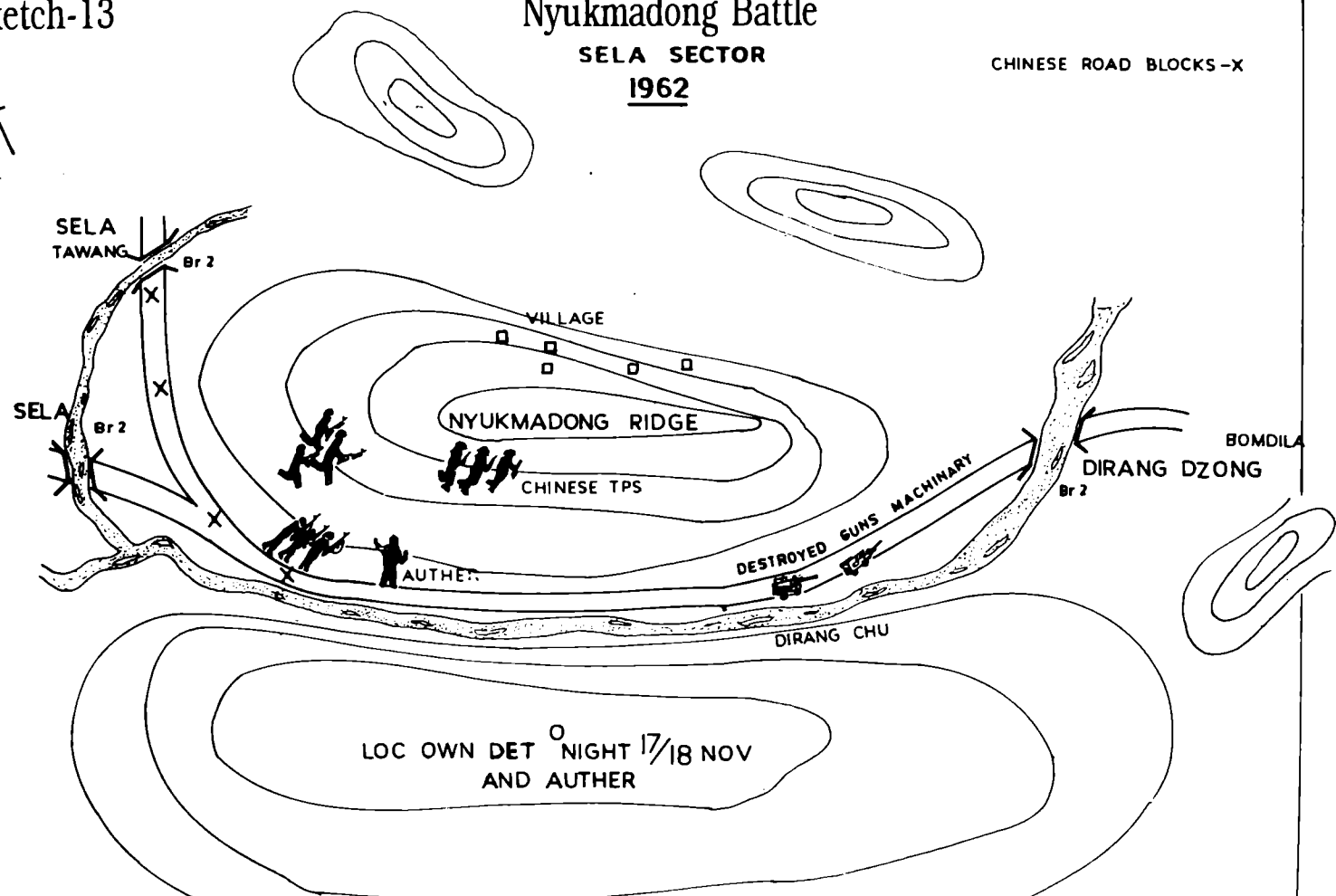
Sketch-13

Nyukmadong Battle

SELA SECTOR

1962

CHINESE ROAD BLOCKS - X



AUTHER UNDER POINT BLANK FIRE OF CHINESE AND DIRECTING OWN FIRE ON THEM IN STANDING POSITION 17 NOV

CLEARANCE OF CHINESE ROADBLOCKS-GREAT NYUKMADONG VICTORY

As mentioned, Nyudmadong is an important ridge situated between Sela mountain and Dirang Valley. It is a low ridge of height about 6000 feet. In fact it is an independent sub feature of the Sela mountain. A fairly large village, after the name of the ridge, sprawls over the feature. There is an across-ridge short cut path for these who undertake the journey from Dirang to Sela on foot or vice versa. The road skirts the ridge. The Ridge is separated from the Sela Massif and Dirang Dzung by nullahs on each side. These nullahs were overlaid with temporary bridges for the passage of Army and road building organisation vehicles. Number One Bridge is in the direction of Dirang Dzung and Number Two Bridge on the side of Sela. The Nyukmadong Ridge was rightly selected as an Intermediate Defensive Position, which was to be occupied by 2nd Sikh LI. At the same time the Chinese selected it for their own purpose that is to stall the 62nd Infantry Brigade withdrawal. The Ridge was a finishing line for the two contestants who were heading for it. The Chinese pre-empted Hoshier's move and occupied the Nyukmadong. Ridge before the arrival of 2 Sikh LI. The Chinese action utterly disorganised withdrawal of 62nd Infantry Brigade and the formation was thrown into disorder and had to suffer the consequences. It was incumbent on 2nd Sikh LI to dislodge the enemy and to occupy the Ridge before the arrival of the main body of the brigade for its safe passage to Dirang Dzung but they could not do this.

Now let me resume the story of withdrawal and the scenario at Nyukmadong. When we reached the Bridge number Two we saw that our men were running helter-skelter. On crossing the Bridge I saw that Brigadier Hoshiar Singh was engaged in a hot and animated argument and wrangling with Lt Col Irani, the Commanding Officer of 2nd Sikh LI who was accompanied by his Second-in-Command, Major Jaspal, and a couple of men. Enemy small arms fire was withholding the movement of the troops and the Brigade Headquarters beyond the Bridge. The Brigadier asked the Colonel as to why the Intermediate Defensive Position at Nyukumadong was not taken; the Colonel replied that the position could not be occupied as it was already in the hands of the Chinese who were said to have arrived there a little after midnight. The Brigadier expressed his dismay and asked the Colonel to clear the Chinese troops firing on the road to thwart the Indian Brigade's withdrawal. The Colonel expressed his inability to do so saying that his troops had scattered and were, therefore, not under his control for any operational job. Our appearance on the scene cut short the wrangling. When the Brigadier turned to me to clear the Chinese and I stood to 'attention'¹²-a sign of explicit obedience. My Commanding Officer had, also arrived by that time and he tacitly endorsed my decision. The situation had assumed a dramatic turn.

The mystery of last night's moving single line of lights was also now clear. The Chinese also had infiltrated on the flank of Sela and were lighting up the narrow and precarious path with pocket hand torches and were making for the important Nyukmadong Ridge, and their intention was now clear.

12. In his book 'Chinese Invasion of NEFA' page 138 Maj Johri has written that no body listened to Brig Hoshiar Singh, when he tried to persuade the troops to take on the Chinese, is entirely wrong.

They intended to cut our line of communication with a view to entrap us. They were presently firing on us to get us in their bag. It was not known that the enemy who were flashing their torches to light up the trail at night would torch our equipment vehicles, and men the next day to leave behind a sordid scene.

I appreciated that we to had to assault the Chinese roadblock to dislodge them and clear the road for our advance and link with Dirang Dzong garrison. I started with the task briskly. There were two alternatives as to the axis of attack. One was to advance with strength across the ridge in the rear of the Chinese posts and on the beaten track across the ridge, the other was to follow the serpentine road and search the spurs jutting on the road. I suggested that we attack over the Ridge as it was a short course which dominated the road and would neutralise the Chinese posts which guarded the road and once we climbed to the top of the ridge the Chinese posts would become ineffective and it would be easier to roll down to Dirang Dzong by the shorter route and join with Dirang Dzong garrison. I had seen the two routes during the routine journeys. I felt that the Chinese were not in strength at the spine of the ridge and they did not have sufficient time to dig in. Their supporting arms had not joined them by that time. But the Brigade Commander wanted to stick to the road as it afforded more cover by the slashed hill side. He said that once the enemy was ousted our immobilized transport could also be used. Moreover, he thought that the Chinese could have their main position in strength on the Ridge, located to support their posts along the road with covering fire. The Brigadier also added that we did not have sufficient troops at hand for the shock action across the Ridge. So, ultimately, it was decided to advance on the road

by securing the toes of the successive spurs to comply with the wishes of the commander.

Since our rifle companies had pushed ahead and were not available, I organised the Battalion Headquarters troops and snipers comprising the Rear Party into covering and assault echelons. Following the correct battle drill we assaulted the Chinese Post, and dislodged it. The road was freed from the enemy stranglehold and was now clear for our advance. This enabled the Brigade Commander's party and other held up troops to advance at least half a mile. As the enemy was cleared I went back and escorted the Brigade Commander and the Commanding Officer along the road. In the same fashion, three more road blocks were dislodged and two more miles of road were made safe.

Apart from the obsolete, 303 Rifles, and light machine gun, a grenade launching rifle and a 2 inch mortar were also used for the supporting fire. There was no other covering fire or support and mere courage and determination carried us through and we suffered no casualties in this operation. Four enemy casualties were found but many more signs of blood on the rocks, indicated that there were heavy casualties amongst the enemy. These were carried away by them as the Chinese usually did. But our discarding the spine of Nyukmadong Ridge delayed the link up of 62nd Infantry Brigade Headquarters with 4th Infantry Division in Dirang Dzong valley and sadly they had hurried up and abandoned their positions without waiting for us. The Sikhs had cleared an almost identical Japanese road block at Taukhian in Burma on 7 March 1942 but in 1962 the conditions were much harder as far as

altitude and terrain were concerned. The Chinese roadblocks were successfully tackled.

Dusk was now approaching and we were running out of ammunition. Heavy enemy small arms fire again started from Nuykmadong Ridge. A sudden enemy automatic fire fusillade swamped us. Enemy small arms fire was kicking up dust around me and some bullets grazed my uniform. Perhaps, the enemy had spotted me and was trying a pot shot, but a miracle saved me. At the same time some men were hit and wounded. I shall try to describe the action to the best of my ability. I exposed myself to the enemy for an exceptionally long time in directing our troops on to the roadblock positions. During the course of fighting at Nyukmadong, all along, I remained unnerved and kept standing upright while directing the troops. I never took cover lest the troops thought I was trying to hide, under the pretext of taking cover. In any event it is clear that this form of command is the best. I never took lying position, or crouched lest I be called tearful and a coward. Though, I remembered that in the face of the bursting shells of the Japanese guns even Field Marshal Slim had to creep under a truck during the Burma operations. Soldierly pride and esprit-de-corps prodded me not to bend and stoop but to keep erect. I was not to cave in or capitulate before the claws of the fire breathing dragon. Though the enemy identified me, they failed to mow me down though they used all types of weapons from almost point blank range and I was sanguine that my days were not numbered as yet. The bullet that was to give me a mortal blow was yet to be manufactured. Though, I threw personal safety precautions to the winds, I exhorted my men to follow proper norms of battlecraft, battle drill, fieldcraft and concealment. To highlight the quality of courage in a

man Field Marshal Slim narrates in his book "Defeat into Victory" that when Field Marshal Alexander and himself were returning from the front in a car a Japanese infiltration party tried to cut the road. The car was held up as fighting was still going on. The bridge in front was being shelled by the enemy over which the car was to pass. Slim beckoned the tanks that were standing by and suggested to Alexander that he get into one and himself into another tank to cross the bridge. 'What about my car and the driver', Alexander asked at once. 'Oh he will have to stand on the gas and chance it', Slim replied. 'But it'll be just as dangerous for him as it would be for us', 'Yes but he's not the Army Commander', 'All right', said Alexander, 'you go in a tank, I am staying in the car.'. So, eventually, they both went in the car. However, Colonel Ranjit Rai, the Commanding Officer of Ist Sikhs during its famous push on the road Sirinagar-Uri on 28 October 1947 was not so lucky. During the tactical pull back from a hill near Baramulla, under heavy onslaught of raiders, Colonel Rai was killed by an enemy bullet as he did not take proper cover; when all the troops under him crawled in the paddy fields he was proudly walking back under the rain of small arms fire. He did not crouch under the eyes of his men to evade death. The same act was repeated by Brigadier Mohammed Usman when he was killed at Jhangar at Nowshera in Jammu Sector in 1948. He never hunkered down or creeped.

For one full day I remained in the thick of battle below Sela and uprooted the Chinese from their road blocks and made them flee; dominated the battle field in the presence of the Brigade and Battalion Commanders and my men and my troops acquitted themselves equally well under the gaze of the two commanders. The Battalion fully deserves a second

Battle Honour of Nyukmadong. It should be bestowed even at this late stage. Let me digress a little.

I felt very happy and satisfied that the troops under my command fought very courageously under most difficult and trying conditions, and maintained the high traditions of the Indian Army while holding aloft the flags of 62nd Infantry Brigade and 4th Infantry Division. Here I did pray for the success of 1st Sikhs and reached the high watermark of my career. I had snatched the opportunity which the other battalions of the brigade had missed or avoided.

I had no fear of death, whatsoever, during the heat of the battle, but fear did grip me while ruminating before and after the hoary battle. My little children were the subject of this reflection. I never begged for my life but when the case for Battle Honours was put up by 4 Mech Infantry (1st Sikhs) to Army Headquarters in 1993 it was observed that the case was put up too late? At that late stage it had become time barred. But when earlier it was contemplated to take up the case thoughts of defeat were looming large at higher quarters which discouraged initiating such cases. When I was married and had no children at the time of the Indo-Pak war of 1948 I had no inhibitions of any sort. If it is said that I am indulging in self praise and self aggrandisement I assert that when my Brigade Commander and the Battalion Commander, who oversaw my actions, were killed then there was no one to provide testimony except myself or my men.

Every soldier, whatever, may be his destiny aspires for promotion and decoration in war. While there are all chances of promotion there is much less scope for decoration. There are three handicaps for this-death/disability, being prisoner of war or remaining unnoticed.

There are hundreds of soldiers who do very well in war but there is no one to observe the deed of gallantry and initiate the required citation or observer gets killed.

Reverting to the battle I noticed that nearby, blinking head lights of an Indian Army Jonga, which had halted on the road due to enemy action was adding a queer and dramatic touch. At this time I had to go back a little distance to deal with a suspected sniper's nest. In the area enemy snipers jinked and were quite elusive. In my absence the Brigade Commander's party left the road and crossed the fast and deep Dirang Chu gorge which was circuiting the road. My force remained on the road engaging and pinning down the enemy so that the Brigade Commander's party could move unmolested and skip unhindered and link up with HQ 4th Infantry Division located with the Dirang Dzong garrison. This was achieved. It was my third contact with the great and legendary Brigadier. My Commanding Officer Colonel Mehta's party also went across the nullah following in the foot steps of the Brigade Commander's party. Colonel Mehta was accompanied by his Adjutant, Captain Haripal and some Battalion Headquarters personnel. Many men followed the Brigade Commander and the Commanding Officer and the Rear Party which had dislodged the enemy from four overlapping roadblock positions was denuded and its assault strength was diminished. If the two senior officers had remained in the column, we all could have forced our way to Dirang Dzong in strength and joined the garrison there for onward push and link up with Bomdila.

As we pushed along on the road towards Dirang Dzong a grossly repulsive scene was in sight and we found the road littered with maimed dead bodies and packed with trapped and shattered vehicles, guns

bulldozers, road rollers and other road building machinery. Some of these were smeared with blood and flesh. Further ahead the body of a young Sikh officer, with a blue turban, was seen lying on the berm along with some men of his corps. It was a naked display of the Chinese frenzy. Enemy thought they had lit the pyre of the Indian Army but this notion was belied when they were ousted from roadblocks laid by them. I regret that we could not attend to the casualties under the prevailing circumstances. Such grisly and monstrous incidents of scourge and carnage are heart rending and examples of excruciating Chinese vandalism and savagery. I was a little short of wailing to watch the despicable scene.

Our ousting¹³ of the Chinese troops from their roadblock positions was the only occasion when Indian troops had an upper hand over the Chinese in the 1962 operations. This is an irrefutable statement. There is no exaggeration whatsoever in the claim.

I had rewarded Lance Naik Pritam Singh, who had displayed superb bravery and calmness at Nyukmadong ridge, with special promotion and recommended him for a gallantry award. However, the

13. I had some tactical knowledge of operating in mountainous terrain as I happened to be a member of the Experimental Brigade-25th Infantry Brigade at Cambellpore—(now in Pakistan) which was trying out new techniques in mountain warfare, in 1946. I was also present in the 1947/48, Jammu and Kashmir operations in Uri Sector. There I attained experience in fighting the raiders and regular Pakistan troops and had captured the fanatic (own battalion) armed deserters, who while fleeing left their footprints on the 10,000 feet high ridge beside the Jhelum River after making away from the Chhota Kazinag picquet. Later on I had learned and perfected mountain warfare technique under Brig Joginder Singh. He is the author of the Book 'Behind the Scene', and was an expert in mountain warfare. He was commanding 80th Infantry Brigade on the line of Actual Control in Nowshera Sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

citation and recommendations were ignored under the ostensible gloom and despondency that enveloped high places after the debacle.

The following other Non-Commissioned officers and Other Ranks distinguished themselves in fighting at Bumla, Sela and Nyukmadong Ridge and deserve recognition:-

CHM Amrik Singh	'A' Company
L/Hav Sucha Singh	11 Platoon, Wounded
Naik Balwant Singh	11 Platoon
L/Naik Naurang Singh	11 Platoon
L/Naik Bawa Singh	Sniper, Killed 4 Chinese at Nyukmadong Ridge.
Sep Sukhdev Singh	11 Platoon
Sep Ajit Singh	Intelligence Section, wounded
Sep Banta Singh	11 Platoon, wounded
Sep Bachan Singh	'B' Company
Sep Phula Singh	Sniper
Sep Jit Singh	11 Platoon, wounded

Now dusk fell, and daylight started fading. At this late hour both sides temporarily ceased fire to take up night positions after the deadly day's fighting. In the glimmering light of afterglow, we left the ridge-way and climbed a nearby high hilltop opposite Nyukmadong ridge and went into night defensive position as by this time stronger enemy reinforcements with heavy mortars stepped in the breach we had made during the day. It was a challenging position. It was a similar position for the enemy also. The Chinese did not pursue us or subjected us to small arms or mortar fire as we climbed up utterly exhausted and the sun was to set in five minutes time and the battle field was to be enveloped in darkness shortly when it would be very hard to differentiate between friend and foe. A little further

ahead the fury of the fighting was unabated and the din of the small arms fire, artillery shelling and war cries were continuously heard as the dingdong battles raged throughout the night astride the main road and on nearby hills. There was a struggle between the trapped Indian troops and the offensive Chinese. We kept vigil on the approaches coming up the ridge. It was a most dreadful night when in the open, we were awfully close to the enemy and their probing patrols could bump into us any time. The darkness was made more hideous by the noise of the battle. This was the first night when we were without communications, food ammunition, and blankets. The troops were looking up to officers with raised eyebrows. When they were explained the situation they calmed down. Though we tried to keep awake due to the nearness of the enemy, after day's hard campaign against enemy roadblocks, fits of deep slumber overtook us.

Incidentally, the party of Captain Krishan Khorana, our Battalion Quarter Master, caught up with us, and he and I huddled together in quest of the warmth at 9000 feet in winter. There were no trees or any other shelter of any sort. Krishan left in the biting chill and the oppressing cold of the dawn to catch up with his separated party. I stayed back till sunrise and remained as cold as steel since my pants, socks, boots, shirt and jersey were completely drenched while crossing the neck deep, cascading, gushing and burbling Dirang Chu, the previous evening. I was feeling soggy and frigid. My clothes dried up only during the subsequent journey in due course. There was no spare set of clothes for a change. It was out of question. In the evening I had lost my balance in the deep and rushing current and also slipped dangerously in the nullah but I managed to get across and survive.

Next morning as the bright sun rose, when I with my men, stood on the hill, we had a very vivid and kaleidoscopic view of the Chinese Army pouring down from Sela, in a stream of soldiery, making a bee line in continual bustle of movement, and racing towards Dirang Dzong. They were moving at their normal pace of jog-trot, at times in bunched groups, and shoulder to shoulder. Then they were a sitting duck and excellent target for the Air Force and Artillery but unfortunately these were not handy. I had an awesome glimpse of the 'yellow' high tide. It was a graphic description that I find hard to paint, as, it is not within the limited capacity of my poor literary talent. But the Chinese did not come up the hill which was occupied by us for the next twelve hours, though, it was so close to them. In spite of my fatigue I had the aroma of the previous day's brilliant success in which I basked.

As I was watching the spectrum, of the battlefield spell-bound, and in dazed state, many thoughts passed through my mind. I considered it immoral to withdraw from Sela when the enemy had come in close contact. I was thinking about the sacred ammunition which we had abandoned at Sela on withdrawal. These were perplexing questions. What success could we achieve had we used the ammunition? What, if we had defied orders of higher command for the withdrawal and fought at Sela? The pleadings of 2/Lt Surrender to stay put at Sela and fight kept ringing in my ears and haunted me as I was certain that if we had stuck to Sela we could have held the Pass for upto three to four days.

Nearby, a local peasant was guarding his maize crop. Throughout the night he was shouting to scare away the would be intruders, unmindful of the battles being fought around him. His position was envious.

Feverish dusk and dawn of 17 and 18 November 1962 will always remain mysterious and frightening in my life.

Our bold and audacious action at Nyukmadong crumbled the Chinese roadblock positions and consequently HQ 62nd Infantry Brigade and the Commanding Officer 1st Sikhs were successful in linking with HQ 4th Infantry Division positions at Dirang Dzong though in small parties; a part of the 62nd Infantry Brigade which was held up came out unmolested through the Chinese roadblock at Nyukmadong. Only a hand-full of Indian troops fell victim. However, when the troops reached Dirang HQ 4th Infantry division had already evacuated Dirang Dzong cross country as the road to Bomdila was cut off. This was done, largely in formed bodies. There were only a few in heterogeneous groups. All men carried their weapons. After that the story of 62nd Infantry Brigade is one of tough skirmishes and hide and seek with the infiltrating Chinese troops. Many Indian troops, though battled to the last, suffered heavily, and finding that all routes to Bomdila were blocked headed for the foothills, wriggled through the Chinese roadblocks and ambushes and offered themselves to the high command for re-organisation, re-consolidation and redeployment to stem the tide of the Chinese into the plain of the Brahmaputra which was conducive to defence with the support of armour, heavy artillery and offensive air support though men arrived exhausted and in emaciated condition. But the air was pregnant with uncertainty. Troops did not flee but ignorantly showed the way to the prospective suitable and natural battle fields which the generals should have appreciated and adopted and continued the fight. Let me digress a little and compare the performance of the brigade.

It is not appreciated that as compared with the performance of 7th Infantry Brigade at Namka Chu and 62nd Infantry brigade at Sela greater claustrophobia had accrued at Bomdila, very close to Brahmaputra plain, when 48th Infantry Brigade was supposed to hold Bomdila in favourable circumstances. It was apparent that the Brigade frittered away its manpower in an attempt to hold the enemy much ahead of Bomdila and thus exposed and compromised the defences of Bomdila. The formation committed a blunder by leaving the prepared positions at Bomdila and tried to fight out from the unprepared positions much ahead of Bomdila. The Brigade had three infantry battalions, one squadron of tanks, and an artillery battery. They were located on a reasonably good line of maintenance. The enemy had a difficult and long approach route and line of maintenance and had no heavy supporting arms. Yet the 48th Infantry Brigade could not hold out. They buckled under the strong numerical enemy strength inspite of strong will and determination. So one can see that 7th Infantry brigade at Namka Chu, 4th Artillery brigade at Tawang/Bumla, 62nd Infantry Brigade at Sela, 48th Infantry Brigade at Bomdila, 11th Infantry Brigade at Walong and 114th Infantry Brigade in Ladakh put up resistance to the Chinese in a more or less identical and uniform manner. They withdrew not because they did not have the will and heart to fight. The main cause of the defeat was that the Indian troops were unprepared, outnumbered, outweaponed and were not tactically positioned.

Let me now continue with the story of withdrawal from Sela. Brigadier Hoshier Singh and Colonel Mehta did not escape over the easy route to foothills, but, ignoring danger and playing hide and seek with the enemy they did not deviate from the aim of reaching Bomdila where they expected to find troops of 62nd

Infantry Brigade. However, they were ambushed and killed on the way, by the enemy. This was the supreme order of sacrifice. I cannot understand why Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, Colonel Mehta and 2/Lt Surinder Dagar can not be rewarded by the Indian government, posthumously, even at this not so late a stage when many civilian awards have been notified so late. Many men who accompanied them, also ran into ambushes and roadblocks and were killed. The tragedy that we were desperately trying to avoid had taken place. May the souls of the dead soldiers rest in peace. I request the high authorities to erect a suitable memorial at Nyukmadong ridge in memory of Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, Colonel Mehta and the other officers and men who laid down their lives while fighting the Chinese Army during the retreat. In the words of Samuel Butler, in all the trades of war there is nothing nobler than a brave retreat.

On our melancholic retreat from Sela we found that, to start with, the country side was bleak, barren and scarcely populated. Range after range of rough, rugged and high mountain had to be negotiated. At places sheer cliffs and escarpments were encountered. It took almost a day to climb a high ridge and then come down on the reverse of the feature. During the gruelling trek we came across all types of topography on the way-towering mountains with irritating and boring false crests, hated bluffs, charming plateaus, serpentine defiles and high passes, hideous torrents and escarpments, serene valleys and slow and fast moving nullas, attractive salients and re-entrants, patches of dark forest, frightening wilderness and barren tracts and thinly spread out sleepy villages, lone isolated and attractive herdsmen's huts. We also came across tempting rich maize crops laden with cobs. There were attractive grass patches looking like well

maintained lawns and flower plants and ornamental trees, prickly and thorny shrubs and undergrowth. We had really increased our botanical floriculture and geological knowledge. As we progressed further, geography flung a cobweb of green fields on a vast landscape.

Apart from 'yaks' and chauri gai', the frisky small mountain goats amused us with their jumping and prancing. We were thrilled to behold large domestic flocks of smart domestic goats and innocent looking pupy sheep being grazed by healthy and charming hill youth. All these scenes were seductions of great mountainous country. We were disturbed at night by the howling of ferocious animals and birds and the shrieking winds passing through the forest lanes and reeds.

Food was out of question. At times we had roots and wild sour forest fruits. At times none at all. We had forced rozas' barts' and fasts. No doubt a soldier has to be ready for this type of suffering in war through exercises in peace. Indian soldiers have ample experience of these hard rituals. Abstinence is a common practice for Indians from time immemorial. Hunger and cold coupled with a sense of reverse made sleep by night almost impossible despite one's extreme weariness. Though they shed poisonous carbon dioxide at night we were always looking out for hollow tree trunks for shelter. Even bark sufficed sometimes. Leeway side in rocks was cherished. Trees, and tall bushes were a favourite with us to protect us from the damning, frigid and caustic cold. Lack of any form of bedding added to our sleeplessness. There was no duree, blanket, water cape or bed sheet. Little grass or the abrasive 'sarkanda' were the only items available for bedding. At times even these were not available

and one dozed fitfully lying on the bare, cold and hard ground with a stone or piece of log as a pillow. We were not scared of ferocious beasts, stinging rodents or poisonous insects. On the top of the all the difficulties the thought of a skirmish with the enemy, with no ammunition was not ruled out.

Water was found at the foot of a range where water bottles were filled up for the next climb. Those who did not have water bottles bloated themselves with the life sustaining liquid to face the coming day's ordeal and hard climb looming ahead. There could not be much care for untreated water which was considered unfit for human consumption. When treated water was not available all types of other good and clear water appearing safe to eyes, was to be acceptable for survival. Yet there were no known cases of dysentery or cholera.

One day we stumbled on a broad and beautiful stream beside which existed a group of rough shacks. The inhabitants were sympathetic. They offered us maize flour, pumpkin and 'Chauri gai' milk but warned us about the Chinese patrols who frequented the village. This was the first time we had strayed into the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan. To avoid risk to the locals we lurched forward to our feet and took to our compass direction and stamped forward as the direction of our destination in NEFA was doubtful. Every step of the withdrawal, every morsel of food and every straw of shelter we got, reminded one of the great, interesting, kind and dreamy places and generous and gracious folks. One drew inspiration from Guru Gobind Singh and Mahatma Gandhi who had long fasts but survived. The time was also reminiscent of exasperating hardships with which Guru Gobind Singh was confronted in the forest of Machhiwara after his retreat from Anandpur Sahib, when pursued by the Mughal

forces over three hundred years back. As for personal wear, as mentioned, the troops were poorly clothed. Consequently, one had to shiver throughout the night in debilitating and biting cold in the open and could not snooze a wink. It was all a nightmare. The deadly past spun through my thoughts as I turned and tossed and was oppressed by the extreme cold. Famished with hunger after the day's long and hard slogging we hurriedly climbed down during the day to the bank of a nullah or a narrow valley to prepare for the acerbically cold night which was approaching. Some forgotten rotten crumbs lying at the bottom of my heaversack for a long time, were welcomed and consumed to assuage the crippling hunger. Crowding together for rest, sleep and smugness was a common process. Place for night fall was selected away from the track after slogging through. Being trapped on a height was the most fearful and detestable chance. Perchance, one came across a grazier's hut or a Buddhist mini 'Pagoda,' a structure having only a dome and four supporting columns but open on all four sides, also called Chortens¹⁴, which afforded some protection. But it did not protect one much from the

14. 'Chortens' are a common sight in Kameng Frontier Division and Bhutan. Some 'chortens' have an opening through the base, forming an archway over a path so that travellers pass underneath. The passage with its big side walls serves as a support for the 'chorten'. In such case the ceiling is decorated with paintings of popular divinities of the Buddhist pantheon or the divinity to whom it is dedicated.

Built by nameless local craftsmen, who work under the directions of the lamas, these structures only achieve a vague resemblance to the classical models. They are built of square stones in a style with a plaster facing. There are usually no dedicatory inscriptions, making it difficult to tell the age of a 'chorten'.

The original function of these structures was to contain relics of the Buddha or the lamas. In course of time they became monuments of salvation. Sometimes the donor uses the length of his arm as a unit of measurement, to identify himself perfectly with the 'chorten'.

chilly drought. Its scanty protection, however, was a source of some solace. At halts though tired, alarm positions were earmarked for troops for all round protection.

Composition of the detachment changed daily as some men from other units chose to proceed ahead and fresh combatants overtook from the rear. However, the troops allotted to me originally remained faithful

The present purpose of a 'chorten' is two-fold as a source of respect for a devoted to ritually move around and also a landmark to the travellers who can spot them from a distance.

The relics deposited are bones and ashes of saints collected after cremation and then placed in a vase.

'Chortens' also sheltered sacred objects such as books. They become natural depositries through whose windows a traveller or a devotee can deposit leaves of books and statues. When members of caravans see them they always place them to their right, reciting 'Om mani padme hum' as they walk around the structure.

'Chorten' remains one of the most popular and mysterious of Buddhist religious symbols.

'Gompas' were found both in Ladakh and NEFA. In these 'gompas', which resemble multistoried fortress-like structure, are usually built on the summit of a hill. The 'gompas' are not only a repository of rich cultural and religious traditions of the Ladakhi Buddhists but also occupy an important place in the socio-religious life of the average Ladakhi.

'Gompa' literally means a solitary place where a Buddhist monk meditates and worships. The facade and location of the 'gompas' are almost identical. These are built on a mountain hill tier after tier and sometimes it becomes difficult to make out the number of storeys. A 'gompa' has two important attributes—'main walls' at the entrance and 'chortens', the former is made up of stones which bear inscriptions from the holy scriptures while the latter are semi-religious structures. Local people believe that these 'chortens' keep away evil spirits from villages.

The head monk of the Thikse 'gompa', the biggest in Ladakh, holds that this monastery, with 10 tiers and 150 rooms was built in 566 AD and had a 37-foot-high, gold-plated clay statue of Lord Buddha. However, the Hemis monastery is one of the most popular among visiting foreign and domestic tourists. Situated nearly 40 km from Leh, it is considered to be the wealthiest 'gompa'. The Hemis gompa was built in 1630 by the legendary Ladakhi ruler Sengge Namgyal .

(In fact pagoda, monastery, 'gompa' and chorten have identical utility and meaning)

to the end and stayed with me though my speed was slow as my foot was affected by frostbite. Not a single person had forsaken and left me in the lurch. There was no fugitive. One has to concede that Indian soldier has the requisite military virtues-loyalty, courage, endurance, efficiency and discipline.

There were no incidents of rape, robberies or cowardice committed as by white commonwealth troops in the wake of fall of Singapore and ultimate humiliating surrender on 14 February 1942. A bit earlier i.e. on 8 and 9 February their discipline and morale seems to have completely collapsed. Commonwealth troops deserted en masse and were guilty of insubordination and drunkenness while retreating in Malaya. Many of the stragglers escaped to Sumatra in boats. Churchill, the great war time leader, blackened out the report to avoid the controversy and acrimonious debates. Contrary to this in India such reports gain wide publicity irrespective of adverse effect on the soldiers.

Frostbite¹⁵ is a very galling affliction. Many officers and men were affected by this disease. A lot lost their

15. With treatment of frostbite which affected me in 1962 it was apparent that frostbite was cured. But, surprisingly after a long lapse of 31 years the disease recurred. Suddenly there was pain in the foot, especially, when I walked on a rough ground. I could not walk long distances due to the pain and fatigue. The foot was shown to various doctors including those at the Command Hospital, Chandigarh. They all were unable to diagnose the ailment even when I narrated the occurrence and history of frostbite 31 years back. My contention was just ignored. They said that frostbite could not relapse when it had been cured and fresh veins had developed. I even mentioned that the disease was never completely cured and deterioration should not be ruled out. Yet, the Staff Surgeon at the Command Hospital simply prescribed Brufane. Obviously, there could be no relief with this medicine. On my instance X-Ray of the foot was done in a nursing home and the bones of toes were found cracked due to osteoporosis caused by removal of calcium from bones as an after effect of frostbite.

limbs and became crippled. Numerous persons sought admission to hospital. To start with the affected limb was painful then there was a frightening swelling and the skin turned deep blue. Later on the affected instep could not be used in marching as it did not take the weight of the body and I had to rely on my heel, only. I felt utterly hamstrung. Perforce, I had to slow down my pace due to my ailment. Under these circumstances a pony could have been mobilised for me by my men, but I thought it befitting when all were marching.

One day some members of our party suggested that they would go in advance of my party to the village which lay ahead on our path. They were to procure some rations from the village and cook food for the party. The food was to be ready when we reached the hamlet and the scheme was heartening. But to our utter dismay we altogether missed the advance party, and had to go without the much longed for grub, as we took entirely different routes. On that night a very strong, and cold wind was also blowing leaving us almost numb and frozen to the bone. The well intentioned measure ended in a fiasco. Such instances were frequent on the march.

As we tramped backward the altitude diminished and we approached the more populated and temperate regions. While the weary troops trudged along there was flurry of bird activity but the cuckoo's call magpie's chatter and notes of the thrush, chirping of crickets fell on deaf ears. The pigmy owl hooted softly from tree to tree and then remained oblivious. Swishing of the breeze in the whispering pines remained unheard. Fine and dainty violet flowers remained un-noticed. Lovely morning scenes rising sun and nights with fairy moon light were missed. Throughout our rambling the locals were quite sympathetic and at some places they came

came out of their houses to welcome and cheer us up and offer us eatables, especially berries and peaches. Peaches were really juicy and tasty.

All along one had thoughts at the back of one's mind of the unwelcome and humiliating reception, that the retreating soldiers were expecting. They were said to have fled from the battle field. The accentuating circumstances were never appreciated and understood.

Defeated and retreating soldiers are seldom acclaimed. The troops who retreated across Burma in Second World War were also treated likewise; they were subjected to sarcasm and disgrace. But the troops who were involved in Dunkirk retreat received a wiser treatment though they had suffered a disaster they met with a reception that is accorded to victorious soldiers. Though men in Burma and NEFA retreat had endured an equal ordeal they were discouraged and not hailed as Dunkirk losers. They received no sympathy or words of cheer.

The Battalion was unable to make any headway towards Bomdila since the town was already in Chinese hands and the road was infested with enemy road blocks. Then the Battalion parties dribbled through and moved in an utterly forlorn state to the Foothills as all routes were blocked. On the way many troops, enfeebled, atrophied, weak with hunger and fatigue perished due to enemy action. Many men sustained grievous injuries, were disabled and lost their limbs as a result of wounds and the severe effects of cold and frost bite. The Battalion had lost its Commanding Officer, one officer, two Junior Commissioned Officers and 175 men. That was a huge, extremely painful and unbearable loss.

It must also be pointed out that ambushes, traps and roadblocks were not a one-sided affair and laying an ambush is not only a Chinese speciality. Though Chinese troops extensively indulged in these tactics our troops laid a number of successful ambushes and took counter-ambush measures also where heavy and matching casualties were inflicted on the enemy and the tempo of their advance whittled down. We had also learnt some lessons in ambush and roadblocks from the Burma operations in the Second World War. Our party strayed into Bhutan. On the seventh day of our gruelling trek, we were picked up by an Air Force helicopter from Tashigong and then transferred to an aircraft at Darranga which flew us to Tezpur airfield. There we saw the huge US Hercules C-130 transport aircraft bringing in troops of 5th Infantry Division from the Punjab border to face the Chinese. We were delighted to welcome the friendly US aircraft and momentarily forgot our fatigue, hunger and privation. Our dwindling morale rocketed sky high.

After many days' of drudgery we wearily and stealthily lumbered off into the rear rendezvous camp of Charduar, rather shamefacedly. We were like ghosts since we abandoned Sela. We did not return as victorious warriors with a big bang, pomp and show to the playing of bands or the unfolding of red carpets. But there was an air of resurrection and 'qayamat'. We slowly recouped our mental and physical strength and regained our dignity in due course of time. I also sent parties to positions at the Foothills to enquire about the return of our missing Commanding Officer, other officers and men of the battalion. Our heart sank in direct proportion to the piling up of casualties. As the casualties turned out to be very heavy one can well imagine the state of our deep shock.

We are a queer nation. How strange it is that whilst USA helped us with transport aircraft and offered other help, our public raised a great hue and cry against use of our airports and harbours by US transport planes and ships during the recent Gulf war. This was being ungrateful to a friend who had willingly helped us while in need.

Let us now discuss battalion affairs. The Commanding Officer of a an Infantry Battalion is a very important appointment. Firstly, he should have great impact on the morale of his men. In addition to his professional ability he should be the model of integrity and virtue and must inspire confidence. He should be humane and be conversant with human factors and must be impartial. He has a unique position of having rapport both with the troops and the higher command. He is in a position to apply the healing touch (Sanjeevni) when the Battalion has severely suffered in an operation. The Commanding Officer, with his hard work, dynamism, vision, inspiring leadership and good management capability can rebuild the Battalion and again infuse it with high offensive spirit. A good Commanding Officer develops the magic wand which is vital for the transformation of the great organisation that an Infantry Battalion is.

I being the Second-in-Command, on the death of Colonel Mehta, the command of the great Battalion devolved on me. I tried my best to re-shape the battalion to its former condition and operational fitness during my brief tenure of command. Reinforcements were called for from the Regimental Centre. Demands for arms ammunition, equipment, clothing and other stores were placed at higher formation headquarters and ordnance depots. Training of the unit was taken in hand. I was concerned about the officer who was to

take over command of the best battalion of the army after me. I was also very particular about the new Subedar Major who was to take over charge in place of Honorary Captain Gurcharan Singh VrC, who was to proceed on retirement shortly. I believe that the post of a Subedar Major is a notable and prestigious appointment in an infantry battalion since he helps to cool down and stabilize it after a hectic operational tenure of a unit. At my request Lt General Harbakhsh Singh VrC, Colonel Commandant of The Sikh Regiment, approved the recall of Subedar Karam Singh from extra regimental employment and his appointment as Subedar Major. He later became Honorary Captain. Karam Singh was an unassuming, steady, firm and popular Junior Commissioned officer. He was hardworking and maintained a cheerful disposition even under severe stress and strain. He was impartial and fair as far all the personnel of Doaba, Majha, and Malwa were concerned. The Sikh recruitment for the Army, is generally, done from these distinct regions of Punjab. All the troops were happy with him. Lt Colonel KS Sidhu, who took over the battalion was a gay, lively, colourful and interesting person. He was wounded in the 1947 operations in Handwara area of Jammu and Kashmir while commanding a company of 7th Sikh Battalion. His evacuation posed no problem; no ambulance came into the picture. It was a clean job when he was tugged down the slippery snow with a rope in a sledge movement. He was a good hockey player. In 1941 our college (DAV College, Jalandhar) team of which I was a member had played against his college team from Moga and were thrilled by the speed of the game.

As the Battalion required rest, reequipping and re-inforcements it was moved to Ramgarh (Bihar). Since the condition of my foot affected by frostbite had

deteriorated, I was evacuated to the Military Hospital, Lucknow and my long cherished hope of taking over permanent command of the battalion was shattered. However, when I weighed this setback against the much greater loss of my Brigade Commander and Commanding Officer and other Officers and men and the defeat we had suffered, I had to equably accept my personal loss.

In desperation, due to the loss the Battalion had suffered, I wrote to my relatives, not to visit me in the hospital.

I could hardly walk as my foot was affected by frostbite. The doctors found that most blood vessels were dead and some blood veins had contracted resulting in reduced blood flow. It was said that fresh blood vessels might develop in due course of time and the condition of my foot could improve but it was not definite that the limb would return to its original state. Deterioration in the condition of the foot was also possible. Gangrene could also set in or tetanus could develop at any time. The doctors performed a painful angiography with a radio opaque substance to observe the blood flow in order to assess the damage to blood vessels and the effects that could permanently impair blood circulation. A costly German injection was administered. But for the German injection, I would have lost my foot and become a cripple. Then I would have got an artificial limb and been supported by crutches for life. I was to be termed 'disabled'.

In 1945 the very young and handsome son of Field Marshal Viscount Slim was a cadet with me at the Officers' Training School, Mhow, where there was a memorable boxing bout. FM Slim was so popular with the British troops that to cheer up young Slim

the British cadets were shouting 'Buck up general'. I too was regaled. Whilst the British cadets coming directly from United Kingdom and Indian cadets who had passed through King George's Royal Military Schools; or the Cadet College had learnt the game and for me who had come via university where the game was not in vogue the contest was only a formality since it was part of the cadets curriculum. Boxing is a right and important training which develops offensive spirit in a soldier.

I had the satisfaction that I commanded the Battalion, in its most traumatic period for over three months. I was the de facto Commanding Officer for this period. But I did not claim the rank and pay as I remained in deep mourning for our dead Commanding Officer, officers and men, and forgot my dream to become a great and renowned soldier. I humbly thought that my deserts were small. I have mentioned that in the operations against the Chinese in November 1962 I had made the Chinese flee, abandoning their roadblocks and proved my fitness to command a battalion in war. My brigade and the battalion commander who had seen me in action were unfortunately killed in the operation. I missed both promotion and possible decoration. When the Army Headquarters called for an Annual Confidential Report from my peace time Commanding Officer, I recalled the encounter of Field Marshal Slim with his Gorkha batman during war. When asked to appear on range for classification firing the batman remarked "Me, on a range to shoot at paper target's 'yes at range at targets 'But I have killed five Japs.'

With the nature of frostbite I had many persons had lost their limbs. In my case dark skin from the instep of the foot turned lifeless and peeled off. I lay

in the hospital for over three months and on discharge from the hospital I was downgraded to the lowest medical category and posted back to my unit which was now again on active service and subjected to battalion and brigade training. For many years I had trouble with walking and was looked upon as an invalid and was considered fit only for sedentary duties, whilst during the previous seventeen years of my service I had not been admitted to a hospital even once. The disabled in India are usually mocked at, even reviled. A disabled writer who can not move about and has to be taken about in a wheelchair or a pram, has related how the people make fun of him, taunt and abuse and also subject him to physical abuse. An Indian taxi driver would, probably, refuse to take a disabled person in his vehicle. Sometimes shopkeepers ask spastics to remove themselves from shops and stores. Whilst my fellow officers had an indifferent attitude no one can blame the civilians. Under these circumstances, what I needed most was the sympathy, appreciation, and healing touch of my superiors and nothing else. I regret that I was deprived of it. I am grateful to my equals and juniors who gave me their full sympathy and loyalty. Some officers ignored and misunderstood me. They thought that I had created a record, stood first and was a gold medalist in the Sela sprint.

At Jodhpur, during the absence of the Commanding Officer Lt Col KS Sidhu, who was on leave, the higher authorities wanted an appreciation and plan for the defence of Jodhpur Sector of Rajasthan. My plan was approved by the self-centered Brigadier Tuli, the Brigade Commander, and the Area Headquarters. Later, on reposting, with my disability. I limped back to Shillong, once again in the east, when the 1965 Indo-Pak war broke out. I was serving with 16th Sikh Battalion at Shillong when the battalion

moved forward to its operational position and my appreciation and plan for attack on forward Pakistani positions at 'Dauki' was approved by wayward Lt Col Dhillon, my commanding officer, and Brigadier Debu, cheerful Commander Communications Zone Sub Area. As the Pakistani positions were very close and there was restricted space for manoeuvre the plan catered for frontal surprise and shock assault.

A soldier is trained and his mental and physical capability judged on courses, exercises and for day to day work and is graded according to his performance, but the eventual litmus test is when he comes face to face with the enemy and is subjected to battle conditions under gun fire in actual fighting.

It will be appropriate to point out certain errors and omissions committed by some earlier writers on place names and dispositions of troops. Sela is incorrectly called as Tsela. Tsela is another pass in the north east which was not held at that time and was never in question. Kela and Keyla are different passes. There was only one brigade at Sela i.e. 62nd Infantry Brigade. There was no second brigade at the Pass. Similarly there were only four Infantry battalions at Sela and not five. Though the fifth battalion - 13th Dogra was on the order of battle of the brigade, this unit concentrated at Senge Dzong only on 10 November and retired with the brigade on 17 November 1962. For about a month the period of its operations at Sela the Brigade operated with only four under strength and ill-equipped battalions. These battalions were simultaneously engaged in preparation of defences, patrolling, stocking and Dropping Zone duties. The other truncated 65th Infantry Brigade was employed on duties along the lines of communication and protection of HQ 4th Infantry Division. This Brigade

had no impact, whatsoever, on the Sela operations of 62nd Infantry Brigade.

Lastly, I must stress that for the last thirty years the valour of soldiers awaits recognition and consecration. There should be no further delay in conferring the Battle Honours of Bumla and Nyukmadong on 4th Mech (previously 1st SIKHS) and wanderings of the souls of dead brave soldiers is halted and they attain salvation. Sacrifices of soldiers should never be allowed to be forgotten; they must always be rewarded with high honours. 1st Sikhs deserve the Battle Honours, of both Bumla and Nyukmadong. One should never be stingy with soldiers. Investment on them will never run in loss but multiply in unimaginable proportions. No government money is linked to a Battle Honour.

BREACH AT BOMDILA

Bomdila is the bed-rock and bastion for the Indian defence of Kameng Frontier Division. Its distance from Misamari, the railhead, is only 125 km, an ideal distance for turn around of supply vehicles. Bomdila's height is approximately 10,000 feet. Thus its weather is bearable by military standards. Together with Mandala ridge on the west Bomdila could present a formidable defensive position to the enemy either coming from the front on Poshingla axis or taking the road approach from Dirang Dzung side.

It is essential that to complete the story of fighting in Kameng Frontier Division the picture at Bomdila is also depicted. 48th Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier Gurbakhsh Singh was deployed in Bomdila area fifty five miles from Foothills and sixtyfive km east of Sela. The brigade had three infantry battalions. (5th Guards, 1st Sikh LI, and 1st Madras a troop of armour¹⁶, 22 Mountain Regiment and a field battery under its command. Another infantry battalion was under orders, to join the brigade. Though given

16. Armour had its own fairy tale. It is said that 7 Cav less a squadron was ordered to move to Misamari, One squadron was ordered to move to Bomdila on 1 November, second to Dirang Dzung and third to Sela. Due to bad road and steep gradient the squadron earmarked for Bomdila reached there on 5 November with a loss of two tanks and some men having been involved in road accidents. Dirang Dzung was reached on 13 November. Sqn Cdr Maj Jamwal found that Sela was beyond the reach and capacity of the armour. The strain on engines was so severe that tanks which had reached Bomdila and Dirang Dzung had become unserviceable and turned to junk. According to another story, not to talk in terms of squadrons and troops, only two tanks hardly reached Dirang Dzung and it is not reported whether these were fit for mobile role, or whether they could fire from only dug in positions. According to another information tanks did not reach Dirang Dzung and were ambushed half way.

Sketch-14

Bomdila Ridge



POSHINGLA

CHINESE THRUST →

TO DIRANG DZONG/SELA/TAWANG

BOMDILA PASS

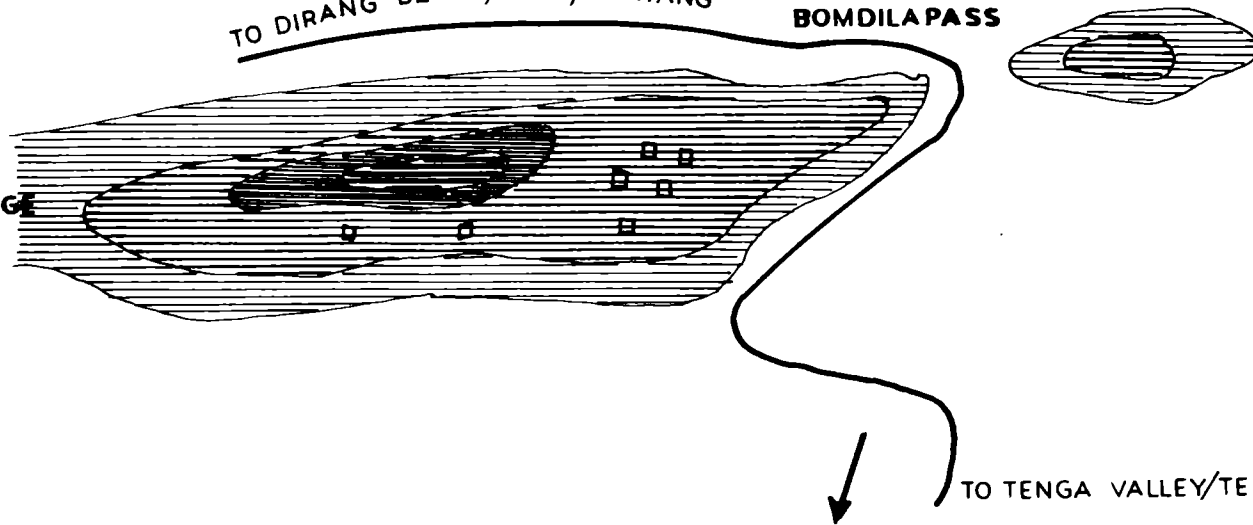
MANDALA RIDGE

TO TENGA VALLEY/TEZPUR

RUPA

EAGLE'S NEST

CHAKU



the last priority for the preparation of defences the brigade held a compact defence sector with reasonable artillery support and detachment of armour. It was appreciated that it was not possible for the Chinese to advance with a large size force from the north of Bomdila, as the route which passed over very high passes of Tulungla, Tsela and Poshingla, was considered very difficult to traverse. So it was presumed that the role of the 48th Infantry Brigade was to stem the tide of Chinese advance, if 62 Infantry Brigade at Sela and 65 Infantry Brigade at Dirang Dzong had been overrun. The brigade was also to secure the lines of communication. Surprisingly, the enemy brought a determined force on the difficult Poshingla approach, bypassing Sela for attack on Bomdila. When the bad news came from Poshingla that 5th Guards Platoon was ambushed there the Divisional Commander ordered another company to move to Thembang to establish a firm base for the Battalion. 5th Guards then moved to Thembang to retake Poshingla. Before the Battalion got into position to attack Poshingla it was forestalled and itself attacked by the Chinese. Enemy was engaged with all the weapons at the disposal of 5th Guards. After having exhausted its ammunition the unit had to evacuate Thembang on the orders of the Brigade Commander, in the face of a hopeless situation and returned to Bomdila.

By this time the enemy had cut the Bomdila-Dirang Dzong road. To restore road communications the Corps Commander ordered that a mobile column should link up with HQ 4th Infantry Division at Dirang Dzong and open the road. But when informed that there was infantry strength of only six companies at Bomdila the order was rescinded by the Corps Commander.

At 12.30 pm on 18 November about 250 Chinese attacked Bomdila from the direction of the old pass. The attack was repulsed. At 2.45 pm, the enemy, with increased strength of 600-700 attacked 1st Sikh LI positions but was beaten back. Now the Brigade Headquarters and the gun positions came under enemy small arms fire from the direction of Circuit House. The Chinese were engaged by the troop of tanks and field guns firing over open sights. Under the heavy enemy fire 1st Sikh LI fell back towards the dropping zone. One company, thereafter, occupied a feature east of Bomdila and the remaining battalion took up positions near the School.

The situation having become grave a general withdrawal of 48th Infantry Brigade to Rupa was ordered. 1st Madras continued to hold its positions at Bomdila as withdrawal orders had not reached the unit. By this time the enemy was able to overrun a part of the 1st Madras defences. When it came to be known that Brigade Headquarters had evacuated its position, the unit which was in a precarious position also pulled back towards Tenga Valley, presuming that the Brigade had gone there and suffered heavy losses due to enemy ambushes enroute.

While Brigadier Gurbakhsh Singh and those who withdrew from Bomdila were heading for Rupa, 4th J&K Rif, was on its way to Bomdila under Lt Col Gurdial Singh, to re-inforce the brigade, but followed a different route. Around 5 pm when the Battalion reached Bomdila they found that a major part of 48th Infantry Brigade had withdrawn but Chinese had not occupied their vacated positions. Then 3rd J & K Rifles decided to occupy a defensive position around the dropping zone.

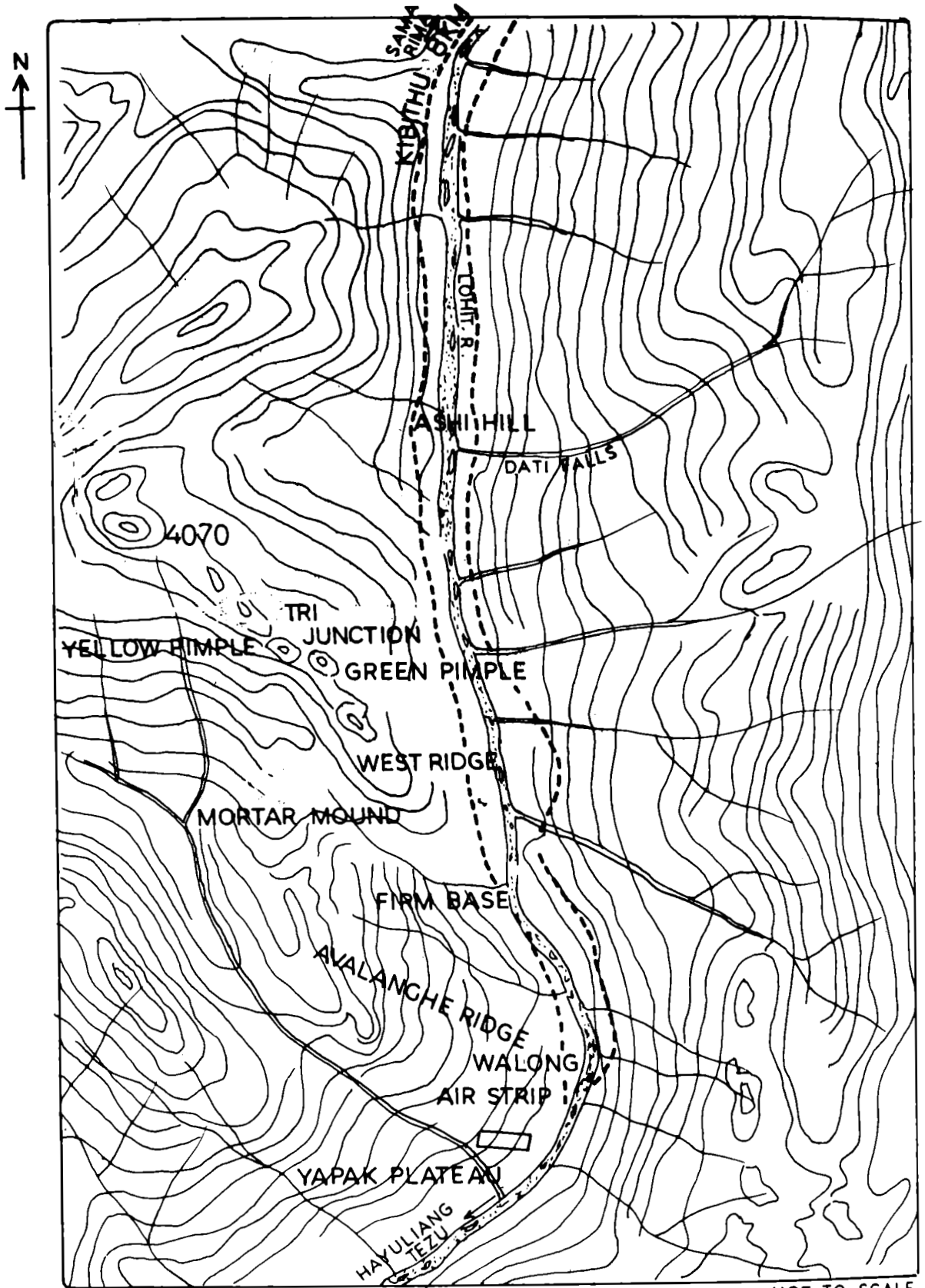
HQ 48th Infantry Brigade reached Rupa by 7 pm on 18 November. As the situation had deteriorated the Brigade Major was sent to Tenga to contact the Corps Headquarters for permission to withdraw to the Foothills which was granted. When the Brigade Major got back to Rupa he found that Brigadier Gurbakhsh Singh had returned to Bomdila as he was worried about 3rd J & K Rif¹⁷. On reaching Bomdila Gurbakhsh Singh met the Commanding Officers of the Infantry Battalions and 22nd Mountain Regiment at the school building. At that time manning the defences around the dropping zone were a field battery, a detachment of armour and a few men of 1st Sikh LI, besides 3rd J & K Rifles. After taking stock of the situation the Brigade Commander ordered all troops in Bomdila to withdraw before first light. At 1.50 am the Brigade Major also caught up with him at Bomdila with orders from Corps Headquarters. At 6.30 am on 19 November fresh orders arrived at Tenga from the Corps Headquarters that Rupa was to be held. The Brigade Commander returned to Rupa when the troops were just arriving there. By 8.00 am the battalions had been allotted their respective defence areas.

When the Brigade was in the process of getting into position it was heavily fired upon by the Chinese from all four directions. The Brigade now withdrew to Tenga and from there towards the south. The Chinese followed upto Chaku and there they halted their offensive with declaration of Cease Fire.

17. 67th Infantry Brigade got embroiled in the NEFA fighting when 4th Infantry Division was already crumbling. The formation consisted of three infantry battalions - 3rd J & K Rif, 6/8th Gorkha Rif, and 5/5 Gorkha Rif and had reached Misamari from Nagaland on 4 November and Brig MS Chatterjee MC had taken over its command towards the end of October. On 16 November 5/5th Gorkha Rif was flown to reinforce 2nd Infantry Division and the rest of the brigade came under the command of HQ 4th Infantry Division.

Sketch-15

Walong Sector 1962 War



NOT TO SCALE

BATTLE OF WALONG

The story of 1962 fighting in NEFA will remain incomplete if the Walong action is not narrated as Walong had appeared in the head lines as much as Ladakh, Thagla and Sela in 1962 Sino-Indian War.

Walong is located in Lohit Frontier division near the tri-junction of Tibet, Burma and India and was as remote as Ladakh and any other part of NEFA. It is a small hamlet situated on the banks of Lohit River near the Eastern end of the McMahon line near the Burma border. The ancient trade route from Tibet to Assam passed through the place. There had been an Assam Rifles/ Army post at the habitation since commencement of British rule in India. Traders from Tibet took the route Chamdo-Rima through Walong to the annual market fair of Sadiya. Tezu, 100 miles and two weeks march away, situated in the Brahmaputra Valley, was the roadhead and the forward airfield for Walong and other nearby airfields, were that of Jorhat and Chhabua. Talap was the railhead 48 Km from Teju. There was an airstrip at Walong but it was so small that only IAF Canadian Otter and Caribou aircraft, capable of carrying only six armed soldiers, could use it. Altitude of Walong hills vary from 5000 to 6000 feet and surrounding features were 10,000 to 16,000 feet high.

Chinese, showed interest in the Walong area, as early as 1910, when a Chinese general forced the local population to construct a road to India through the Lohit Valley. The road was only extended slightly beyond Yapak, when this general, gave up the attempt.

and withdrew back to Rima in Tibetan territory just south of Walong.

The first Chinese intrusion took place in October 57, when a small party of Chinese troops, penetrated along the Lohit river valley upto Walong. On being challenged, they returned to Tibet. In the same year Chinese survey parties transgressed the border in this region a number of times. Again on 28 September 1958 another armed party intruded into Dichu Valley upto Jachap. When the Indian Government protested to the Chinese Government, the official response in April 1960 was :

“Monyul, the area of Lower Tsyul in Walong not only was inhabited by Tibetans, but was always under the jurisdiction of Tibet. British troops intruded into Dichu Valley, unlawfully invaded and occupied Walong in 1944, and it was only after the local Tibetan Government, sent a representative to Deong'pon of Sangacho Dzong to make representations, that the troops withdrew.”

This statement was not true, as Assam Rifles had been stationed at Walong for a long time. In 1952 a company size patrol of 6th Kumaon had also visited not only Walong, but elements had even been to Sama (Tibetan territory). Chinese effectiveness at that time, was so low, that a communist Chinese prisoner was also captured by this patrol, and brought back to India.

Whatever may have been their reasons for intrusions, one thing was very clear, that the Chinese through these intrusion, tried to familiarise themselves with the terrain of Dichu and Lohit Valley. The knowledge, so gained, could subsequently be used in

military operations, which were possibly being planned at that stage.

Towards the end of March 1962, 6th Kumaon had moved to Walong from Ukhrul under Lt Col CN Madiah to relieve 2nd Rajputs and took over operational responsibility of Walong sector in April 1962 under 5th Infantry Brigade whose Headquarters was located at Lilasari. The maintenance of Walong and Kibithoo sector was by air only. Soon after its arrival, at Walong 'C' company under Captain Pali, took operational duties at the post at Kibithoo, a tiny Mishmi village, about two miles south of McMahon Line. The unit carried out intensive reconnaissance and patrolling of the area with the aim of familiarising themselves with the terrain. From about mid September 1962, our observation posts on the McMahon Line started reporting unusual activities taking place, across the border, both by day and night. The Chinese observation posts had come closer, and were supplemented by locals, in civilian clothes. Light signalling from one post to another would go on, late into the night. A large number of lights were also observed moving frequently between border villages, which Chinese troops were believed to be occupying and a number of local Mishmies, both men and women were apprehended in suspicious circumstances; which gave rise to obvious doubts of the intentions of the Chinese. Consequently patrolling was intensified in the vicinity of the McMahon Line.

The Chinese attack on India had begun in Tawang Sector, in Kameng Frontier Division of Arunachal (Then NEFA) on 20 October 1962. It was a pincer move which involved attacking, both sectors of NEFA about the same time. During October 1962 digging of bunkers by the Chinese south of Tattu Nullah, had commenced.

The presence of the Chinese, at Hundred Hill (Point 10070) was discovered on 19 October by a patrol sent by the 6th Kumaon post at Kibithoo. During the night of 20/21 October our observation posts on McMahon Ridge observed heavy concentrations of Chinese near the West Bank Check Post, and in front of McMahon ridge. At night numerous lights were seen moving in the Tattu Nullah area, and around village Sama. Chinese activities were observed-digging and clearing the paths for mules, through the jungle towards Mc Mahon Ridge.

By 5pm 21 October 1962 a large number of enemy, had concentrated near the West Bank Check Post, and also in front of McMahon Ridge. Lt Col CN Midiah, Commanding Officer had reached Kibithoo from Walong as the attack was imminent that night.

Initially 5th Infantry Brigade was responsible for the defence of Walong Sector. Later 11th Infantry Brigade took over the operational responsibility from the 5th Infantry Brigade and HQ 2nd Infantry Division relieved HQ 4th Infantry Division under the overall Command of HQ 4th Corps. 6th Kumaon had a long acquaintance with Walong Sector. When build up of troops occurred in 1962 it was joined by 4th Sikhs, 1/3rd Gorkha Rif, a Company of 1/8th Gorkha Rifles and at the fag end 4th Dogras also came in. Apart from ancillary units there was some artillery, a troops of 4.2 inch mortars and a platoon of medium machine guns in direct support. The operational responsibility of Walong Sector was taken over by 6th Kumaons, from 2nd Rajputs in April 1962. In July 1962, it was decided by HQ 5 Infantry Brigade to establish a platoon post of 2nd Assam Rifles at McMahon Line (NH 5202), an Observation Post Sama NH 5103 and Rima. 'A' company was, therefore, moved to Richu NH 5200 area

which is two miles south of McMahon Ridge. For political reasons no troops except Assam Rifles were be deployed on the McMahon Line.

Deployment of 6th Kumaons on 18 October 1962 was as under :-

- (a) 'A' Company — Richu NH 5200.
- (b) 'B' Company — East ridge NH 5477, moved to Thapa DZ 5194 on 22 Oct 62.
- (c) 'C' Company — Kibithoo NH 5196.
- (d) 'D' Company — Ladders Area NH 5483, moved to Thapa DZ on 20 October, 1962.
- (e) Battalion Tac HQ — Kibithoo.
- (f) Battalion HQ with Adm elements — Walong NN 5377.

On 18 October 1962, a reconnaissance patrol, under Subedar Surendra Chand, was sent to Hundred Hill (10070 feet) NH 4999. This intelligent JCO was swift in discerning, the presence of enemy across the mountain. He noticed 2 Chinese officers, 50 other ranks and a lama guide, who had occupied Hundred Hill.

On 19 October, one platoon of 2nd Assam Rifles, which was under operational control of 6th Kumaons, was sent to Ninety Hill (9000 feet) NN 4990, to take up a defensive position. The platoon post, under Jem Bhairab Singh of 'A' Company was established by 6pm on 19 October. At that time, the other two platoons of

'A' Company were occupying positions at Sangram NN 5199 and Richu. At 1900 hours on 21 October our sentry observed light signals between Chinese post Sama and the spur running North of McMahon Ridge. On receiving this information Major Gamathinayagam 'A' Company commander, moved with a platoon less a section to the McMahon Ridge which was now being held by 'A' company less a platoon. One platoon of 'A' Company was sent up along Dichu Nullah to prevent any enemy advance, from the direction of Taluk Pass.

The Chinese offensive commenced at 0015 am on 22 October 1962, when the calm of the Himalayas was suddenly disturbed, by Chinese machine guns and mortar fire. The enemy attacked, with approximately 300 men the 2 platoon position of 'A' Company, and with approximately another 100 men the post Madiah Top (NH 5302). Our accurate 3 inch mortar fire the enemy made panic, and caused maximum casualties. The gallant and resolute fight, put up by own posts, halted the enemy attack. But before long, replenished in strength, Chinese mounted yet another fierce attack, on these two platoon posts. Simultaneously they launched an assault on Lohit II (NH 5303) and Laila (NH 5101) posts with 200 men. For four hours our 'jawans' fought, with determined courage a most fierce action. Finally, the enemy was able to rip through our defences, by overwhelming superiority in numbers and fire power. In this action, we inflicted about 60 casualties on the enemy and ourselves suffered only four killed, four wounded, and two missing, including Naik Bahadur Singh. After his gun numbers 1 and 2 were killed, he took over the light machine gun himself, and kept on firing till the last moment when he was hit in the chest, by a burst from an enemy automatic. This brave soldier died on the spot. For this outstanding

act of gallantry Naik Bahadur Singh was decorated with the gallantry award of Vir Chakra.

After fighting a gallant action at McMahon Ridge, on 22 October, the Battalion received orders to withdraw from Kibithoo to Walong. 'D' Company under Lieut Bikram Singh was ordered to establish a screen position on Ashi Hill (NN 5484). The company was supported by a section of medium machine guns, and mortars. A trick was played by Bikram on the enemy. The wooden planks over Namti Nullah were removed from own side, while the planks towards the enemy side were cleverly left intact. The screen was established on the evening of 22 October and the Chinese made contact with us at 3 am 23 October. Due to the restricted field of fire and visibility, the enemy was allowed to come close. The leading Chinese soldier after walking halfway over the intact planks, stepped on a weakened plank, and fell down into Namti Nullah. The incident created confusion and alarm in enemy ranks. The Chinese who were taken aback, and dazed, flashed their torch lights, to ascertain, the fate of their fallen comrade. At that very moment, verey lights fired by Lieut Bikram Singh revealed, the enemy cramped along, the narrow path. Our 3 inch and 4.2 inches mortars and machine gun fire played hell, into the enemy troops. Under this well timed voluminous fire, the Chinese column groaned in despair. Only a miracle could have prevented their massacre. The enemy was beaten back, with heavy losses. About 200 Chinese were killed or wounded which was later ascertained by prisoners of war as well. We had merely 3 other ranks killed and 6 wounded. At 4 am the screen was ordered to withdraw, having creditably performed the given task. Chinese were convinced that they were pitted, against a determined lot : The Kumaonis.

Inspite of lack of experience young and valliant Bikram Singh, conducted this admirable action, displaying leadership and courage of highest order. He and his men, fought this action, in keeping with the best traditions of The Kumaon Regiment. The valour and gallantry shown by our men was outstanding.

Our patrols, had quite a few clashes, with the enemy patrols. Thereafter, the next battle was for the Green Pimple Spur (NH 4983), which overlooked the brigade defences. Moreover, enemy advance of another two miles along that spur meant, domination of the Walong Air Strip and Dropping Zone. 'A' company under Captain Mathur was ordered to dislodge the enemy from the Green Pimple. Initially for this operation the company was to get fire support from heavy mortars, but for unavoidable reasons, this fire support did not materialise. At 8.50 am, on 6 November the entire Walong Valley echoed with battle cry "Kali Mata Ki Jai" and the Kumaonis launched the attack on the Chinese. The enemy opened fire, with all his weapons. The Kumaon company continued its advance, steadily, with determination and forced the enemy, to vacate his forward posts. Thereafter, the Kumaonis grappled with the enemy in a hand to hand tussle, as ammunition was running out. However soon the full impact of the enemy forced the company commander to pull back, also appreciating that even if he secured the green Pimple, he would not be able to hold on to it, if counter attacked. Later 'A' Company took defensive positions at a nearby feature 11000 feet high in order to forestall any further advance of the enemy, along the West Ridge but the enemy was relentless. After five successive enemy attacks, this company was relieved by 'D' Company led by Lieut Bikram Singh.

Now it was apparent that the enemy build up for final attack on Walong was nearing completion. It was appreciated, that the weight of the enemy attack would fall on the western flank of the Brigade Sector. It was, therefore, planned to launch a spoiling attack on the enemy with the aim of disrupting his preparations. As the area Tri Junction (NN 4883) dominated the Yellow Pimple, an attack on this feature, was most likely to succeed, if launched from Tri Junction. Consequently, 6th Kumaons was ordered to undertake the attack. On 12 November, Tri Junction was secured by an ad-hoc company under Capt BN Singh. On 13 November the Battalion less four platoons, concentrated at Tri Junction, after a weary march over rugged terrain. Four platoons, under Lieut Bikram Singh were holding the Chinese on the West Ridge. At 8 am on 14 November the Commanding Officer gave his verbal orders for attack on the Yellow Pimple and forming up place was marked and secured. At 9.30 am Yellow Pimple was attacked with two companies. An ad hoc company under Captain BN Singh and 'B' Company under Major Sharma took lead and 'Kali Mata ki Jai', the war cry of valiant Kumaonis, echoed amidst the mute mountains. Once unleashed, the Kamaonis charged up the slopes of the Yellow Pimple like hungry lions. Unfortunately, our artillery fire was ineffective and the attack was supported by only the unit 3 inch mortar fire, which was no substitute for artillery fire. Enemy, reacted very violently to our attack and brought down heavy fire on the advancing troops. Nothing could stem the advance of undaunted and brave Kumaonis. The left flank of the assault line under the command of Capt BN Singh, stormed, to nearly 20 yards from the top. Further progress was difficult as the enemy was well dug in, and was covering every inch of ground in front with accurate and deadly fire. Subedar Govind Singh, one of the platoon commanders, decided not to

be held back within a few yards of glory and fame, and dashed forward with a light machine gun to destroy the enemy bunker, which was holding up our advance. He was fired upon from another bunker and was wounded. Exasperated, he charged this bunker like a furious lion, and silenced it. He then fell having been badly wounded, and in the last few seconds before he died, fired with unerring accuracy, at the first bunker and silenced that too. Subedar Govind Singh died, leaving behind a most worthy example of gallantry and valour for posterity to remember and emulate. Jamadar Trilok Singh another platoon commander, also dashed and charged into the enemy ranks. He too, was swept away by enemy bursts of light machine gun fire within a few feet of the top and laid down his life in a most heroic fashion.

Inspired, by these lofty examples of courage, and valour, the right flank also made a determined sprint, till they were held up only 50 yards from the crest of the ridge. The fighting had now been going on for over six long hours. The enemy, had definitely halted our offensive. By this time, we had 20 men killed or wounded. Captain BN Singh too was wounded, and 2/Lt Khatri was ordered to take over the command of his ad hoc company.

It was then decided by Col Madiah, Commanding Officer, to push into the fray, two more platoons, the only reserve available, with him. The Brigade Commander Brigadier Rawlley, who had been watching the battle, ordered the Battalion to stick to the ground it had captured, and gradually creep up, under the cover of darkness. 4th Dogras, who had just been inducted into Walong, were instructed to reinforce the position. The Chinese during this period stabilised and strengthened their positions and at 8.30 pm counter

attacked with a battalion strength. Our men held the ground they had captured; however, it did not take them long to realise that two attacking companies had been surrounded by the Chinese. The brave KUMAONIS stayed put, till hand to hand fighting ensued. On account of the strength of numbers and devastating enemy fire power, and due to the heavy casualties suffered, the two companies had to inch forward to Tri Junction, fighting all the way, under the skill and tenacity of 2Lts Khatri and Jindal.

Out of total of 200 men, only 90 reached the Tri Junction where eventually the Battalion Headquarters was located. The unit at that time, had only one company strength there. This included, the medical platoon, and the Battalion Headquarters personnel. Though severely depleted in strength, and fully weakened in fire power, 6th Kumaons again braced up to give yet another fight to the enemy.

At 4.30 am on 15 November, the expected attack came on the Tri Junction. Bitter fighting ensued, for the next two hours; Tri Junction continuously blazed, with flying bullets, and exploding mortar bombs, Capt Bhatia cleverly dealt with the situation and put up a determined resistance. When the gun number near him was fatally wounded, he himself manned the light machine gun and emptied magazine after magazine on the advancing enemy. The attack was repulsed, and enemy suffered heavy casualties. By 6 am, we had two other ranks killed and 3 wounded, including two officers-Capt Bhatia and 2 Lt Khatri.

By then, the enemy had established an observation post on a 'machan' about 200 yards away from Tri Junction. The next series of Chinese attacks on the Tri Junction commenced at 6 pm on 15

November. Thereafter, Chinese attacked repeatedly and evenly at intervals of four hours, in their typical human wave tactics but every time they were thrown back. Our reinforcements were on their way, but the Chinese had cut off their route between Mortar Mound and Tri Junction. Only 33 men of 4th Dogra managed to get through. The arrival of these troops, was a great relief. The ammunition was also replenished and the reinforcement provided confidence and hope, that the held up 4 Dogras, would soon join; however, no reinforcements appeared. Our non-combatants did commendable work by portering ammunition and supplies. Four successive Chinese attacks, were repulsed, on the night of 15/16 November as the Kumaonis fought with added severity in the face of the enemy. It was bitterly cold at the Tri Junction (13700 feet). The troops had no rest and at the same time ammunition was running out and casualties steadily mounted.

At 7.30 am on 16 November 1962, another massive Chinese attack was launched on Tri Junction, supported by 120 mm mortars. At that time there was no communication with the brigade headquarters since telephone lines had been cut and wireless sets damaged, due to heavy shelling. Yet, in desperation, the Kumaonis fought grimly, and repulsed determined Chinese attacks. But the fate of Walong by then had been sealed. The enemy had brought up two more brigades and his troops were pouring through gaps in our defences. They had also succeeded, in cutting off, the axis of maintenance, to Tri Junction.

While the fighting was going on at Tri Junction, four platoons under Lieut Bikram Singh were holding the West Ridge. At 8.30 am on 16 November the Chinese mounted a frontal attack on the West Ridge, with

approximately 3900 men. The attack was repulsed. Lieut Bikram Singh once again fought gallantly. Then the Chinese hordes fanned out, on three sides and were supported by medium machine gun fire and heavy artillery. Lieut Bikram Singh the great warrior of 6th Kumaon was to deny West Ridge, to the enemy till 11 am. He successfully performed his task. However, before 11 am the enemy had encircled the West Ridge from all sides, and there was no hope of saving it; in this situation the company was given orders to withdraw. Alas, Lieut Bikram Singh, who battled bravely, throughout the campaign was killed while extricating his men. The fighting, at West Ridge was intense. A few who survived stated that every Kumaoni killed, accounted for at least 5 Chinese before going down.

At 12 am on 16 November 1962 when all hopes of saving Walong were dashed to the ground, orders for general withdrawal were issued to units by HQ 11 Infantry Brigade. The troops at Tri Junction and Mortar Mound had a tough time withdrawing, due to the heavy pressure from the enemy.

In the final muster, the enormous casualties suffered by 6th Kumaons were :-

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>POW</u>	<u>Total</u>
(a) Offrs	2	5	4	11
(b) JCOs	6	1	5	12
(c) Other Ranks	111	107	163	381
Total :	<u>119</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>172</u>	<u>404</u>

Captain RK Mathur was the only officer who continued to be present with the unit and he was

faced with the task of reorganizing and reshaping the battalion which had suffered a great catastrophe.

The Brigade commander, had intended to make a last stand at Yepak, but the Chinese forestalled him, and had put a blockade at Yepak, against the withdrawing column. The battalion managed to evade the block and trickled down to Tezu, a distance of 100 miles from Walong, in bits and pieces. Stragglers continued to join till 4 December. The path was terrible. The earth-quake and floods of 1951 had played havoc with the Walong-Hayuliang valley and there was not even a mule track.

Some troops did not receive withdrawal orders and they slugged it out to the last man and last round. Fighting in the Walong Defence sector lasted from 18 October 1962 to 16 November 1992, and performance of 6th Kumaons was remarkable and consistent with the highest traditions of the Indian Army. Troops were stoic and firm in defence, fearless and aggressive in attack. The battle of Walong will be remembered for the heroic deeds of the men and officers who laid down their lives in the battle and won undying fame against overwhelming enemy numbers and fire power, for days and nights, without any break or rest. Officers, Junior Commissioned Officers and men did not fall back until it was militarily unsound to hold on.

This supreme display of heroism, will be a inspiring example, to every one. Brigadier NC Rawley MC, the Brigade Commander aptly summed up the performance of the 6th Kumaons thus:

“6th Kumaon at Tri Junction fought and fought and fought till there was nothing left. After this there was an eerie silence”.

To earn a tribute of this nature from such a veteran and distinguished soldier is itself an honour.

The unit received the following gallantry awards, in the battle of Walong:-

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (a) | Major PN Bhatia | — | Vir Chakra |
| (b) | Captain RK Mathur | — | -do- |
| (c) | Captain BC Chopra | — | -do- |
| (d) | 2Lt AS Khatri | — | -do- |
| (e) | Naik Bhadur Singh | — | Vir Chakra
(Posthumous) |
| (f) | Jamadar Man Singh | — | Mention-in
Despatches |

Let not the memories, of many unsung heroes, who lost their today, for our tomorrow, be obliterated. Their heroic deeds will always be remembered by posterity as a source of unlimited inspiration and remain shining examples of the supreme sacrifice in the defence of their country. The saga of Walong will go down, in the annals of military history, as a great epic.

Another unit which distinguished itself in fighting at Walong was the famous 4th Sikhs Commanded by Lt Colonel Behl. 4th Sikhs has a very rich fighting heritage like 1st Sikhs. This unit draws its inspiration from the Saragarhi epic, its top battle honour, where twenty of its gallant men lost their lives against the onslaught of the Pathan Lashkars in 1897 in the North West Frontier Province of India (now in Pakistan) See Appendix 'J'. The unit has a creditable record in the First and Second World Wars and in the post independence wars.

The Battalion¹⁸ had just celebrated Saragarhi day at Ramgarh on 12 September, 1962 when it was moved to NEFA. It moved to Jorhat by rail and then in small parties to Walong by Otter aircraft. It occupied positions on both east and west banks of Lohit river at heights 5,000 and 8,000 feet in conjunction with Kumaonis and Gorkhas. On 23 October when the elements of 6th Kumaon withdrew from Kibithoo the dispositions of 4th Sikhs by the first light were-

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------|---|----------------|--------------|
| (a) | 'D' Coy | — | Lachman Ridge | |
| (b) | 'B' Coy | — | Maha Plateau, | West bank of |
| | | | Mithun Track | Lohit River. |
| | | | Ladders | |
| (c) | 'C' Coy | — | Dong Plateau | East Bank of |
| (d) | 'A' Coy | — | Dong Hill | Lohit River. |
| (e) | 3 inch mors | — | Slopes of Dong | |
| | | | Hill | |

In the absence of porters, ammunition, defence stores, food and all other items had to be carried by men to the top of high hills on steep gradients.

Whilst the Battalion was beset with logistic problems the Chinese launched their offensive across the McMahon Line at Kibithoo. As the enemy, after Kumaonis withdrew from Kibithoo, made contact with the Sikhs they were subjected to severe LMG, MMG and 3 inch mortar fire and had to withdraw. In this

18. I was commissioned into this great battalion 4th Sikhs in 1945 and served as Signal Officer, Adjutant and Company Commander at Rawalpindi, Sargodha (now in Pakistan) and at Uri in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 in the company of the great stalwarts like General Harbakhsh Singh Vrc, Brig Hartley MC, Brig Kushalpal and Col Harwant Singh MC. I must also mention the name of Colonel Ashe, the last British Commanding Officer of the Battalion. He was a most dedicated officer.

operation Lance/Naik Gurdial Singh can be singled out for his undaunted action and Subedar Pritam Singh for bringing down devastating defensive mortar fire on the enemy.

Meanwhile the enemy set off a bush fire to retrieve their dead and sneaked forward. 5 Platoon at Mithun track was in peril and Subedar Jaswant Singh had warned his platoon personnel of the impending twin dangers. To the utter disregard of his personal safety Sepoy Piara Singh fought the ravaging fire and also engaged the enemy. Though very seriously wounded and bleeding profusely he refused to be evacuated. He breathed his last while fighting to the last and the unit lost a gallant soldier in him.

Intense enemy activity continued on 25th night. The Chinese tried to break through the Battalion defences but the Sikhs defied all their attempts. It was here that young Kewal Singh with only one and half years service created history. In their attack, some of the Chinese managed to get dangerously close to the unit defences. Kewal Singh, on his own initiative, rushed out of his section post and charged the enemy with his bayonet, killing a few in hand to hand fighting. In the encounter he was seriously wounded. Despite his previous injuries, he bayoneted, yet another of the enemy before he breathed his last. For this act of valour and self sacrifice, he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra.

There was another interesting and daring incident which occurred on 26 October; 'B' Company patrol, sent out to obtain enemy identifications, was ambushed by a numerically superior enemy force and all efforts to break the enemy encirclement of the patrol failed. It was then decided to threaten the vulnerable flank of the enemy so that our patrol could be extricated. Lance

Naik Kartar Singh volunteered to undertake the task. He took out a small party and sneaked close to the enemy position and attacked. The enemy was completely surprised by the unexpected sally and scattered in panic. In the process the encircled patrol made good its escape.

The enemy had tested the strength of defensive posture of the 4th Sikhs and could not affect a break through along the main track which the Sikhs blocked and fought stubbornly and courageously and remained stuck to their defences. At this stage, a revised defence plan of Walong was initiated. According to this the whole of 4th Sikhs was to hold the west bank of Lohit river while 6th Kumaons was to defend the east bank, but this scheme did not materialize and all companies of 4th Sikhs remained committed on the forward defended localities on both sides of the Lohit river and 'A' & 'C' companies remained on the east bank position and 'B' and 'D' companies held forward defended localities on the west bank. Thus the battalion was entrusted with an abnormally wide frontage of 6,000 yards. One company of 2/8th Gorkha Rif was put under the command of 4th Sikhs as a major threat was anticipated along the west bank. This company was deployed at Ladders. All positions in depth were held by 6th Kumaons. More troops were asked for as intensity of enemy activity increased on our exposed western flank. 2 platoons of 2nd Assam Rifles also joined the west bank defences.

On 27 October Brigadier JC Hartley MC, a fine officer ex 4th Sikhs Battalion, took over the command of Walong Sector and shortly, afterwards Lt General Harbakhsh Singh VrC, the new Corps Commander, also visited Walong.

General Harbakhsh Singh¹⁹ was extremely happy with the Battalion's gallant performance and spoke to the Company commanders at the forward defended localities which served to boost their morale. The Battalion presented two Chinese automatic rifles to the General which had been captured by the unit the previous evening. Unfortunately, Brigadier Hartley left the sector on 31 October to take over another operational assignment and Brigadier Rawley MC replaced him. It is surprising that the two brigade Commanders were changed in a matter of a week.

The enemy's activity had by now shifted to the flank as he was unsuccessful in his frontal effort. It was obvious that enemy build up was taking place on the eastern flank. At this stage our logistic problems had also become rather acute. On 3 November 3/3rd Gorkha Rif was inducted and relieved 'A' & 'C' companies of 4th Sikhs which moved to the west bank in order to re-inforce that side. 2/8th Gorkha Rif company reverted to their parent unit under the command of 5th Infantry Brigade.

On 4 November 'C' Company took over from 'D' Company and a patrol from 'D' Company, was sent out to Green Pimple to confirm the dispositions, and

19. It is of interest to mention that General Harbakhsh Singh had replaced Brigadier Hartley as Second-in-Command of 4th Sikhs at Cambelpore (now in Pakistan) in 1946. At present Harbakhsh was also the Colonel Commandant of The Sikh Regiment. Both these stalwarts were battallion hockey players and both played at back position. Both were equally tall-over six feet and were a sight on the pitch. Brigadier Hartley had won his decoration of Military Cross while commanding 'C' Company in Italy in Second World War and the General Harbakhsh won his equivalent decoration of Vir Chakra in Jammu and Kashmir in 1948. The presence of the two old and able officers of the Battallion was a great source of strength and inspration to all ranks.

strength of enemy, reported briefly by an earlier patrol. Instead an interesting encounter ensued. The patrol had hardly gone forward when it was fired upon by the enemy. As the Chinese were reported to be encircling the patrol it was ordered to move back; in doing so the patrol was engaged by the enemy. In the encounter one of the company's men was killed and seven were wounded. It was creditable that the company brought back its casualties. A tribute must also be paid to Naik Natha Singh, who, though severely wounded, brought back himself and his section by sheer grit and determination.

As earlier indicated the possession of Yellow and Green Pimples was vital to the defence of Walong and 11th Infantry Brigade planned to recapture them. During this operation the role given to 4th Sikhs was to contain the enemy at Green Pimple.

On 13 November 'A' Company relieved 'B' Company at the Patrol Base and it was subjected to constant enemy automatic fire for the whole day. Eventually the company was attacked but attack was repulsed. Both sides suffered heavy losses.

At 5.30 am on 16 November the Mithun Track platoon of 'B' Company was completely surprised when the enemy opened up with devastating effect with a direct firing anti-tank weapon from Ashi Hill on 4th Sikhs bunkers which collapsed. This isolated platoon position was again attacked at 7.30 am and Subedar Nasib Singh IDSM was killed along with some of his men. The platoon fought heroically till the last and Naik Naranjan Singh was the last to leave the position and according to him the locality was littered with Chinese dead.

Remnants of 'A' Company on arrival at the Battalion Headquarters with their walking wounded casualties at about 9.45 am give information about Major Samvatsar who lay wounded. Captain Kumar, the Quarter Master volunteered to evacuate Samvatsar with his platoon personnel. Kumar helped by Lance Naik Ajit Singh had succeeded in getting to Samvatsar who was again hit by a splinter in the back. Thereafter he refused to be carried any further as he knew he could never make it. Kumar fell a prisoner to the Chinese and Ajit himself was wounded and returned wryly in dismay.

The Brigade detailed 6th Kumaons to capture Yellow and Green Pimples. 4th Sikhs were to contain the enemy by feining attack and patrolling. Subedar Gurnam Singh led the 4th Sikh patrol. His task was to disrupt the axis of maintenance of the enemy leading to the Green Hill. After sometime, he located an enemy telephone line, cut it, and laid an ambush for the Chinese. A small Chinese line repair party accompanied by a large protection party came to repair the line. The enemy, being much superior in number, located Gurnam Singh's patrol, encircled it and subjected it to firing. Two of our men were killed and eight wounded. In spite of the fact that a few men were left with him and he had lost his vitality due to excessive bleeding the junior commissioned officer realised that the only way to save the remnants of his patrol was to charge through the enemy ring. He himself picked up the light machine gun from the dead number and firing from the hip led a wild charge. In the process he was seriously wounded. However, his charge created utter confusion amongst the enemy who consequently gave way. This brave and inspiring action of Subedar Gurnam Singh saved the remaining patrol from total annihilation by the Chinese.

As 4th Sikhs had been under constant pressure since 24 October it was decided by the Brigade Headquarters to give it a less arduous task and shift it to the east bank of the river where enemy activity was practically non-existent. Consequently 'D' Company, having been relieved by a Company of 3/3 Gorkha Rifles, moved to High Plateau.

By the evening of 15 November, there were strong indications that the enemy had completed their build up and a major enemy attack was imminent. It had been reported that the enemy was crossing to the east bank of Lohit river in rubber boats. Till now, crossing of the turbulent river was considered an impossibility.

On 15 November 'A' company in front came under constant sniping and a patrol which had been sent under Subedar Harnam to cut off the enemy supply line was forced to withdraw in the face of stiff opposition. This tense situation persisted. On the evening of 15 November there was a short and uneasy lull at the front. But after dark it was reported from High Plateau that some torch lights were seen moving along the track Kibithoo-Ashi Hill. There were about eight to ten lights seen switching on and off at irregular intervals. Based on previous experience it was assessed that a large enemy column was moving towards Ashi Hill. Soon 'A' Company came under severe enemy attack. Wave after wave of Chinese attacked the position but our troops held out. Havildar Labh Singh was wounded three times during the night, and every time, after getting first aid he rejoined battle and went forward and inspired his men to keep fighting.

At noon on 15 November, 'D' company was attacked by the enemy. The first enemy assault failed. The second enemy assault also fizzled out with heavy

casualties. Next day, early in the morning a final assault was launched by the enemy. Our men fought tenaciously but to no avail. The enemy had captured the position. Those few who came back to tell the tale, spoke of the young and gallant company commander, Lieutenant Yog Palta, moving from bunker to bunker and encouraging his men to hold out. He was firing his sten gun hurling hand grenades at the same time. Unfortunately he met his end in front of his bunker when hit by a light machine gun burst, which passed through his neck. For his inspiring act of valour he received the award of Vir Chakra posthumously. The company position fell with the death of the brave Company Commander.

'A' Company which was attacked by the enemy now fought an identical battle, and perhaps did even better than 'D' Company. Its Company Commander was killed. Company Second-in-Command was also killed and two platoon Commanders, Subedar Harnam Singh and Massa Singh, were wounded. The cream of the Battalion's athletes including, Havildar Labh Singh and Tehal Singh also lost their lives in the action.

It will not be out of place to recount the good work done by Lance Havildar Kirpa Ram, the bootmaker, and an excellent hockey goal keeper. On many an occasion, along with other tradesmen, he delivered ammunition to the troops under attack. In one of his missions he was first seriously wounded and later killed. For his acts of valour, he was awarded Vir Chakra posthumously. Before his death his designation was non-combatant enrolled but on his death he became 'pucca' combatant! An immortal soldier! When I was serving with the Battalion I had captained the Battalion hockey team. I remember Kirpa

Ram for his cheerful disposition, apart from his brilliant goal keeper's role. We had won the inter battalion hockey competition at The Sikh Regiment Centre at Ambala in 1949. Kirpa Ram had a large share in that victory. Almost ten years later under my captaincy 1st Sikh Battalion had won the same cup at Meerut. 1945 to 1962 period can be aptly called Kirpa Ram era in the hockey history of the unit. The game of hockey had stood me in good stead. In 1945 at the Officers' Training School Mhow, I captained my cadet company hockey team which included both British and Indian cadets. We won the inter company hockey competition. When my company was passing out I was recommended for relegation for flimsy reasons as I had inhibition in 'horse vaulting' at the physical training ground. When I was called by my British Company commander Major Johnson of the Gorkhas to his office for the final interview he pointed to the hockey shield which was displayed in his office and said 'Gurdip, that hockey shield is due to you. You have brought honour to the company. So I am ignoring your poor performance in the 'horse vaulting'." I qualified and got my commission.

Major Harbans Singh, 'B' Company Commander later second-in-Command who visited Walong as a member of a party two months after the cease fire reported that the Chinese had buried the dead of 4th Sikhs in the same location, where each person had been killed. The Chinese displayed some sort of identification in the form of an article of the individual concerned like an item of uniform, belt, or an anklet with the regimental number. At places it was noticed that Chinese had put up bamboo posts on which identification articles were affixed. Major Harbans Singh tallied his list of casualties with the proof displayed by the Chinese. It was seen that almost all

bunkers or trenches had signs of dead bodies of persons who manned them. The unit suffered casualties-2 Officers, 5 Junior Commissioned Officers and 75 other ranks were killed, 1 officer 4 Junior Commissioned Officers and 92 other ranks were wounded, besides there were a number of missing personnel and POW. It is appropriate here to quote from a letter from the Colonel of the Regiment Lieut General Harbakhsh Singh VrC.

“It is coming to light now, after it has been seen that the dead of 4 Sikh at Walong were lying in their bunkers where they had fought it out to the last, that the Battalion’s performance was more than in keeping with the highest traditions of the Regiment. In one or two instances, complete platoons were wiped out without a single survivor. In this two names come to my mind and they are Subedar Gurnam Singh and Havildar Gurmukh Singh the performance of whose platoons was in no way short of the Saragarhi epic”.

A number of awards were announced, but most touching was the presentation of Maha Vir Chakra to the proud widow of late Sepoy Kewal Singh, at an impressive ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, on 8 October 1963, who received the medal with a year old baby in her lap.

On the morning of 14 November the situation all along the front turned grave. There was a shortage of ammunition at all positions. Walong now also came under severe enemy shelling. The end came when the enemy subjected the landing ground cum dropping zone at Walong to artillery shelling and small arms fire. Consequently, under extreme pressure, when ammunition was almost exhausted, withdrawal orders were received. The tenacious battle of Walong lasted

for 25 days. The Brigade casualties were high, but in turn the enemy also suffered very heavily. The enemy arms captured by the 4th Sikhs were perhaps the only few taken by the Indian Army.

Sikhs, Kumaonis, Gorkhas and Dogras all had fought shoulder to shoulder and no one lagged behind in acts of bravery.

General Kaul and the Divisional Commander, Pathania, a cousin of another Pathania who was Commanding 4th Infantry division, flew out of Walong in the last but one Otter aircraft. Remnants of the brigade withdrew through the Lohit Valley towards Teju in small parties. The Chinese did not pursue the retreating Indian troops. On 17 November when General Kaul flew in a helicopter to look for the remnants of the 11th Infantry brigade, he spotted Brigadier Rawley and his party in a nullah bed and landed near them. The General offered to take with him the brigade commander and some officers to Hayuiiang at the Foothills for food after which they could return to their men. Quite rightly, however, Rawley said that he would rather remain with his men.

The detailed activities of the Brigade Headquarters Dogras and Gorkhas are not narrated as these are not known. Activities of 6th Kumaon and 4th Sikhs are given one after the other. To grasp the fighting in better perspective sequence of events as it took place is given in the following paper in chronological order.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WALONG SECTOR 1962

Sr. No.	Date	Event
1.	Mar	6th Kumaons moves to Walong. 'C' Coy reaches Kibithoo.
2.	22 Sep	4th Sikhs arrives at Jorhat by air.
3.	26 Sep	4th Sikhs advance party reaches Walong.
4.	18 Oct	Whole of 6th Kumaon deploys at Kibithoo.
5.	19 Oct	Presence of Chinese patrol discovered at Kibithoo.
6.	21 Oct	Chinese attack Kibithoo. Nk Bahadur Singh gives befitting fight.
7.	22 Oct	6th Kumaon withdraws from Kibithoo under heavy pressure.
8.	23 Oct	Whole of 4th Sikhs deployed at Walong.
9.	23 Oct 0300 hrs	Chinese make contact with 6th Kumaon screen at Ashi Hill. Lt Bikram Singh displays ingenuity in action. 6th Kumaon screen withdraws.

10. 24 Oct Chinese capture Green Pimple. Chinese make contact with main defences at Walong. L/ Nk Gurdial Singh and Sub Jaswant Singh 4th Sikhs engage Chinese with small arms fire and Sub Pritam Singh engages Chinese with 3 in mor fire. Sep Piara Singh fights both bush fire and Chinese.
11. 27 Oct Brig Hartley MC takes over brigade.
12. 27 Oct Lt Gen Harbakhsh Singh VrC visits Walong.
13. 31 Oct Brig Hartley hands over brigade to Brig Rawlley MC.
14. 3 Nov 3/3 GR inducted.
15. 4 Nov 'C' Coy 4th Sikhs takes over from 'D' Coy at Lachhman hill.
16. 5 Nov Green and Yellow Pimple areas scene of intense activity.
17. 6 Nov 6th Kumaons attacks Green Pimple but had to withdraw.
18. 8 Nov 'C' Coy 4th Sikhs relieves 'D' Coy at Patrol Base.
19. 12 Nov Sub Gurnam Singh 4th Sikhs extricates his patrol by bayonet charge.

20. 13 Nov 'A' Coy 4th Sikhs relieves 'B' Coy at Patrol Base.
21. 14 Nov 6th Kumaons attacks Yellow Pimple but attack stalemated. Subs Gobind Singh and Trilok Singh killed in fighting, Capt BN Singh wounded.
22. 14 Nov 4th Dogra inducted and moves to Tri-Junction.
23. 15 Nov 3/3rd relieves 'D' Coy 4th Sikhs at West Bank who moves to High Plateau at East Bank.
24. 15 Nov Lt Joe Palta 4th Sikhs 'D' Coy) killed in severe fighting at High Plateau.
- Hav Gurmukh Singh 4th Sikhs creates another Saragarhi epic. Severe fighting at Tri-junction. Maj Bhatia and Lt Khatri wounded, 2OR of 6th Kumaons killed.
25. 16 Nov Maj Samvatsar 'A' Coy 4th Sikhs killed during severe fighting at Patrol Base.
26. 16 Nov Lt Bikram Singh 6th Kumaons killed during hard fighting at West Ridge.
27. 16 Nov Good athletes of 4th Sikhs killed.

- 28. 16 Nov Sub Nasib Singh IDSM 4th
Sikhs killed at Mithun Track
in serious fighting.

- 29. 16 Nov 4th Sikhs, bunkers demolished
by Chinese direct arty hits.

L/Hav Kirpa Ram 4th Sikhs
killed when delivering
ammunition to Mahan Plateau.

- 30. 16 Nov DZ and landing strip came
under enemy shelling.

- 31. 16 Nov Bde withdraws from Walong
under intense enemy
bombardment and repeated
assaults by Chinese hordes
when no ammunition was left
with troops.

Appendix 'J'

(Refer to Page 329)

SARAGARHI EPIC

Saragarhi is located on Samana-Ridge, in Kohat District of North West Frontier Province, which now forms part of Pakistan. The defensive battle of Saragarhi was fought by Havildar Ishar Singh and twenty men of 4th Sikh Battalion against Pathans on 12 September 1897 under the overall command of Lt Col J Haughton who was killed in a later operation. The small picket of Saragarhi was surrounded and repeatedly attacked by 20,000 strong Afridi and Arkzi Pathan 'lashkars'.

However, the gallant detachment of Sikhs never gave in and fought to the last. Time and again the Pathans shouted to the tiny garrison to surrender, but each time they were met with volleys of fire and a challenge that they would fight to the last. Repeated enemy attacks were beaten back and all the members of the brave garrison lost their lives in the fighting. Finally, the time came when there was only one survivor of Saragarhi left, the signaller, who had been reporting every activity to the Regimental Headquarters. The sole survivor, Gurmukh Singh, now sent his last message to his Commanding Officer:-

"They are getting in now. Shall I take a rifle or shall I go on signalling?"

But in the meantime, the enemy had set fire to the bushes around the fortress, and under the cover of smoke, breached the perimeter wall of the picket. Sepoy Gurmukh Singh probably fought his last gallant action

and was killed before he could get any answer from his Commanding Officer.

The gallant defence of Saragarhi by Havildar Ishar Singh and twenty other ranks and a follower is estimated to have cost the enemy about four hundred and fifty killed or wounded. The bravery of the Sikhs stunned the world. The defence of Saragarhi received the highest praise from the British Parliament and the Monarch. The British government erected memorials; at Amritsar, Ferozepore and Samana Ridge to honour the defenders of Saragarhi. Each man received cash and land awards and decorations of the Indian Order of Merit. (IOM was the highest award which Indian could get those days)

CHAPTER EIGHT

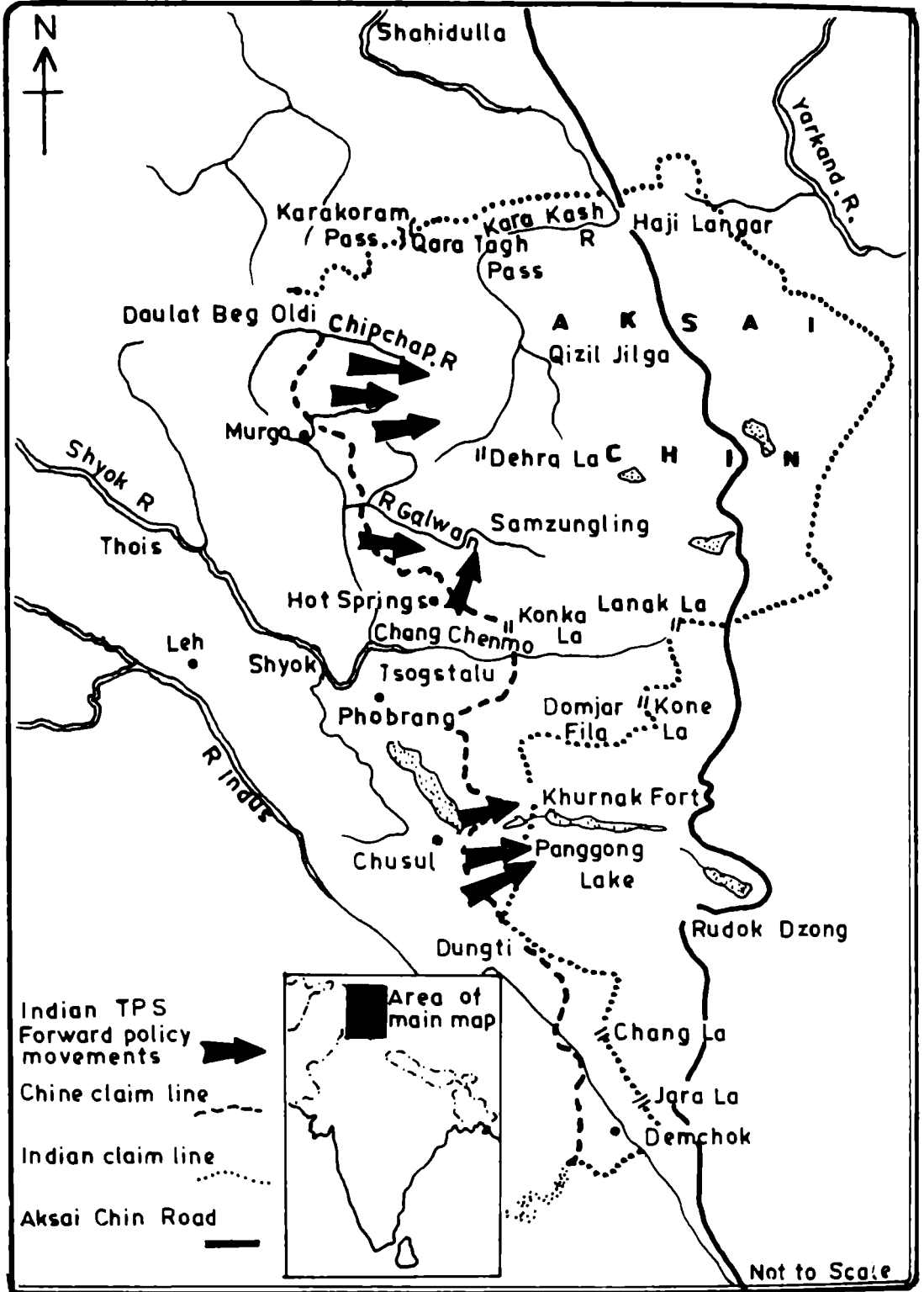
WAR IN THE WEST

FIGHTING IN LADAKH

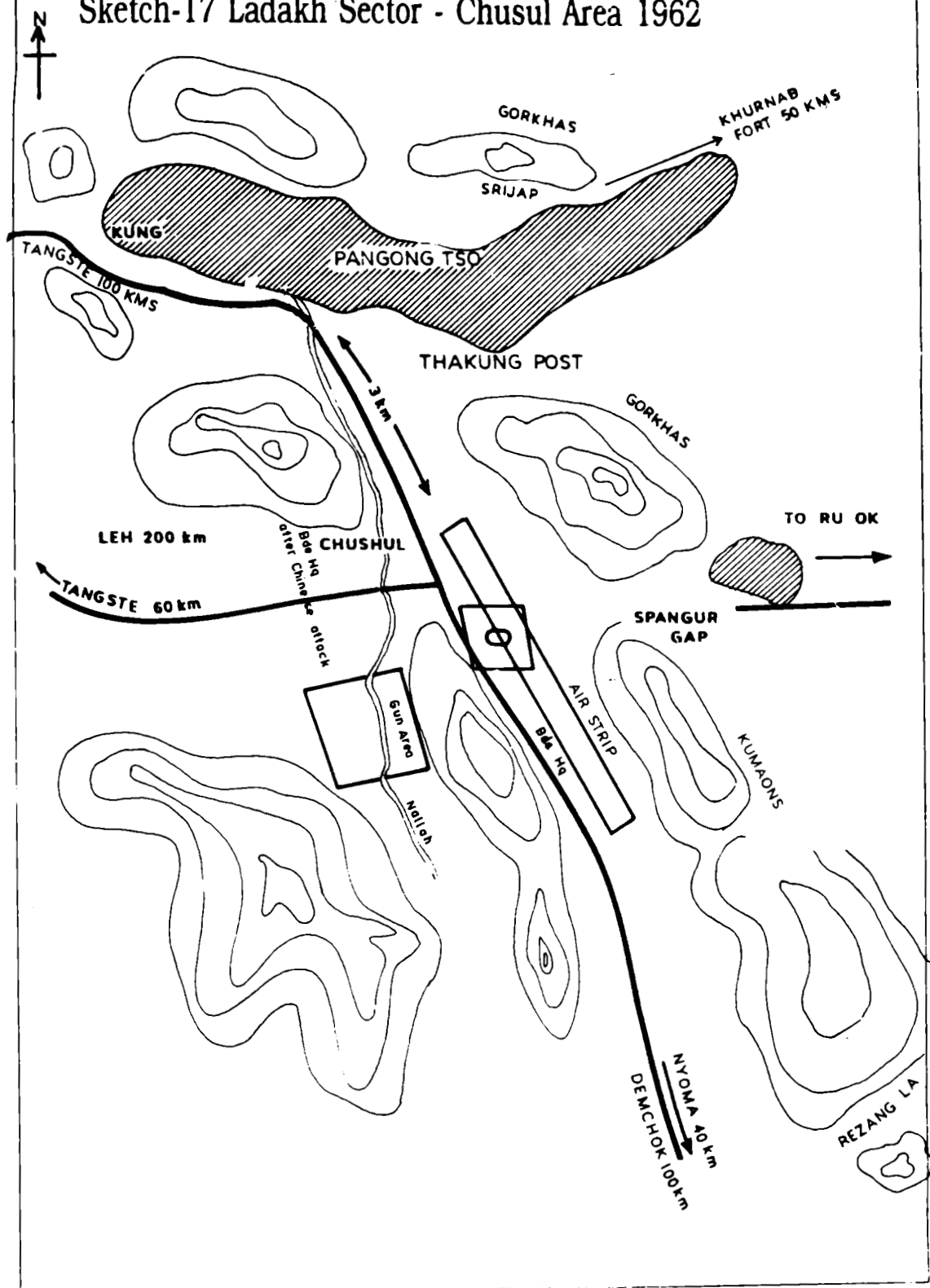
Let us now turn to the events in Ladakh at the other end of border in the north west of the country, where the Chinese undertook the offensive, simultaneously, with the invasion of NEFA. Ladakh has 400 km of frontier common with Tibet and various distances from Leh are as follows : Demchok 300 km, Chusul 200 km, Tangse 100 km, Phobrang 150 km and Karakoram 220 km. Impact of the Indian Forward Policy consequent on the construction of road by China in Aksai Chin initially took place in this sector. The absence of timely information about the road was a sheer neglect on the part of the Indian Army, The Air Force and the Central and State Intelligence set ups whose most important and onerous function was to keep a constant vigil and surveillance over the country's frontiers even though the Indian Government was not serious. India learnt no lesson from the Indo-Pak War of 1947 and neglected the development of Ladakh, particularly, the road communications. Ravages of strong wind start from mid-day and causes unbearable fall in temperature.

As a result of the much publicised Forward Policy, it was decided to open forward posts at Tsogatsalu, Hot springs, Kongka La, Shamul Lungpa and

Sketch-16 Ladakh - Aksai Chin



Sketch-17 Ladakh Sector - Chusul Area 1962



Shinghuna and other places under direction of the Intelligence Bureau. The Tsogatsalu post was opened on 17 October 1959 and that of Hot springs on 19 October. When a party proceeded to establish a post at Kongka La on 20 October it was captured by Chinese. After the Kongka La incident, opening of further posts and patrolling was stopped. Consequent on the failure of talks with Chou En Lai, the Chinese Prime Minister in April 1960, it was decided to establish new posts at Nuingri, Dambu Guru, and Nyagzu in the central area between the Chang Chenmo river valley, Pangong Lake, Qazil Langer and Daulat Beg Oldi under the Ministry of Defence. In the southern area also possibility of establishing additional posts west of the line running from Chusul to Rezangla, Demchok, and Changla, which was the international alignment according to the Indian Map, was to be considered. We soon established our Daulat Beg Oldi Intelligence Post. But due to want of sufficient build up at Leh and suitable road communications in the forward areas the Army was not in a position to open any more posts. In the meantime the Chinese made further progress in building roads, particularly, the circular road which was planned by taking the Aksai Chin road as the diameter. From the Chinese activities it was apparent that they were making preparations to move towards the flat Chip Chap Valley. To checkmate these Chinese moves it was decided to set up posts at Burtsa, Qazil Langar and the Track Junction north of Murgu on the route to Daulat Beg Oldi and the Karakoram Pass. It was also thought necessary to have a strong Army Sub unit at Daulat Beg Oldi. To prevent the Chinese from extending their roads further Army set up posts at Sultan Chusku and Hot springs post was strengthened by stationing an army sub unit there in September 1960. Later Army posts were set up in the Depsong Plains and along the Chip Chap Valley. The army also

moved forward in area Pangong and Spanggur Lakes and opened a post at Julu. Our troops took up position at Demchok. Rezangla and Gurung Hill posts were also occupied by Indian troops immediately and the Galwan river post was set up earlier in July 1961 by an army platoon.

Summary of deployment in Ladakh in 1962 when Forward Policy was in full swing:

- (a) DBO and Chip-Chap Sector—
14 J&K Militia Plus Coy 5 Jat
Posts— DBO, Burtsa, Qazil Tr Junc north of Murgo, Depsong Plains and others
- (b) Galwan Valley Coy 5 Jat
- (c) Chang Chnmo Valley 5 Jat less Coy
Post— Tsogetsalu, Hot Springs, Shamul Lumgpa, Shimguna and others

Rear— Tr Junc north of Murgo, Suitan Chisku, Phobrang
- (d) Chusul
Coy less Pl 1/8 GR—Sirijap Posts
Coy 1/8 GR—Yalu Posts
Two Coys 1/8 GR—Spangur Gap
- (e) Bn HQ 7J&K Militia—Koyal
Coy 7J&K Militia—Dugti
Pls 7J&K Militia—Chngla, Jarala, New Demchok, High Ground, NW Demchok

There were two phases of war in Ladakh-Phase-I took place in October 1962 and Phase-II in November 1962.

In the first phase in October 1962 Chinese wiped out Galwan Post, the scene of the past fighting, and on 20 October the Chinese mounted an attack on Chip Chap valley post in the west. Under pressure, our troops pulled back to Daulet Beg Oldi. Subsequently the airstrip at Daulet Beg Oldi came under enemy fire and was rendered unserviceable and our Air Force planes on supply dropping missions were fired upon. The post was later evacuated via Saser Pass. The Chip Chap river Indian Army post of thirty men held at bay 500 Chinese for a whole day and at the end of fighting only four of them survived, while Chinese had more than 150 casualties.

The enemy now attacked Sirijap and Yulu posts situated on the shore of Lake Pangong in south Ladakh in the north of Chusul. The attack started with heavy shelling at 6 am on 21 Oct for two and half an hour and was supported by light tanks. The first assault came on Sirijap I. The Gorkhas fought back resolutely at Sirijap but either they were killed or captured. Here Major Dhan Singh Thapa, who was taken prisoner by Chinese and released in 1963, was awarded Param Vir Chakra for his gallantry. After some time the Chinese attacked Changla, Jarala and Demchok in Sindh Valley. Strong resistance was offered by the Indian troops but they had, perforce, retreated due to enemy superiority in numbers and under repeated attacks in which artillery was also used by the Chinese. Changla was attacked on 27 October. Chinese approached the post with 30 vehicles mounted with machine guns. The post opened fire with 2 inch mortars and two vehicles were set on fire. Thus almost 40 Forward Policy Posts were eliminated in one swoop.

There was a lull now. The second phase of the Chinese offensive started in November 1962 alongwith

their major offensive in NEFA. This phase was more or less confined to Chusul sector where entire 114 Infantry Brigade was made responsible for the limited operational sector. Instead of having isolated Forward Policy penny pocket posts we reverted to positional Company/battalion defensive localities.

Relative strengths in November 1962-

Own Orbat and Dispositions

HQ 3 Inf Div (Leh)

HQ 114 Inf Div (Chusul)

1st Jat In north at Tokieng

5th Jat Skala

13th Kumaon Muggar Hill, Rezangla

1/8th GR Gurung Hill

Tp 20 L (AMX-13 Tks)

2 Btys 13 Fd Regt

HQ 70 Inf Bde (Dungti)

7 J&K Militia

Bty 7 Fd Regt

Hy Mor Bty

HQ Delta Sector (Thoise)

14 J&K Militia

HQ 163 Inf Bde (Leh)

7 Fd Regt less 2 Btys

Enemy Strength—

Infantry Brigades

Artillery Units

Heavy Mortars

Recoil-less guns

Tanks

Ratio of Chinese to Indian troops; normally was

5 to 1.

Let us refer to Chusul defences scene of fighting. The Sketch of Chusul is attached. Chusul was earmarked as brigade vital ground and plan of defence at Chusul was that 8th Gorkha Rifles was put on the (Gurung) ridges left of Spanggur Gap and on Gurung Hill and 13th Kumaon occupied the right ridge, Magger Hill and Rezangla and armour covered the Gap. Artillery was deployed on the airstrip and behind the airstrip hill. Jats were located in north at Tokung other units were the left employed on other brigade defence commitments. HQ 114 Infantry Brigade was located on airstrip hill.

While the height of Chusul is 14,000 feet positions around were 16,000 feet high. In winter preparation of defences was a herculean task. Frozen ground, which was almost impossible to dig by picks and shovels, had to be blasted to soften up and to scoop out the earth. Wood for fuel and for building bunkers and ammunition and other material had to be carried by troops to heights in small loads. Mules were of no use and troops could not manage to get the few pack 'yaks' which were available in the valley.

Appreciating that the Chinese would mount their attack supported by tanks on the main axis of Spanggur Gap, Brigadier Raina, 114 Brigade Commander had concentrated his defences on this approach but the Chinese main attack on 18 November unexpectedly came in the south at Rezangla held by one isolated company of 13th Kumaon. The attack had the element of surprise as it began with complete silence but it was discovered by the alert Kumaonis in the initial stages and they put their defensive fire plan in operation immediately. The Chinese in turn changed

the attack into a noisy one at 5 am and opened up with their intense artillery bombardment. Indian bunkers were also made targets of recoilless guns and knocked out and the first Chinese attack failed in the face of 3 inch mortar fire and grenades; The Chinese put in second attack with the support of artillery and mortar support. Defenders Telephone communication was destroyed and radio set knocked out. But the Company Commander moved from trench to trench encouraging the men. One jawan jumped out of his trench, bodily lifted a Chinese soldier and threw him on rocks. First attack came from South East the second came from rear and south. Out of 112 only 14 men survived. Tsakala post observed the progress of the historical battle and informed the Bn HQ. The whole of the rear platoon met with death. The battle field was strewn with field dressings and extensively dotted with blood marks. Though the Kumaonis put up a prolonged stubborn fight the Chinese were successful in capturing the position, albeit with heavy losses. There were only 14 survivors out of a strength of 118.

Chinese attacks on Gurung and Mugger hills came simultaneously with offensive in Rezagla area. The attack was mounted from the direction of Black Hill as the going from there was down hill. Initial assault came on northern company of 1/8 GR at 6.30 am. Our field guns opened up with accurate shelling. Lt. Goswani of artillery did a commendable work and Capt Dewan did not lag behind with his armour. However, overwhelming man power and intense artillery bombardment of the enemy forced the Gorkhas to pull back but after heavy losses to the enemy. The Chinese halted their offensive at the Spanggur Gap ridges and did not pursue the attack further on to the airstrip. In the meantime Brigadier Raina stepped back, re-

organised his troops and occupied contingency positions near Chushul village.

When an Indian party climbed Rezangla three months later; some men appeared to be still in position, these men were frozen as they died, weapons in their hands. Here Major Shaitan Singh the Company Commander fought most heroically, was seriously wounded, laid down his life, and won Param Vir Chakra posthumously. The three platoon commanders were awarded VrC. 13th Kumaon also received the Battle Honour of Rezangla. Exceptionally heavy price was paid for the romours.

In the two sweeps the Chinese overran all Indian posts within their 1960 claim line. Chusul, itself, had not been attacked as it lay outside the Chinese claim line. Brigadier Raina who later become the chief of army staff, had a reputation of being resolute in crisis, had won the Mahavir Chakra for his firm and resolute handling of the situation at Chushul.

In the intervening lull in fighting two more brigades under HQ 3rd Division were inducted. 70th Brigade was located south of Chusul and 163rd was concentrated at Leh and Delta Sector at Thoise but these formation did not see any fighting as a unilateral 'Cease fire' was declared by the Chinese.

CHAPTER NINE

DECLARATION OF UNILATERAL CEASE FIRE BY CHINA

After causing unnecessary bloodshed but before the Indian Army could have stabilised and regrouped for a counter offensive, China suddenly and unexpectedly declared a unilateral ceasefire on 22 November 1962. They never gave good reasons for this. The announcement is reproduced in the succeeding paragraphs.

“In the past two years, first in the western and then in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border, Indian troops crossed the line of actual control between China and India, nibbled Chinese territory, set up strong-points for aggression and provoked a number of border clashes.

Relying on the advantageous military position they occupied and having made full preparations, the Indian troops eventually launched massive armed attacks all along the line on the Chinese frontier guards on October 20, 1962.

This border conflict deliberately provoked by India has been going on for a month.

The Chinese Government served repeated warnings in regard to the increasingly serious Indian encroachments and provocations and pointed out the gravity of their consequences. The Chinese frontier guards all along maintained self-restraint and forbearance in order to avert any border conflict.

However, all these efforts by China proved of no avail, and the Indian acts of aggression steadily increased.

Pressed beyond the limits of endurance and left with no room for retreat, the Chinese frontier guards finally had no choice but to strike back resolutely in self-defence. After the present large-scale border conflict broke out, the Chinese Government quickly took the initiative in an effort to extinguish the flames of conflict that had been kindled.

On 24 October 62, that is four days after the outbreak of the current border clashes, the Chinese Government put forward three reasonable proposals for stopping the border clashes, reopening peaceful negotiations and setting the Sino-Indian boundary question. The three proposals are as follows:

- (1) Both parties affirm that the Sino-India boundary question must be settled peacefully through negotiations. Pending a peaceful settlement, the Chinese Government hopes that the Indian Government will agree that both sides respect the line of actual control between the two sides along the entire Sino-Indian border, and the armed

forces of each side withdraw 20 km, from this line of disengagement.

- (2) Provided that the Indian Government agrees to the above proposal, the Chinese Government is willing, through consultations between the two parties, to withdraw its frontier guards in the eastern sector of the border to the north of the line of actual control; at the same time both China and India undertake not to cross the line of actual control, i.e., the traditional customary line, in the middle and western sectors of the border.

Matters relating to the disengagement of the armed forces of the two parties and the cessation or armed conflict shall be negotiated by officials designated by the Chinese and Indian Governments respectively.

- (3) The Chinese Government considers that, in order to seek a friendly settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question, talks should be held once again by the Prime Ministers of China and India. At a time considered to be appropriate by both parties the Chinese Government would welcome the Indian Prime Minister to Peking; if this should be inconvenient to the Indian Government, the Chinese Premier would be ready to go to Delhi for talks."

On the very day it received them, the Indian Government hastily rejected the Chinese Government's three proposals and instead demanded that the Chinese Government should agree to restore the state of the boundary as it prevailed prior to September 8, 1962, that is to say, India wanted to reoccupy large tracts of Chinese territory so that the Indian troops might regain

the position from which they could launch massive armed attacks on the Chinese frontier guards at any time.

In his reply to Premier Chou En-Lai dated November 1, Prime Minister Nehru put forward even more unreasonable demands which, on the one hand, required the Chinese Government to agree to the Indian troops reverting to their positions prior to 8 September, and on the other hand, required the Chinese frontier guards not only to withdraw to their positions as on 8 September but to retreat further in the western sector to the so called positions of 7 November 1959, as defined for them by India unilaterally, that is, requiring China to cede 6000 square miles (13000 to 15000 km) more of Chinese territory.

In the meantime, the Indian Government relying on large amounts of US military aid, again launched powerful attacks in the eastern and western sectors of the Sino-Indian border in an obstinate attempt to expand the border conflict.

The Chinese reaction to the rejection was as follows. It is by no means accidental that the Indian Government has taken such an extremely unreasonable attitude. To meet the needs of its internal and external politics, the Indian Government has long pursued the policy of deliberately keeping the Sino-Indian boundary question unsettled, keeping the armed forces of the two countries engaged and maintaining tension along the Sino-Indian border.

Whenever it considered the time favourable, the Indian Government made use of this situation to carry out armed invasion and provocation on the Sino-Indian border, and even went to the lengths of provoking an

armed clash. Alternatively it made use of the situation to conduct 'cold war' against China.

The experience of many years shows that the Indian Government has invariably tried, by hook or by crook, to block the path which was opened up by the Chinese Government for a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question. This policy of the Indian government runs diametrically counter to the fundamental interests of the Chinese and Indian people and the common desires of all the people of the world, and serves only the interests of imperialism.

The Chinese Government's three proposals are most fair and reasonable; they are the only proposals capable of averting border clashes, ensuring border tranquillity and bringing about a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question.

The Chinese Government perseveres in these three proposals.

However the Indian Government has so far rejected these three proposals and continued to expand the border conflict, thus daily aggravating the Sino-Indian border situation. To reverse this trend, the Chinese Government has decided to take initiatives in order to promote the realisation of these three proposals.

The Chinese Government hereby declares the following:

- (1) Beginning from the day following that of the issuance of the present statement i.e., from 00.00 hours on November 22, 1962, the Chinese frontier

guards will cease fire along the entire Sino-Indian border.

- (2) Beginning from December 1, 1962 the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 km behind the line of actual control which existed between China and Indian on November 7, 1959.

In the eastern sector, although the Chinese frontier guards have so far been fighting back in self-defence on Chinese territory north of the traditional customary line, they are prepared to withdraw from their present positions to the north of the line of actual control, that is, north of the illegal McMahon Line, and to withdraw 20 km farther back from the line.

In the middle and western sectors, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw 20 km from the line of actual control.

- (3) In order to ensure the normal movement of the inhabitants in the Sino-Indian border areas, forestall the activities of saboteurs and maintain order there, China will set up checkposts at a number of places on its side of the line of actual control with a certain number of civil police assigned to each checkpost. The Chinese Government will notify the Indian Government of the location of these checkposts through diplomatic channels.

These measures taken by the Chinese Government on its own initiative demonstrate its great sincerity for stopping the border conflict and settling the Sino-Indian boundary question peacefully.

It should be pointed out, in particular, that after withdrawing, the Chinese frontier guards will be far behind their positions prior to September 8, 1962. The Chinese Government hopes that, as a result of the above-mentioned initiative measure taken by China, the Indian Government will take into consideration the desires of the Indian people and people of the world, make a new start and give a positive response.

Provided that the Indian Government agrees to take corresponding measures, the Chinese and Indian Governments can immediately appoint officials to meet at places agreed upon by both parties in the various sectors of the Sino-Indian border to discuss matters relating to the 20 km withdrawal of the armed forces of each party to form a demilitarised zone, the establishment of checkposts by each party on its side of the line of actual control as well as return of captured personnel.

When the talks between the officials of the two parties have yielded results and the results have been put into effect, talks can be held by the Prime Ministers of the two countries for further seeking an amicable settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question.

The Chinese government would welcome the Indian Prime Minister to Peking and if this should be inconvenient to the Indian Government, the Chinese Premier would be ready to go to Delhi for the talks.

The Chinese Government sincerely hopes that the Indian Government will make a positive response. Even if the Indian Government fails to make such response in good time, the Chinese Government will take the initiative to carry out the above-mentioned measures as scheduled.

However, the Chinese Government cannot but take into account the following possible eventualities:-

- (1) that the Indian troops should continue their attack after the Chinese frontier guards have ceased fire and when they are withdrawing;
- (2) that, after the Chinese frontier guards have withdrawn 20 km from the entire line of actual control, the Indian troops should again advance to the line of actual control in the eastern sector, i.e., the illegal McMahon Line, and/or refuse to withdraw, but remain on the line of actual control in the middle and western sectors; and
- (3) that, after the Chinese frontier guards have withdrawn, 20 km from the entire line of actual control, the Indian troops should cross the line of actual control and recover their positions prior to Sept 8 that is to say, again cross the illegal McMahon line and re-occupy the Kechiang river area north of the line in the eastern sector, re-occupy Wuji in the middle sector, and restore their 43 strong-points for aggression in the Chip Chap River valley, the Galwan River valley, the Pangong Lake area and the Demchok area or set up more strong-points for aggression on Chinese territory in the western sector.

The Chinese Government solemnly declares that should the above eventualities occur, it reserves the right to strike back in self-defence and the Indian Government will be held completely responsibly for all the grave consequences arising thereof.

The people of the world will then see even more clearly who is peace-loving and who is bellicose, who

upholds friendship between the Chinese and Indian peoples and Asian-African solidarity and who is undermining them, who is protecting the common interests of the Asian and African peoples in their struggle against imperialism and colonialism and who is violating and damaging these common interests.

The Sino-Indian boundary question is an issue between two Asian countries. China and India should settle this issue peacefully; they should not cross swords on account of this issue and even less allow US imperialism to poke in its head and develop the present unfortunate border conflict into a war in which Asians are made to fight Asians.

It is from its consistent stand of protecting fundamental interests of the Chinese and Indian peoples, strengthening Asian-African solidarity and preserving world peace that the Chinese Government calls upon all Asian and African countries and all peace-loving countries and peoples to exert efforts to urge the Indian Government to take corresponding measures so as to stop the border conflict, reopen peaceful negotiations and settle the Sino-Indian boundary question."

(Comments on Cease Fire by Neville Maxwell given at Appendix 'K' attached)

**Proposals of the Conference of Six Non-Aligned
Nations held at Colombo
(December 10 to 12, 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 kilometers withdrawal of their military posts as has been proposed in the letter of Prime Minister Chou En-lai to Prime Minister Nehru of November 21 and November 28, 1962.
 - (b) The Conference would make an appeal to the Indian Government to keep their existing military position.
 - (c) Pending a final solution for the border dispute, the area vacated by the Chinese military withdrawals will be a demilitarized 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 Indian and China in that area.
3. With regard to the Eastern Sector, the Conference considers that the line of actual control in the area recognised by both the Governments could serve as a ceasefire line. Remaining areas 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 ceasefire, once implemented, should pave the way for discussions between representatives of both parties for the purpose of solving problems entailed in the ceasefire 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 two Governments as regards its conception of the final alignment of the boundaries.

The Principles Underlying the Proposals of the Six Nation Conference :

1. The Sino-Indian boundary dispute must be settled by peaceful negotiations between China and India. The object of Six is to create an atmosphere which would enable China and India to enter upon negotiations with dignity and self-respect.
2. The proposals of the Six are intended to create such an atmosphere.
3. In considering the proposals made by them, the Six welcomed the announcement of a unilateral cease-fire and withdrawal made by China on November 21, 1962.
4. In the formulation of these proposals, the Six paid particular attention to the following principles :-
 - (a) neither side should be in a position to derive benefit from Military Operations
 - (b) a stable ceasefire must be without prejudice to the boundary claims of either party;
 - (c) in the establishment of a stable ceasefire, neither side should be requested to withdraw from territory over which they exercised exclusive civilian administration;

- (d) any ceasefire arrangements must be without prejudice to the boundary claims of either party;
 - (e) the establishment of a stable ceasefire may or may not according to circumstances, require the establishment of a demilitarised zone.
5. On consideration of these principles, the Six were of the view that it was not feasible to formulate one uniform proposal to apply to all sectors of the Sino-Indian boundary now in dispute.
6. On the Eastern Sector,
- (a) Seems to be clear that, whether the McMahon Line is considered to be an illegal imposition or not, it has in fact become a line of actual control, with the Chinese Government exercising exclusive administrative control to the north of it, and the Indian Government exercising exclusive administrative control to the south of it, except in Che Dong and Longju which are disputed;
 - (b) for purpose of a ceasefire, the Six considered that this line of actual control would be the most appropriate;
 - (c) if this line were to be adopted, the nature of the terrain would bring about an automatic disengagement of forces, so that the establishment of a demilitarized zone would become unnecessary;

- (d) the Six considered that China and India should enter upon immediate negotiations in regard to the disputed portions of the of Eastern Sector (i.e., Che Dong and Longju), and that it might be appropriate if arrangements similar to Longju could be made in respect of Che Dong pending a final settlement.
7. In the Middle Sector, the Six considered that, in as much as there have been no military operations in this sector, and in as much as the line of actual control is not in dispute, except at one place (Wuje or Barahoti), it should be appropriate if, pending a final settlement of overall boundary question:-
- (a) both sides disisted from military actions;
 - (b) both sides respect the status quo.
8. In formulating proposals for a ceasefire on the Western Sector, the Six bore in mind the following factual considerations :-
- (a) that China and India are not agreed as to what is meant by "the line of actual control as of 7th November 1959".
 - (b) that India exercised exclusive administrative control to the west of what the Chinese claim to be the traditional customary line, and prior to 1959, may have sent out patrols to the east of that line from time time;
 - (c) that between 1959 and 1962, India has established 43 military checkposts to the east

of what the Chinese have described as the traditional customary line;

- (d) that prior to 1959, the Chinese held some where to the east of the traditional customary line as claimed by them;
 - (e) that between 1959 and 1962, the Chinese also have established some military posts westward but to the east of what China claims as the traditional customary line;
 - (f) that the Chinese reached what they claimed to be the traditional customary line in 1962 as the result of their recent military actions;
 - (g) that the area to the east of what the Chinese hold as the traditional customary line is uninhabited so that civilian administrative control in the strict sense of that term would not have been possible by either side;
 - (h) that at the date of unilateral ceasefire declared by the Chinese, the Chinese and Indian military forces were confronting each other more or less along the traditional customary line claimed by China;
9. Bearing these considerations in mind, the Six propose as a basis for a ceasefire :-
- (a) that Chinese forces should carry out the withdrawal proposed by Prime Minister Chou-En-Lai on November 21, 1962, on the Western Sector;

- (b) that Indian forces should remain where they are i.e., on the traditional customary line as claimed by China;
- (c) that the area in between should be demilitarized pending a final settlement of the border dispute;
- (d) that the demilitarized zone should be so administered as not to exclude the presence of either India or China as hitherto, pending a final settlement of the border dispute;
- (e) that pending a final settlement of the border dispute, this zone should be so administered as to exclude the presence of military forces of both sides. It is therefore proposed that this zone should be administered by civilian posts to be agreed upon by both sides.

Clarification given by the Representatives of the Colombo Powers to the Government of India on 13th January 1936.

Upon request from the Government of India, the following clarifications of paragraph 2, 3 and 4 of the Colombo Conference proposals were given by the delegations of Ceylon, U.A.R. and Ghana;

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 21st November and in Prime Minister Chou En-lai's letter of 28th November

1962, i.e., from the line of actual control between the two sides as on November 7, 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 will be up to the line indicated in (i) above.
- (iii) The demilitarized zone of 20 kilometers 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 two Governments 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 the two areas on which there is difference of opinion between the Governments of India and China. 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 Governments of India and China, according to the Colombo Conference proposals, are Che Dong 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 desired that the status quo in this sector should be maintained and neither side should do anything to disturb the status quo.

Appendix 'K'

(Refer to Page 367)

COMMENTS ON CEASEFIRE AND COLOMBO PROPOSALS BY NEVILLE MAXWELL

(AUTHOR OF BOOK INDIA'S CHINA WAR)

The world learnt on 20 November, 1962, that the fighting in the Himalaya between its two biggest countries was to be ended by China's unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal. Just before midnight on 20 November the Chinese Government announced that in another twenty-four hours its forces would cease fire, and in another nine days they would begin to withdraw. The previous night, Chou En-lai had called the Indian charge de' affairs to his residence and told him in detail of China's intentions, now these were proclaimed:

- (1) Beginning from.....00.00 on 21 November 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will cease fire along the entire Sino-Indian border.
- (2) Beginning from 1 December 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control which existed between China and India on 7 November 1959. That was clear enough, but the statement spelled it out :
- (3) In the eastern sector, although the Chinese frontier guards have so far been fighting on Chinese territory south of the traditional customary line, they are prepared to withdraw from their present positions to the north of the

line of actual control, that is north of the illegal McMohan Line, and then to withdraw 20 km back from that line.

In the middle and western sectors, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw twenty kilometers from the line of actual control. The Indians would be expected to keep their armed forces twenty kilometers away from the line of actual control, too and, China reserved the right to strike back if they did not do so. Both governments could establish civilian police posts on their side of the line, however, Peking proposed that officials meet on the border to discuss the siting of such posts, implementation of the joint withdrawals, and return of prisoners. Then the two Prime Ministers should meet again to seek an amicable settlement: Nehru would be welcome in Peking, but if that is inconvenient for him, Chou En-lai would 'make a positive response'. But, 'even if the Indian Government fail(ed) to make such a response in good time'. China would put her stated intentions into effect."

This was the proposal that Chou En-lai had first made to Nehru in his letter of 7 November 1959, (hence the allusion to that date to define 'the line of actual control'), and reiterated after the Namka Chu battle. Again and again in the course of the dispute China had urged it on India as the only possible way to defuse the borders and clear the way for settlement; as consistently, India had rejected it - most recently and brusquely on 24 October, after the first Chinese attack. Now, at the point of a smoking gun, a victorious China imposed not a victor's terms but what she had proposed all along. The difference was that it had now ceased to be a proposal. China intended to put it into effect, and

warned of grave consequences if India did not reciprocate on her side by keeping troops twenty kilometers back from the line. But that warning was watered down by another. If the Indians attempted to resume the forward policy in the western sector, or to move troops back into the Thagla triangle 'China reserves the right to strike back'.

Later the Chinese explained their plan. They had advanced into the territory south of the McMohan Line 'in order to thoroughly rout the Indian reactionaries and to shatter their plan of altering the border status quo by armed forces, and to create conditions for a negotiated settlement'. There was nothing incomprehensible about these measures, the Chinese said, and cited as proof of their effectiveness that the Indians had begun to have a little more sense, and the border tension had basically eased. The Chinese move came as a surprise only because the Indian version of what was happening was so widely accepted. Even those who did not credit that China had embarked on an invasion of India thought that 'negotiation from the strength of total occupation of all Chinese territorial claims was the logic of their military advance'. But that would not only have believed the approach China was taking to all boundary questions, it would also have kept the Sino-Indian sector a running sore. If the Chinese remained in NEFA the Indian Army would inevitably start probing up from the plains when it had recovered, and Peking would then have an unending campaign on its hands. Looking back at the border war in 1962 Lord Caccia, former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office of U.K., said that as far as he knew 'the Chinese withdrawal to their original lines after a victory in the fields (was) the first time in recorded history that a great power has not exploited military success by demanding something

more'. But it was not territory that China sought. It was a settled boundary, and the military operations had been directed to that end. Withdrawal was integral to the concept.

No military action that stopped short on the borders could force the Indian Government to negotiate, therefore the Chinese operation could not be sure of achieving the underlying aim of formal delimitation of the Sino-Indian boundary. But that could wait, as Peking had suggested to the Indians in 1960; and the Chinese Army had now made sure that in the meantime - or at least for several years - the status quo would be left undisputed, with no more deliberate encroachments or provocative sallies from the Indian side.

So far as the Indian Army was concerned, there was no doubt about what the response to the ceasefire must be. The new Chief of Army Staff, General Chaudhari, reported that his forces were in no condition to do anything but reciprocate the Chinese move, and ordered that after midnight the troops should not fire unless fired upon. For the politicians, as usual, it was a different story. In the lobbies of Parliament that morning and on the broad pillared balcony where the press correspondents gathered before the sitting began, the most frequent word in the excited talk was 'humiliation'. However, relieved the soldiers felt, for the civilians the unilateral Chinese cease fire rubbed salt in the wounds. Opinion was nearly unanimous that Peking's offer must be rejected out of hand - some Congress MPs from Assam who advocated acceptance were shouted down. Caught again between intractable military realities and the urgings of an aroused political opinion, Nehru played for time. After first introducing the new Defence Minister, Chavan, to the House, Nehru

simply said that no official message about a ceasefire had been received from Peking and that until one came he would express no opinion about the Chinese proposals. As for negotiations, 'Our position..... continues to be..... that the positions as it existed prior to 8 September 1962, shall be restored'. This measured, cautious reaction was in sharp contrast, to the instant and categorical rejection with which the Indian Government had met China's previous diplomatic move, and it seems to have been the result of some strenuous persuasion by Galbraith. Fearing demonstrative and out-of-hand rejection and seeing that it would only make the Indian position worse, he had urged the Government to be non-committal.

The moment the Prime Minister sat down Opposition members were on their feet, denouncing what Frank Anthony called 'a typical piece of calculated Chinese trickery, and demanding assurances that the Government would ignore the ceasefire and continue to refuse negotiations. Decency, dignity and self-respect require that we negotiate only after the barbarians are driven out', another member cried. Ashoka Mehta said that he saw it as an ultimatum. As usual the massed benches of the Congress Party were relatively restrained, but opinion was solid there, too, that the Chinese proposals must be rejected. Later that day all the opposition parties except the Communists issued a joint statement: 'The Chinese offer of a unilateral ceasefire is only another of their notorious manoeuvres, calculated to cause confusion and disruption in our national front, gain time for consolidation and build up for another infamous offensive and prevent us from mobilizing resources from inside and outside and create doubts in the minds of our friends in world democracy. The Prime Minister must not allow himself to be taken in', the statement

continued, and the Government should reassure the nation that it would stand firmly by the policy of determined resistance and no negotiations.

That night it was announced that the text of China's declaration had been received, but the spokesman would not comment beyond saying, 'Let us wait and see.' Neither then nor later would officials confirm that the troops had been ordered to observe the cease fire. That would have been taken as admission that India had surrendered. The Government strove to give the impression that, on the contrary, India had just started to fight. The day the ceasefire came into effect Nehru, who was very fond of the young, reassured a gathering of school children that 'the war with China will be a long-drawn-out affair, it may take years - it may take so long that some of you will be fit and ready to fight it.'

In the diplomatic exchanges with Peking the Indian Government played for time, too, using again the technique of feigned incomprehension. The day New Delhi learned of Peking's ceasefire declaration, a member of the Chinese mission was called to the Ministry of External Affairs and asked for clarifications. What precisely was meant by the 'line of actual control'? What exactly did the Chinese mean by the position prior to 8 September? Two days later the Chinese Charge de affairs was called and more of these questions put to him. Did the proposed Chinese withdrawal twenty kilometres behind the line of actual control refer only to the western sector? If the Chinese withdraw twenty kilometres from the McMahon Line, 'where will that be?' will China set up checkpoints south of the McMahon Line? The questions were quibbles; when they were not, as Peking described them, meaningless, and in every case the answers were to be

found in Peking's original ceasefire statement. These were restated by the Chinese diplomats in New Delhi, but the Indian Government complained to Peking that the clarifications offered were still vague, and would require further elaboration 'before the Chinese ceasefire proposals can be fully considered.'

What China intended, of course, fell short of what the Indian Government desired. The Indian demand, as advanced after their initial defeats, was that before there could be any discussions the Chinese must withdraw to the positions they had held prior to 8 September the date on which they invested Dhola Post. Such a withdrawal would have had the Chinese pulling back over Thagla ridge and, in the western sector, evacuating all the Indian posts set up under the forward policy and over run in the fighting. The Indians would then have been able to resume the positions they had held inside the Chinese claim line in the west, and north of the map-marked McMahon Line in the Thagla area. As Peking had pointed out in the ceasefire declaration, the withdrawal of Chinese troops for twenty kilometres all along the 1959 line of actual control would in fact place them well behind their positions of 8 September, 1962. But in New Delhi's view it was not enough for the Chinese to withdraw their troops; the Indians wanted all Chinese personnel to withdraw; and they wanted to return to their forward policy positions themselves, in the wake of the Chinese withdrawal.

A week after the ceasefire, Chou-en-lai wrote again to Nehru appealing for Indian reciprocation for the Chinese measures. He urged that the Chinese proposals had given 'full consideration to the decency, dignity and self-respect of both sides', and argued that their implementation would not involve gain or loss of territory for either side. But he warned that Chinese

withdrawal could not by itself be expected to prevent clashes, and that Indian refusal to co-operate would jeopardize the ceasefire.

A sharply worded Chinese note of 8 December accused India of 'deliberate haggling and evading an answer'. Peking put three blunt questions: 'Does the Indian government agree, or does not agree, to a ceasefire?.....Does the Indian Government agree, or does not agree, that the armed forces of the two sides should disengage and withdraw each twenty kilometres from the 7 November, 1959, line of actual control? Does the Indian Government agree, or does it not agree, that officials of the two sides should meet?' But the Indian position was such now that the only possible public answer to the questions was: 'Yes and no.' For domestic and international effect Nehru and his colleagues were saying that the struggle with China would continue, that the deceitful Chinese proposals must be rejected, the Chinese warning, that India must not send troops right up to the McMahon Line decried. But in fact the Indian Army was under orders to preserve the ceasefire and avoid giving any provocation to the Chinese. It had no intention of moving right up to the McMahon Line again; and through Mrs Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon, Nehru even gave an indirect and secret assurance to Cho En-lai on that score. The Forward Policy was dead, with the two or three thousand Indian soldiers lost in the fighting; but the fundamental position of the Indian Government had only been confirmed by the defeat on the borders. No negotiations remained the basic Indian stand. If that was ever to be changed it could only be long after the bitter humiliation of the border war had faded, and after Nehru and his colleagues had left the scene. But, as from the beginning, that unyielding and unchanging

refusal to negotiate had to be cloaked, the onus for preventing settlement shifted to Peking.

As always, this was not difficult for the Indians to achieve, so high was their reputation for a pacific approach, so low the general opinion of China. The border war, almost universally reported as unprovoked Chinese invasion of India, had only confirmed the general impression that Peking pursued reckless, chauvinistic and belligerent foreign policy. Explanations for the unilateral Chinese ceasefire and withdrawal were sought outside the Sino-Indian context. There was speculation that a Russian ultimatum might have brought it about or that the Chinese called off their invasion because the United States had cleared its hands of the Cuba confrontation and world have intervened to help India. Others were ready to accept the popular Indian explanation, which was that the Chinese had to stop and then withdraw because they had overstretched their lines of communication and were vulnerable to Indian counter-attack that, in fact, the Chinese withdrawal had been 'basically inspired by fear', as an Indian MP put it. In time it almost came to be believed that the Chinese had turned tail rather than face 'the unexpected anger of the Indian people when aroused,' as Nehru put it.

So far as the NEFA front was concerned, the ceasefire that came into effect at midnight on 21 November was a formality. Organized fighting there had effectively ended nearly forty-eight hours before, when the remnants of 48 Infantry Brigade had finally even broken up at Chaku. After that, the two sides ceased to be in contact any where in the eastern sector. The Chinese had not followed up the Indian troops retreating down the Lohit valley from Walong, nor did

they press on after those making for the plains from Chaku. Although the Chinese seem to have made no attempt to round up the thousands of Indian troops outflanked and left behind by their advance, skirmishes continued in NEFA for a week after the ceasefire. Some parties of Indians were ambushed on their trek to the plains, sometimes suffering heavy casualties in these actions. Most of the retreating Indians had no knowledge of the ceasefire, and it appears that in some instances Chinese troops disregarded it.

In the western sector, the ceasefire was more definite. There the Chinese had not advanced on Chushul after overrunning the forward Indian positions, around the heights at Rezang La, but they had been shelling the Indians around Chushul itself and the airstrip; that firing ceased at the given time. The Indian Army in the western sector had suffered from none of the confusion and indecision that had compounded the rout in the east, and was still in a fighting posture at the ceasefire, ready to give battle if the Chinese advanced further. Heavy reinforcement of the Chushul force continued, and within a few days after the ceasefire the Indians were sending out patrols again to develop contact with their enemy and test his intentions.

On the plains below NEFA the Indians were more cautious. A new brigade there was ordered not to move across the Chinese claim line, ie to keep back from the hills themselves; and Army HQ instructed IV Corps to make no provocations and avoid patrol clashes. As the survivors from the debacle trickled on to the plains they were collected into unit groups, preparatory to the long task of reorganizing them and repairing their broken morale. Survivors continued to emerge from the foot-hills for several weeks, so arduous was their

trek back and many Indian troops died from exposure or starvation on the way.

It was a long time before any count of Indian losses could be made. In 1965 the Defence Ministry released these figures:

Killed.....	1,383
Missing.....	1,696
Captured.....	3,968

Twenty-six died of wounds in captivity. About ninety per cent of the Indian casualties were suffered in NEFA.

The Indian Army later estimated that the Chinese had used three divisions in the NEFA fighting; one normal and one light division for the main thrust through Tawang, Se La and Bomdila to foothills; and another division - of possibly a regimental group for the Walong action. The Indian force in NEFA numbered at its maximum about twenty-five infantry battalions, equivalent to just under three normal infantry divisions so probably the Chinese, overall, had only a narrow numerical superiority. But the Indian forces were so scattered that in most of the actions the Chinese would have had no difficulty in putting into effect Mao's teaching; 'in every battle, concentrate an absolutely superior force.' Where that was not done-as, probably, at Sela the Chinese were saved hard fighting by the dissolution of the Indian position before it was struck.

Where the Indians stood and fought the Chinese appear to have suffered heavy casualties. At Thembang, for example, where the Guards made their stand on 17 November, Indian intelligence later concluded that the Chinese had suffered between three and four hundred

killed. Evidence of substantial Chinese casualties were found when the Indians returned to the Walong battlefield and to Rezang La in the western sector. However no Chinese prisoner was taken by the Indians.

The Chinese came to the foothills below Chaku only in strong patrols. Their limit of patrolling was the top of hills across the plain. They never entered the plains.

In India and to some extent, abroad there was scepticism that the China would fulfil her proclaimed intention to withdraw behind the McMahon Line. But on 30 November the Defence Ministry in Peking confirmed that the Chinese forces were about to begin their withdrawal, and punctually on 1 December they began to pull back. The withdrawal was slow. On 5 December the Chinese handed over some wounded Indian prisoners at Bomdila, and it was only about a week later they began to pull out from there. The Chinese had a lot of tidying up to do, and went about the task with meticulous, even fussy care. They made it a matter of principle, or pride, that all the equipment left behind by the Indians should be handed back to them in as good a condition as possible. Accordingly it was collected, stacked, piled or parked; cleared, polished, and carefully inventoried small arms, mortars, artillery, trucks, shells and ammunition, clothing, and all the other impediments of a defeated army. Among the equipment returned were a few American automatic rifles, the first instalment of American military assistance, captured at Sela before they could be uncrated and issued to the troops and a Russian helicopter, in serviceable condition.

Peking asked New Delhi to arrange for the equipment to be received, and Indian civilian parties

were sent to take control of it, the Chinese checking off items and taking receipts. China did not publicize this extraordinary transaction, and said later that there was no intention to do so; it was simply a gesture to further demonstrate..... sincerity for a peaceful settlement. But although they co-operated by formally receiving the returned material, the Indians bitterly resented what they felt was an added humiliation, and denounced the Chinese gesture as propaganda manoeuvre - thereby drawing attention to it.

The Indian Army did not return to NEFA on the heels of the withdrawing Chinese. Administration was taken over by civilians, who reached Tawang on 21 January 1963; and it was many months before the first Indian troops moved back into NEFA. The ceasefire remained informal. Indian observation of it was tacit, though careful. New Delhi ignored the Chinese demand that Indian troops be withdrawn twenty kilometres from the line of actual control in the western and middle sectors, and Peking did not press that point. But in the eastern sector the Indians kept out of the territory between Thagla ridge and the map-marked McMahon Line which was left to the Assam Rifles The Army, it's own tactical interest coinciding with the Chinese demand, now kept well back.

In the aftermath of the ceasefire, the Indian government found that among the Afro-Asian countries there was a marked inclination to give Peking credit for a genuine attempt to return the dispute to the negotiating table. New Delhi felt itself under pressure to accept the Chinese ceasefire proposals, and resented it. 'Those who do not understand the full signification of the deceptive Chinese proposals naturally ask why we cannot accept (them),' the official spokesman in New Delhi explained at the end of November; and Nehru

noted with some exasperation that the non-aligned countries were failing to grasp things that were obvious to India.

President Nasser of the United Arab Republic was giving the Indian Government no grounds for complaint at this time, however. The Indians found him 'one hundred per cent behind them, and prepared to act as their stalking horse by putting forward as the proposals of the UAR suggestion, in fact made by the Indian Government. The UAR with Indian encouragement mooted the idea of convening a conference of Afro-Asian Governments to discuss the ceasefire and possible bases of bilateral negotiation. Mrs. Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon, agreed to convene the conference in Colombo, and six delegations met there on 20 December; Ceylon, the UAR, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia and Burma were represented. The Governments concerned had previously been carefully briefed by special ministerial missions from New Delhi as to the minimal Indian requirements. In essence, these remained the restoration of the positions that obtained on 8 September; in other words, 'that the Indians should be permitted to return to the posts set up in the western sector under the forward policy, and to Dhola Post in the east.'

The UAR delegation in Colombo pressed for full restoration of 8 September position but as that would plainly be unacceptable to China, and was therefore resisted by the other conferees, a compromise was evolved. So far as the eastern sector was concerned, the Colombo powers proposed that the line of actual control (ie the McMahon Line) could serve as the ceasefire line. This ignored China's stipulation that both sides should keep their armed forces twenty kilometres back from the line, but left the question of

specific areas in dispute, such as that below Thagla ridge, for future bilateral discussions.

The nub of the Colombo proposals, as of the whole dispute, lay in the western sector, however. There, the Colombo powers proposed that China should carry out the twenty-kilometre withdrawal which she had proposed in the ceasefire announcement; but that there should be no reciprocation on the Indian side, the Indians staying where they were. Then, 'pending a final solution of the border dispute, the area vacated by the Chinese military withdrawals will be a demilitarized 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. This passage of the Colombo proposals pointed to the return of the Indians to the areas they had infiltrated under the forward policy, and was thus the crucial concession from New Delhi's point of view. But, perhaps they were ambiguous at this point, and could be read to imply that the presence of Indian civilian posts across the line of actual control (ie the Chinese claim line) in the western sector had 'to be agreed upon' by China.

When Mrs Bandaranaike came to New Delhi in January to submit the Colombo proposals, the Indians persuaded her to allow them to remove that ambiguity. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs drafted, and Mrs. Bandaranaike released, 'clarifications' of the original proposal.' This was the key passage: 'The demilitarized zone of twenty kilometres created by the Chinese military withdrawals (in the western sector) will be administered by civilian posts of both sides. This is a substantive part of the Colombo Conference proposals. It is as to their location, the number of posts and their composition that there has to be an

agreement between the two Governments of India and China. Nehru then informed Mrs Bandaranaike that India accepted the Colombo proposals, as thus clarified, in principle. At the same time Chou En-lai informed Mrs Bandaranaike that China accepted the proposals in principle, and it seemed that two sides were for once in agreement.

But Chou stated what he called 'two points of interpretation' which were in fact reservations. As 'clarified' by the Indian Government, the proposals looked in China's fulfilling most of the provisions of her ceasefire declaration, but exempted India from any obligation of reciprocity. Chou now suggested that in the east, as in the west, the Indian military forces should stay where they were. But the crux from the Chinese point of view, appears to have lain in his second 'point of interpretation'. He argued that the Indians should not be allowed back into the strip in the west into which they had infiltrated under the forward policy, either with troops or civilian personnel. To allow this, Peking maintained, would be 'tantamount to recognizing as legitimate the Indian armed invasion of this area and its setting up of forty-three strong points there between 1959 and 1962'. Instead, Chou volunteered that China would pull all her posts out of that area, civilian as well as military. Chou suggested that neither his 'points of interpretation' nor reservations on the Indian side should delay the opening of talks. Such difference could be resolved in the talks themselves.

But the Indian Government was as resistant as ever to any kind of direct exchange with the Chinese. 'We cannot have any kind of talks, even preliminary talks, unless we are satisfied that the condition we

had laid down about the 8 September position being restored, is 'met,' Nehru told the Lok Sabha.

The situation was as confused and apparently contradictory as ever. China was again urging the early opening of negotiations India was refusing, and setting conditions even for limited official 'talks'. But the Opposition in Parliament was pressing Nehru for ever clearer under-takings that he would not talk to the Chinese until they had vacated every inch of Indian soil, while he was seemingly flouting those demands with reiterations of his old pledge to talk to anyone, at any time- 'even to an enemy in the midst of war'. Beneath the rhetoric, however, the Indian approach was unchanged, they were seeking a way to avoid meeting the Chinese without seeming to rebuff the attempts of the Colombo powers. Peking's reservations to the Colombo proposals gave the answer. On learning of those, the Indian Government promptly declared that it accepted the Colombo proposals, as clarified by themselves, 'in toto', and declared that there could be no further step towards talks or discussions until Peking had also accepted the proposals together with the Indian clarifications in toto. Once again skilful Indian diplomacy had avoided negotiations by making physical concessions by China a precondition. And once again the onus for obstructing a meeting seemed to be left on China.

The general impression that it was India who was anxious to explore every avenue for peaceful settlement and China who was balking was strengthened by a reference Nehru made at this time to the possibility of referring the boundary dispute to the International Court at The Hague. Previously Nehru had categorically ruled out any adjudication or arbitration on the main boundary dispute, but now he seemed to reverse that

stand. He told the Lok Sabha 'I am prepared when the time comes, provided there is approval of Parliament, even to refer the basic dispute of the claims on the frontier to an international body like to International Court of Justice at The Hague. 'This was reported in the foreign press as a substantive Indian concession, while Nehru's gloss on his remark, a little later, went unnoted. The reference to the International Court was ill-received in the House, member objecting to the suggestion that a part of the motherland could be made the object of adjudication, and Nehru immediately backed away. It had been a casual remark, he explained. 'What I said was that if and when the time came for it, if the House, agrees, if Parliament agrees, we might perhaps think of it'. In spite of the qualifications with which he had watered down his first reference to the International Court, Nehru later quoted it to Chou En-lai, citing this as proof of his sincere desire for a peaceful settlement. The gambit was safe, there was no possibility of Peking's accepting it and submitting a question concerning China's sovereignty to adjudication-especially by a body on which China was represented by the KMT.

By this time it was plain that the Indian Government's determination not to negotiate a settlement had only been confirmed by the defeat on the borders. Writing to Nehru in April, 1963, Chou Em-lai accused him of taking a dishonest approach, and of having no intention whatever of holding negotiations. India, he said, had exploited ambiguities in the Colombo proposals to interpret those as conforming with the Indian demand for restoration of the 8 September positions, and was not trying to convert them into an adjudication and force them on China. As for the reference to the International Court, that was plainly an attempt to cover up the fact that

the Indian Government refuses to negotiate.' Chou reiterated China's readiness to open negotiations immediately on the basis of the Colombo proposals, which both sides had accepted in principle. But, he went on, if the Indian Government, owing to its internal and external political requirements, is not prepared to hold negotiations for the time being, China is willing to wait with patience.

A year later Nehru said in Parliament that he would be willing to consider opening talks if the Chinese completely evacuated the twenty kilometre strip on their side of the line in the western sector (implying that India would waive her insistence on the re-establishment of Indian posts in that Zone). Chou En-lai had previously proposed exactly that compromise and when the idea was put to the Chinese Government by two emissaries of Bertrand Russell, who had discussed it with Nehru, the Chinese did not rule it out; they said that the proposal, if seriously meant, should come from the Indian Government itself. Now Delhi, however, instantly denied that the Russell emissaries had been entrusted with any message from Nehru, and said only that if the Chinese evacuated the western strip 'the new situation... might merit consideration'. But by this time the Chinese Government had decided that it would be useless to open discussions on the borders with India unless there was evidence of a radical change of Indian approach. There was every reason to believe, Peking said, that the Indian Government will not be prepared to negotiate the boundary question in earnest and bring about a settlement even if all its pre-conditions are fulfilled. It has always been the attitude of the Indian Government that it completely denies the existence of a boundary question between China and India. It arbitrarily holds that the alignment it claims is the

fixed boundary between China and India; and at most it admits the existence of some minor 'differences'. Hence it holds in effect that Indian-occupied Chinese territory is not negotiable either, and that negotiations, if any, must be confined to China's withdrawal or India's entrance..... In these circumstances, it can be foreseen that no results will be obtained ever though boundary negotiations are held.

The diplomatic exchanges, which New Delhi continued to publish, went on for a year. The laurels for debating skill rested with the Indians, who continued to present themselves as the aggrieved party, and the Chinese as an aggressive and recalcitrant. On the ground the position was reversed. There the boundaries had in fact already been settled by China's crushing victory.

As the dust of battle subsided, most of the internationally conscious class of Indians had to come to terms with a sad new world. The abiding truths of yesterday had been falsified. Those who had been regarded as supporters and friends had failed in the first role and consequently been dropped from the second. By giving more thought to stopping the fighting than to the causes and merits of the dispute the non-aligned countries, in the Indian view, had been guilty of betrayal; that India herself had preached just that approach to the world's brawls was forgotten. There was strong resentment at what were called : these immoral neutralists who have refused to give India the unreserved sympathy and support she had asked for'. The Soviet Union also came in for a share of this displeasure. The United States, Britain, and other Western powers, on the other hand, had been seen to step forward staunchly in the hour of India's need,

denouncing China, offering India weapons and other assistance.

India emerged from the border war with a feeling that the fruits of defeat might not, after all, be so bitter. The country appeared to be united as never before, and the Government was so confident that this was no passing phenomenon that it suspended that committee it had set up to promote national integration, arguing that the war had done its work for it. As for the defeat, itself, the myth-makers were soon at work. A week after the ceasefire a journalist wrote from Tezpur: 'If Dunkirk has gone down in history as the best example of British courage and determination in the face of the greatest odds, the planned withdrawal of several thousand Indian Jawans (soldiers) and officers from the besieged 14,000-ft Sela region in NEFA will surely be regarded by future historians as a great page in military history. By and large the official explanations for the debacle were accepted, the blame put on the Chinese rather than on the Indian Government or on the military leadership. It was suggested that the Chinese had won because they fought in overwhelming numbers, without regard for casualties, and took the defenders often by surprise. Much was made of the climatic and logistical difficulties that faced the Indian troops, few asking why, unprepared, they had been made to engage the Chinese in circumstances so adverse.

One area in which the Indian Government did show decisiveness and determination was that of defence. Stinted for years, the armed services, and especially of course the Army were now given almost a blank cheque. In the next two years India's defence expenditure was more than doubled. The Army formed six new infantry divisions, organized and armed for

combat in mountainous country, and was able to replace its obsolete equipment and stores with the latest available American and British supplies. Although a good deal of the expenses were covered by military assistance, the suddenly increased outlay on defence inevitably had a distorting effect on the third Five Year Plan, which had begun in 1961. The Indian development effort had begun to labour in the late 1950s but in the succeeding decade flagged and failed. The burden of rearmament and of developing and maintaining a strong defensive posture was at least one of the main factors in this failure.

The political position of the Indian Army had been sharply changed, almost reversed, by the debacle. There would be no more interference by the civilians in internal Army matters, in future it would be the chastened politicians who would know their place, rather than cavalierly keep the soldiers in theirs.

After the border war, much less was heard in India about forcing the Chinese 'to vacate their aggression'-although in 1970 the opposition Congress tried to commit the Government to doing just that. The forward policy was not revived. The Army built up its forward positions; but these remained outside the Chinese claim line and the dispositions were defensive. The soldiers appreciated that the tactical advantages in the western sector were so overwhelmingly with the Chinese that it would never be possible to develop and sustain a major offensive against them there. If the Chinese were ever to be driven off the Aksai Chin plateau, it could only be after they had been defeated militarily elsewhere. But the overall superiority in numbers of the Chinese Army and their advantages in movement on the Tibetan plateau make it likely that the Indians can never hope to mount a successful

offensive action anywhere on the northern borders-so long as China's central power is unbroken.

While the borders thus settled down into an armed truce, diplomatic relations between China and India were also frozen in a sort of limbo. Diplomatic relations with Peking had not been broken off, for all the pressure on Nehru to do so. He did, however, close the Chinese Consulate in Bombay, a concession to domestic opinion which cost India her consulate in Lhasa-a loss which must have made Lord Curzon turn in his grave. It was years before anyone in India was bold enough to suggest that one day relations with China would have to be mended, and when Mrs Indira Gandhi, The Prime Minister, did put out feelers to that effect in 1969 she was criticized in Parliament. The Chinese, for their part, showed no interest in improving relations with India. Chinese maps continue to ignore the McMahon Line and show the eastern boundary with India running along the edge of the Brahmaputra valley, just as India maintaining the claim to Aksai Chin; presumably, however, Peking's long-standing offer to negotiate a boundary settlement on the basis of the status quo, when India is ready to do so, still stands. But thus to go back to the beginning would mean India's tacit admission of error, and recantation of the deeply cherished belief that in 1962 she was the innocent victim of unprovoked Chinese aggression. That will never be easy.

The Chinese started their withdrawal not on 1 December as they had announced but much later and moved at a snail's pace and did not cross the passes till towards the end of January taking over a month to traverse the area which they had covered in three days in their forward march. The explanation of this slow and delayed withdrawal given by the Chinese

to their sympathisers was that they were watching the rate of flow of foreign military aid to India and assessing whether the Indian Government, strengthened by this foreign assistance, would be emboldened to strike back at their retreating army. The Chinese left in junk heaps most of the Indian arms which they had captured and for which they had no use. After rendering them ineffective, they asked India with a show of generosity to send officials to take over these arms. They, however, took away all vehicles, pump sets, hospital equipment, power units and even the helicopter which had crashed at Lumpu.

The Chinese did not allow the International Red Cross to visit Indian prisoners and thus violated the Geneva Convention. But the Indian Government allowed the Red Cross to visit Chinese civilian prisoners at Delhi and, though the Red Cross was satisfied with the way they were being treated, the Chinese carried on propaganda of maltreatment of these prisoners and repeatedly demanded their release and repatriation. These threats however, had no effect on the Indian Government and, even when finally released, only a small number wanted to be repatriated to China and the rest went back to their homes in different states of India and settled down in the occupations they were pursuing before their arrest.

The detention of these Chinese prisoners on security grounds, however, produced one good result. The Chinese released the Indian prisoners numbering about 3,000 by the end of April, 1963. They had done their best to brain-wash the prisoners and paraded the officer-soldier camaraderie supposedly prevailing in the Chinese Army. They kept the Gorkhas isolated from the rest and made a special effort to win them over by propagating that they were not Indians and China and

Nepal were good friends. But all these attempts to subvert the troops and separate the Gorkhas misfired. Again to show their friendliness, the Chinese took a batch of Indian officers on a conducted tour of China to impress them with the grand progress socialist China had made compared to poverty-stricken India.

All the time Chinese propaganda against India continued unabated-professing everlasting friendship between the Chinese and the Indian peoples, attacking the Indian Government for allegedly adopting an anti-China policy only to suppress the democratic struggle of the Indian people and asking the latter to force their Government to accept the hand of friendship which China had proffered. That all this was a ruse to deceive the Indian people was evident from the progaganda that China was putting out among her own populatation regarding India. It was reliably learnt that at about this time the Chinese Deputy foreign Minister was briefing important overseas Chinese leaders on the points to be propagated amongst members of their own community as well as among the local population. The briefing was as follows: India had been tought a good lesson. At the same time China had shown magnanimity by withdrawing from conquered territory. China would wait till the next summer to see what development would occur in India and what would be the extent of foreign arms aid and then decide on the next step to take. China had no intention of recognising the McMahan Line as the frontier between India and China in the Eastern Sector but China had not quite made up her mind regarding the frontier she would ultimately decide on. Pandit Nehru's intransigence was due to his dependence on the bourgeoisic and the feudal elements in India and the imperialists abroad and he was raising the China bogey only to stabilise his own

position in India, which was under pressure from the left.

In actual fact, China adopted a most aggressive posture again in July, 1963 and started propagating in the areas bordering NEFA that her army would again move into NEFA immediately after the monsoon. Actually a Chinese Brigade had moved into North Burma and had taken positions to the east of the Lohit and Tirap Divisions of NEFA. But the threatened invasion did not come, because though Indian civil administration had gone back to all the original positions and so had our Intelligence units, the Indian army had not yet moved forward and, therefore there would have been no excuse for this invasion. probably it was just a ruse to intimidate India to force her to come to the negotiating table, a course which the Chinese Government very strongly desired and which it had put down as one of the cardinal point of its foreign policy even as early as 1961.

In the meantime, the six Colombo Powers representing Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, UAR and Ghana met at Colombo between 10 & 12 December, 1962 at the initiative of the Ceylonese Prime Minister, Smt. Bandarnaike, and drew up what later became famous as the Colombo Proposals.

The Colombo Powers' proposals with the explanation given, if implemented by China and India, would mean that in the eastern sector the McMahon Line would be the ipso facto cease-fire line and Indian and Chinese troops could be posted right up to the frontier excepting at Longju and Che Dong which neither of the countries could occupy till a permanent border settlement was arrived at. In the middle sector the status quo would continue and as India was in

physical-civil and military-control of the entire territory up to the Himalayan watershed in Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab there was going to be no alteration to that position. In the Western Sector, i.e. in Ladakh, the Chinese would withdraw 20 kilometers from their line of occupation, i.e. their 1960 claim line except for slight deviation in Depsang plains and Demchok area and the Indians would hold their existing positions along that line and in that 20 kilometre belt there would be joint civilian posts of the Chinese and the Indians. This would mean that in the south-eastern portion of Ladakh from Demchok to Spanggur the Chinese would vacate the entire territory of India which they had occupied by force and even withdraw from some portions of their own territory and India could then establish civilian posts in these places and so could China. In the Aksai Chin, Lingzi Tang and Depsang Plains, the Chinese would generally have to withdraw from most of their westernmost positions and even from a portion of the circular road from Shamui Lungpa to Lanak La. This demilitarised area would be occupied by civilian staff of both the countries.

So, with these explanations the Colombo proposals came nearest to the demands made by Pandit Nehru of Chinese withdrawals before he would enter into any talks. At the instance of the Prime Minister, Parliament endorsed the Government's acceptance of these proposals on the other hand, though during Smt. Bandaranaike's visit to Peking with the proposals, China had said that she was going to give a positive response, after the explanation given by these powers at New Delhi, China did not show any willingness to accept these proposals and made reservation, where these were at variance with her ceasefire proposals. She insisted that the main purpose of the Six was to

bring the two countries to the negotiating table and that should be done without preconditions. This was the first diplomatic set-back which China received and she thereby put herself in the wrong in the eyes of these six countries who were friends of both India and China. All their efforts at restoring and promoting friendly relations between the two Asian countries were rendered futile due to Chinese intransigence which thus blocked further peace talks. So they were frustrated and disillusioned. The fact that this friendly approach by six neutral, nonaligned Asian and African countries had been ultimately nullified by the Chinese had its own psychological effect on the minds of the other Afro-Asian countries and even on the minds of the socialist countries of Europe. To offset this and to isolate India, China, from her position of strength, made great efforts throughout the whole of 1963 to oust India from her position of influence in Africa by trying to win the friendship of the African countries and Chou En-lai made extensive tours and promises of lavish assistance. But the Africans, learning from the bitter lessons of the Indians had become doubly wary and China's ministrations generally fell on deaf ears and, instead of being able to isolate India, it was China which gradually started becoming isolated. At one time the Chinese had also tried to gain influence in South America, but she was finally disowned even by the South American Communist parties. China also hastily concluded border treaties with Afghanistan, Mongolia and Burma, but in joint communiques issued in Burma and Afghanistan, these countries stressed in their statements that peace between India and China should be restored on the basis of the Colombo proposals. Inclusion of this suggestion in the communiques was really a slap in China's face. Ultimately by 1964 the only real friend China was left with was Pakistan not

because of any ideological unity between her and China but because of their common hostility towards India.

The upshot of all this was that though India's military prestige, which had been high till then in the Asian and African countries, had received a severe blow. She held on to all the territories which were under her occupation prior to September, 1962 except in north-east Ladakh. Most of this area in N E Ladakh had been occupied by the China prior to September, 1962 but India lost the strip of territory (2500 sq. miles) east of the Chinese-claim line which she had occupied before the hostilities. Considering the nature of this terrain, the net material loss in territory was little; but the humiliation suffered was great.

PART-III

CHAPTER TEN

COOKS WHO SPOILT THE BROTH

Prime Minister Nehru was highly popular with Indian masses. He was a great visionary and an intellectual. At this time he had Shri Radha Krishnan as President who was a great scholar and philosopher.

In Nehru we had a great freedom fighter Prime Minister who had made an indelible mark in the country's politics and in international affairs. Though, Nehru had understood and appreciated the theories of Clausewitz and Chanakya on war, as apparent from his book 'Discovery of India', when he came to power he was, strangely, casual about the defence forces. He harped on his views of peaceful progress and the non-aligned movement. He thought that might was no more right and the nation's worth was not determined by arms and armies, a negative characteristic of a good ruler.

He believed in the traditions of non-violence and the spiritual values of Ashoka. He preached the gospel of peaceful co-existence. He signed the Panchsheel agreement with China and ruled out war. He thought that the Panchsheel had made China and India eternal friends. Nehru wrongly put faith in China's sincerity and on 200 years of Sino-Indian friendship. He ignored the well-known axiom that nations have no permanent friends but only permanent interests. He sacrificed

India's interests for a mistaken friendship and acquiesced in the act of taking over of Tibet by the greedy Mao-Tse-Tung and supported the entry of communist China into the United Nations Organisation.

Nehru was unaware of the existence of the Aksai Chin road until the Chinese announced in September 1957 the construction of the road. Nehru failed to take into confidence either Parliament or the Public until 1959. He, however, gracefully conceded that "It was possibly an error on my part not to have brought the facts before the House." Still as late as the autumn of 1959 he sought to minimise the whole border question and dismissed the Aksai as a waste land "where not a blade of grass grows" and completely showed ignorance about the strategical military requirements. He lost a border area as no sentinel was posted or patrolling done by Army or Airforce planes or border police.

Nehru clung to the view that the Chinese did not think of strong action or war. However, he later confessed that we were getting out of touch with reality in the modern world and we were living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation. In fact as far as military matters were concerned Nehru was no match for the Chinaman Mao-Tse-Tung. Mao was a military genius and a hard headed revolutionary; he was a descendant of Chengalz Khan; whilst Nehru was a pacifist, a believer in non-violence and a staunch follower of Budha and Ashoka: Nehru did not have the aptitude and spirit for a fight. He was just a socialist planner, believer in new high ideal of non-alignment and did not understand what national security entailed, resultantly he did not strengthen the Indian Army. In sheer diplomacy and impressions he would have surpassed all the politicians of the world put together provided the world had no armies to manage and wars

were mutually banned and all defence ministries of the world were disbanded. But his diplomacy was incapable of bringing about these conditions. War was not his forte. In USA, Britain and Russia, head of the government, in their earlier careers, had served with the Armed Forces in one way or the other; this does not happen in India though it has a large Army and has fought more wars than other armies in the last forty five years; even other Prime Ministers had not any experience in managing the armed forces. Being scared of civil strife Nehru became party to the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

Nehru had much divergence of views with Deputy Prime Minister. This difference of views is illustrated in a letter written by Patel to Nehru is given at Appendix 'L'. It appears Patel had better understanding of defence matters than Nehru.

The second man under review is Krishna Menon. He considered Pakistan as India's real enemy and not China. Menon had an ideological bias in favour of Communist China and he hated Pakistan. He was charged with grave negligence in failing to realize the imminent Chinese threat. In Feb 1962 Menon declared "The India - China border dispute was not of such magnitude as could precipitate a war." Thus he misunderstood the Chinese intransigence and three of them Nehru, Menon and Kaul set the Thames on fire.

Menon caused friction in the functioning of the Ministry of Defence. He tried to browbeat the generals and particularly the Chief of Army Staff General Thimmaya. He unduly favoured Lt General BM Kaul, a junior General as did Nehru. He began to play politics in the Defence Ministry and formed cliques within the Army headquarters: he thought he could teach the

service chiefs. He also bypassed them. In fact he was part of the Nehru lobby planted by him in the Defence Ministry to foil any coup against him.

His actions adversely affected the morale of all ranks and he was directly responsible for the poor performance of the Indian troops in NEFA against the Chinese. However, he was imbued with tactical sense. He understood and appreciated the merits of the Defence in Depth doctrine. He resigned after the defeat of the Army but stayed on in the Congress back benches until the general election of 1967. When the party organization in his Bombay constituency denied him the Congress nomination he stood as an independent but was defeated.

He was a man of his own class. He was hardworking, an intellectual and sharp-witted but had traits of cynicism. He was selfless but arrogant and intolerant.

Next man in line was General PN Thapar, the Chief of Army Staff. He did not force his personality. He failed to assess the strength of the Chinese at Thagla in NEFA. When he was criticised for not evicting the Chinese from our territory he blamed the forward troops.

He did not lay any terms of reference for Appreciation of the Military Situation. He was influenced by vague political phrases. He did not have the force of character to influence the impulsive Nehru or the domineering Krishna Menon and even the military commanders under him. He abdicated his responsibility and lacked decision making capability still it is of some credit that he obtained written orders

from the Ministry of Defence for attack on Thagla though these were signed by a Joint Secretary only.

After the debacle General Thapar resigned on the grounds of ill-health. He was, however, more fortunate. He was appointed Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan; his appointment being one of the last papers signed by Nehru before his death in 1964.

In the next position was Lt General LP Sen DSO who was the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Eastern Command with his headquarters at Lucknow. Sikkim, Bhutan, NEFA, Assam and whole of eastern region were his Army responsibility.

He had commanded 161st Infantry Brigade in the Kashmir Valley in 1947-48 and acquitted himself well. Later he held important appointments in the Army. He is also the author of the good book 'Slender was the Thread' on 1947-48 conflict between Pakistan in J&K. In contrast to his earlier performance his reputation slumped in the 1962 NEFA operations. In 1962 he did not display the old vigour and energy he showed in 1947-48. He did not stand up to the government to protest against its unreasonable and unattainable aims and appeared diffident. On the other hand he did not visit the forward troops as an Army Commander should have done and he too abdicated his responsibility. This apathy may be due to the dominant personality of his Corps commander General Kaul. General Sen continued as GOC-in-C Eastern Command until he resigned from the Army, some time after the events of 1962.

The fourth man was Lt General BM Kaul, CGS and the Commander of the IV Corps, which was specially raised for the defence of NEFA. Though Kaul

was extremely hard working diligent, intelligent and clear headed but he was flamboyant. Though he was a forceful personality he lacked the military skill and tenacity of a Corps Commander. His earlier appointment of the Chief of General Staff was also not in conformity with his professional experience and background. His appointment as Quarter Master General was good enough. These high appointments smacked of Nehru's and Menon's anxiety to place him in the galaxy of the distinguished men. He tried to attain a high position in the hierarchy and attempt to rise to the top aided by phony army tactics and with contacts with highly placed politicians and caused many eyebrows to be raised. It was known that he had access to Nehru and Menon and that he nurtured political ambitions. His book 'Untold Story' amply divulges this fact. It is said that he deftly exploited his kinship with Nehru to achieve advancement in his Army career and wanted to use his Army career as a leverage to gain political aims. Whatever the Army planning hit did had a political tinge.

He was the architect of the Forward Policy which was miles away from military appreciation and tenets. In implementing the strange Forward Policy he crumbled and upset the chain of normal Army command. It is said that but for this Forward Policy, a substitute for proper military action, this Sino-Indian conflict would not have taken place. The Forward Policy provoked the Chinese to take to undeclared war so that India desisted from the so called farcical positional warfare. Probably Kaul was employing the policy of brinkmanship which failed and had a boomerang effect. This view has been supported by the peace conditions which have prevailed for the next three decades and have prompted peace talks between the two countries.

In his earlier Army career his domestic constraints did not permit him to have proper hard professional and combat experience that one gets specially in the infantry or other arms. It is admitted that he partly made up for this weakness with intelligence; but weaknesses of the formative period continued to persist. He was initially commissioned into the Infantry. I wish he had continued in this arm. Then one could have had the opportunity to see him in proper perspective. However, he changed to the Army Service Corps.

There is no doubt that Kaul was a remarkable man and much above his contemporaries. He was a most hard working and ebullient. He committed mistakes but his blunder was that Kaul allowed General Pathania latitude to abandon Sela when young officers were yearning to fight out there where they had prepared the defences meticulously.

However, it is a moot question, that when the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister stood behind Kaul all along they did not come to his rescue with the employment of Air Force, which was kept in mothballs. After the ceasefire the Chief of Army Staff, proposed to transfer displaced Kaul to a training command in Punjab, but the latter put in his resignation. Nehru, in Kaul's account, attempted to dissuade him and then wrote him a letter of condolence:

My dear Biji,

I am sorry that you are retiring. I tried to induce you not to do so but as you were determined on it I could not do any thing about it. The events which have led to your retirement are sad and have distressed many of us. I am sure, however that you were not specially to blame for them. A large number of people

and perhaps just the circumstances were responsible for them.

I am sure that a man like you, full of energy and patriotism, should not merely rest without doing anything useful for the country. Perhaps a little later you can find this useful work.....

Yours affectionately
Jawaharlal Nehru

According to Kaul, Nehru, later amplified that closing hint, telling him that he might be appointed lieutenant-governor of Himachal Pradesh. Feelers were apparently put out in New Delhi to test the likely political reaction. Perhaps the Prime Minister concluded that it would be too strongly adverse to Kaul's appointment, and the idea was dropped. But at Nehru's behest Kaul was later employed by a Dr Teja, a financier who had persuaded the Prime Minister to provide huge sums of Government money to finance a shipbuilding industry. Kaul resigned before long, and Teja was indicted for fraud.

During that turbulent period a man who held his own and remained composed and steady was Lt Gen K Umrao Singh Commander XXXIII Corps. He was a tall and handsome person and came from a royal martial family of Rajputs. He had a cold analytical mind and displayed great presence of mind. He resolutely refused to be pressurised to unsound measures and tried to defy the clamour to evict the Chinese from Thagla. Umrao was responsible for the defence of NEFA till Lt Gen Kaul was appointed commander of the resurrected IV Corps, and was entrusted with the responsibility. Like many other Army officers he opposed the indiscriminate establishment

of posts under the Forward Policy which was neither politically, tactically nor administratively sound. He emphasised the shortage of troops, ammunition, ration, clothing, defence stores, fire support and lack of road facilities for the task.

Maj General Naranjan Prasad Commander 4 Infantry Division was another upright man. He was stocky and smart and appeared tough. He had candidly put to the Army Headquarters that Operation Unkar which had stipulated border posts, was impractical and tactically unsound and had said that some of the posts, out of the proposed thirty five, were many days march from the nearest mule track head and their proper stocking was impossible. He tried in vain for the disengagement of 7th brigade on both tactical and logistical grounds and moreover its incorrect location on McMahon line. He was removed from the command of 4th Division after the Namka Chu and Tawang debacles, and was reinstated when he appealed personally to the President, and given command of another division, this time in Western command. During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, unfortunately, his personal papers fell into enemy hands, and these were found to include a protest against his supersession, with extensive bitter criticism of his superiors and the Government which Pakistani propaganda highly exploited. Due to this Prasad left the Army immediately.

Apart from squabblings amongst the generals and politicians there were other serious causes for failure of the Indian Army in 1962 war. Foremost cause was the adoption of Panch Sheel, the five principles of peaceful co-existence amongst nations. India placed its mistake trust in the long history of friendship with China. Next cause was the state of affairs in the Defence

Minister Krishna Menon's domain. He did not prepare to deal with threat from China as he thought the real enemy to guard against was Pakistan. When correct realisation came, it was too late. Another cause of failure was that of Krishna Menon's style of working with, his colleagues. The use of Prime Ministers backing and authority at every time did not help. The Defence Minister's working through personal favourites had an adverse effect on the functioning of his Ministry.

Where India failed in having an ally China got Pakistan on his side in 1962 to browbeat India. This alliance has continued in its strange form. Ignorance and uncertainty about the situation in Aksai Chin which is mostly barren and sparsely populated persisted and identical ignorance existed over the McMahon Line.

Indian's faith in the non-aligned movement struck a death blow to military preparations.

Appendix 'L'

(Refers to Page 407)

PATEL'S LETTER TO NEHRU OF 7 NOVEMBER 1950

"Ever since my return from Ahmedabad and after the Cabinet meeting the same day which I had to attend at practically fifteen minutes' notice and for which I regret I was not able to read all the papers, I have been anxiously thinking over the problem of Tibet and I thought I should share with you what is passing through my mind.

I have carefully gone through the correspondence between the External Affairs Ministry and our ambassador in Peking and through him the Chinese Government. I have tried to pursue this correspondence as favourably to our Ambassador and the Chinese Government as possible, but, I regret to say that neither of them come out well as a result of this study. The Chinese government have tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intentions. My own feeling is that at a crucial period, they managed to instil, into our ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means. There can be no doubt that, during the period covered by this correspondence, the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The final action of the Chinese in my judgement is little short of perfidy. The tragedy of it is that the Tibetans put faith in us: they choose to be guided by us; and we have been unable to get them out of the meshes of Chinese diplomacy or Chinese malevolence. From the latest position, it appears that we shall not

be able to rescue the Dalai Lama. Our Ambassador has been at great pains to find an explanation or justification for Chinese policy and actions. As the External Affairs Ministry remarked in one of their telegrams, there was a lack of firmness and unnecessary apology in one or two representations that he made to the Chinese Government on our behalf. It is impossible to imagine any sensible person believing in the legitimate claims, in our discussions and correspondence with America and Britain and in the UNO. In spite of this, China is not convinced about our disinterestedness; it continues to regard us with suspicion and the whole psychology is one, at least outwardly, of scepticism, perhaps mixed with a little of hostility. I doubt if we can go any further than we have done already to convince China of our good intentions, friendliness and goodwill. In Peking we have an Ambassador who is eminently suitable for putting across the friendly point of view. Even he seems to have failed to convert the Chinese. Their last telegram to us is an act of gross discourtesy; not only in the summary way it disposes of our protest against the entry of Chinese forces into Tibet but also in the wild insinuation that our attitude is determined by foreign influences. It looks as though it is not a friend speaking in that language but a potential enemy.

In the background of this, we have to consider that a new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet as we know it, and the expansion of China almost upto our gates. Throughout history, we have seldom been worried about our north-east frontier. The Himalayas had been regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble. The Chinese were divided. They had their own domestic problems and never bothered about our frontiers. In

1914, we entered into a Convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationships, presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter-signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all the stipulations which Tibet has entered into with us in the past. That throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century. China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along the Himalayas in the north and north-east, we have on our side of the frontier, a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans or Mongoloids. The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that Communism is no shield against imperialism and the Communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include important parts of Assam. They have their ambitions in Burma also. Burma has the added difficulty that it has no McMahon Line round which to build up even the semblance of an agreement. Chinese adventurism and Communist imperialism are different from the expansionism or imperialism of the Western Powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national and historical claims. The danger from the north-east, therefore, becomes both communist and imperialist. While our western and north-western threats to security are still as prominent as before, a new threat has

developed from the north and north-east. Thus, for the first time, after centuries. India's defence has to concentrate, itself on two fronts simultaneously. Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of a superiority over Pakistan. In our calculations we shall now have to reckon with Communist China in the north and north-east- Communist China which has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us.

Let me also consider the political considerations on this potentially trouble-some frontier. Our northern or north-eastern approaches consist of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal areas in Assam. From the point of view of communications they are weak spots. Continuous defensive lines do not exist. There is almost an unlimited scope for infiltration. Police protection is limited to a very small number of passes. There too, our outposts do not seem to be fully manned. The contact of these areas with us is, by no means, close and intimate. The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong area are not free from Pro-Mongoloid prejudices. During the last three years, we have not been able to make any appreciable approaches to the Nagas and other visitors had been in touch with them, but their influence was, in no way, friendly to India or Indians. In Sikkim, there was political ferment some time ago. It is quite possible that discontent is smouldering there. Bhutan is comparatively quiet, but its affinity with Tibetans would be a handicap. Nepal has a weak oligarchic regime based almost entirely on force; and with it is in conflict with a turbulent element of the population as well as with enlightened ideas of the modern age. In the circumstances, to make people alive to the new danger or to make them defensively

strong is a very difficult task indeed, and that difficulty can be got over only by enlightened firmness, strength and a clear line of policy. I am sure the Chinese and their source of inspiration Soviet Russia would not miss any opportunity of exploiting these weak spots, partly in support of their ideology and partly in support of their ambitions. In my judgement, therefore, the situation is one in which we cannot afford either to be complacent or to be vacillating. We must have a clear idea of what we wish to achieve and also of the methods by which we should achieve it. Any faltering or lack of decisiveness in formulating our objectives or in pursuing our policy to attain those objectives is bound to weaken us and increase the threats which are so evident.

Side by side with these external dangers we shall now have to face serious internal problems as well. I have already asked Iengar to send to the External Affairs Minister a copy of the Intelligence Bureau's appreciation of these matters. Hitherto, the Communist Party of India has found some difficulty in contacting Communists abroad, or in getting supplies of arms, literature, etc., from them. They had to contend with difficult Burmese and Pakistan frontiers of the east or with the long seaboard. They shall now have a comparatively easy means of access to Chinese Communists and so-called threat to China from Anglo-American machinations in Tibet. Therefore, if the Chinese put faith in this, they must have disturbed us so completely as to have taken us as tools or stooges of Anglo-American diplomacy or strategy. This feeling, if genuinely entertained by the Chinese in spite of your direct approaches to them, indicates that, even though we regard ourselves as friends of China, the Chinese do not regard us as their friends. With

the communist mentality of "Whoever is not with them being against them", this is a significant pointer, of which we have to take due note. During the last several months outside the Russian camp, we have practically been alone in championing the cause of 'Chinese entry into the UNO and in securing from the Americans assurances on the question of Formosa. We have done everything we could to assuage Chinese feelings, to allay its apprehensions and to defend its interests. Infiltration of spies, fifth columnists and Communists would now be easier. Instead of having to deal with isolated Communist pockets in Telengana and Warangal we may have to deal with Communist threats to our security along our northern and north-eastern frontiers where, for supplies of arms and ammunition, they can safely depend on Communist arsenals in China. The whole situation thus came to an early decision so that we can, as said earlier, formulate the objectives of our policy and decide the methods by which those actions will have to be fairly comprehensive involving not only our defence strategy and state of preparation but also problems of internal security to deal with which we have not a moment to lose. We shall also have to deal with administrative and political problems in the weak spots along the frontier to which I have already referred.

It is, of course, impossible for me to be exhaustive in setting out all these problems. I am, however, giving below some of the problems, which, in my opinion, require early solution and around which we have to build our administrative or military policies and measures to implement them.

- (a) A Military and intelligence appreciation of the Chinese threat to India both on the frontier and to internal security.

- (b) An examination of our military position of our forces as might be necessary particularly with the idea of guarding important routes or areas which are likely to be the subject of dispute.
- (c) An appraisalment of the strength of our forces and, if necessary, reconsideration of our retrenchment plans for the Army in the light of these new threats.
- (d) A long-term consideration of our defence needs. My own feeling is that, unless we assure our supplies or arms, ammunition and armour, we should be making our defence position perpetually weak and we would not be able to stand up to the double threat of difficulties both from the west and north and north-east.
- (e) The question of Chinese entry into UNO. In view of the rebuff which China has given us and the method which it has followed in dealing with Tibet, I am doubtful whether we can advocate its claims any longer. There would probably be a threat in the UNO virtually to outlaw China, in view of its active participation in the Korean War. We must determine our attitude on this question also.
- (f) The political and administrative steps which we should take to strengthen our northern and north-eastern frontiers. This would include the whole of the border, i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the Tribal territory in Assam.
- (g) Measures of internal security in the border areas as well as the States flanking those areas such as U.P., Bihar, Bengal and Assam.

- (h) Improvement of our communications, road, rail, air and wireless in these areas, and with the frontier outposts.
- (i) Policing and intelligence of frontier posts.
- (j) The future of our mission at Lhasa and the trade posts at Gyantse and Yatung and the forces which we have in operation in Tibet to guard the trade routes.
- (k) The policy in regard to the McMahon Line.

These are some of the questions which occur to my mind. It is possible that consideration of these matters may lead us into wider questions of our relationship with China, Russia, America, Britain and Burma. This, however, would be of a general nature, though some might be basically very important, e.g., we might have to consider whether we should not enter into closer association with Burma in order to strengthen the latter in its dealings with China. I do not rule out the possibility that, before applying pressure on us, China might apply pressure on Burma. With Burma, the frontier is entirely undefined and the Chinese territorial claims are more substantial. In its present position Burma might offer an easier problem for China and, therefore, might claim its first attention.

I suggest that we meet early to have a general discussion on these problems and decide on such steps as we might think to be immediately necessary and direct quick examination of other problems with a view to taking early measures to deal with them.

POLITICAL AMITY BETWEEN CHINA AND INDIA IN THE FUTURE

When we view the situation in retrospect, we find that in 1962 there were no major political or other differences between the two countries. 'Panch Sheel' had its good effect and there was a spirit of 'Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai'. Even if there were some differences these were minor in nature and did not warrant a conflagration. These differences could have easily been solved by diplomatic overtures when great leaders like Mao-Tse-tung and Jawaharlal Nehru were at the helm of affairs.

The British after giving freedom to the Indian subcontinent, did not leave behind any serious problems concerning Tibet and China. There is no reason why any problem should have cropped up later. The two countries may have had some pinpricks due to crooked borders and due to legacy of history but these could have been overcome by a give and take process. If dialogue is not successful mediation from a third neutral country can be sought. Also we should not have been influenced all together by public opinion as public opinion is normally not shaped by reason. Public opinion is whipped up by false mob emotions manipulated by politicians for ulterior motives which are seldom in a nation's interest.

We can ill-afford conflict with our two neighbours. But conflict with Pakistan is perpetual as this is as a result of religious antipathy. Pakistan problem is more complicated.

Border trade between the two countries China and India was resumed in July 1992 following the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr Li Peng.

So what Mao and Nehru could not do was achieved by Li Peng and Rao. They have broken the ice on a subject, which had defied solution over long time due to high mountains and most difficult terrain, and where the scenario has been changing from time to time due to ups and down in the balance of power between Tibet, China and India. At last there has been a breakthrough.

Proposals of the Conference of Six Non-aligned Nations held at Colombo in December 1962 can provide good guide lines for a final settlement.

China has termed the period of conflict and subsequent silence between the two countries as past time and part of the history now.

Almost after 32 years of the Sino-Indian conflict wise counsel has prevailed when finally on 7 September, 1993 China and India entered into a landmark agreement to respect and observe the Line of Actual Control between the Himalayan borders of the two countries till a mutually acceptable settlement was found through negotiations. As a result of this agreement the two big countries decided to establish a sub-group of a joint working group already instituted on the boundary question that would include representatives of foreign ministries and military personnel to implement the agreement for maintaining peace and tranquillity on the border. The two sides made it explicit that the references to Line of Actual Control did not prejudice the respective positions of the two countries on the boundary question. It was

also said that the search for a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution was still on. The line of Actual Control constitutes the 4,056 km de-facto border of the two neighbours after the 1962 war.

Co-operation with both China and USA is equally essential and will be in mutual interest. As such friendship with China and USA has to be pursued. One country is a big neighbour. The other country is a good, rich industrially advanced friend, ever ready to help a friend in need mainly due to its democratic traditions. India should increase its trade with China and avail of the financial, technical and military help from the USA.

As this book was going to the publishers China and India signed the 'Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the line of Actual Control in the Indo-China borders Areas vindicating my stand. This agreement was signed without prejudice to claims of the two great countries on disputed border areas. There is a great hope that these claims will also be settled in the near future. We must have peace with China with whom we can have reconciliation without difficulty.

China is a pragmatic country and does not demur very much. We have to be equal to our big neighbour in solving our problems. If some problems persists and can not be resolved, then, century span 'status-quo' is the answer. These two countries can then turn to bilateral trade and several other fields of mutual co-operation with the aim of raising the standards of living of millions of teeming humanity in their countries. That will be a colossal experiment and demonstration for the world. The Himalayas will again reverberate.

not with hostile gun fire, but with the friendly and joyous cries of 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai'.

The following proposal should be considered by the two sides in the forthcoming negotiations:

- (a) Acceding of Aksai Chin to China.
- (b) Recognition of McMahon Line.
- (c) Accordingly boundary in north-east Ladakh should run through Karakoram Pass, waterheads of rivers Chip Chap, Galwan and Chang Chanmo, Dunpu Guru, Kharnak Fort, Changla and Jarala. Pangong Tso and Spungar should be inclusive to India. This will be in accordance with principle of natural boundary.
- (d) In north-east boundary should run over the crest of Thagla and other places on McMahon Line and Indian claim over places such as Longju and Walong be recognised.
- (e) In Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh Indian claim should also be recognised.

The Indo-Pak problem, which is an awkward legacy of the partition of the sub continent, is very complex and complicated. The solution depends mainly on rationalisation of line of Actual Control in J&K. No other solution is possible as there are three distinct areas with nothing common and dominated by either of the three communities. These are Jammu, with Hindu, Kashmir Valley & Poonch area with Muslim and Ladakh with Buddhist majority. Plebisite, referendum, or plain elections can not decide the perplexing issue as in each region, a different

community has majority. The state can not be entrusted to Muslims who wield the overall majority in the J&K State as a whole as they will drive out the minorities or exterminate them. So certain changes in Line of Actual Control may only solve the difficult problem. Some salient changes which include exchange of portions of Indo-Pak frontier areas are envisaged. These are :

- (a) All area north of line Nawan-Shahaar and Bhimbeer inclusive be given to India.
- (b) All area west of line Bhimber, Nawan-Shahr, Rajouri, Pir Panjal Pass, Gulmarg, Wullar Lake, Bandipur, Guraiz, Burzil Pass, Skardu, K2 Mountain and Arghil Pass all inclusive, be given to Pakistan.
- (c) Border will cross ten km away from the towns named.

The following factors have been considered:

- (a) Security of towns.
- (b) Security and continuity of communications.
- (c) Amarnath Cave and Vaishno Devi Temples continue to be in India.
- (d) As for possible division done on the basis of 1947 population of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs & Buddhists.
- (e) Big towns equally distributed.

- (f) Communities given more or less their region of majority.
- (g) Srinagar Airfield will be properly secured for India catering for sufficient space around and Pakistan should initially construct a small airfield, if need be, south of Srinagar.

If the above proposal is accepted by the two countries they will usher in a peaceful and prosperous period. The proposal should be taken up under the Simla Agreement and the two sides have to be sincere, in foriplay, and forsake chauvnism.

INFANTRY

The civilian, who seldom reads military history except where it is an adjunct to policy and high strategy, usually gets his conception of what a battlefied looks like from prints and pictures. Artists, who after all have to sell their pictures for a living, naturally choose subjects which are spectacular incidents of the more romantic arms of the service. In the older pictures, it is usually a cavalry charge or the heroic defence of the guns. In more modern times, it is the tanks spitting fire or aircraft diving to attack. Consequently infantry, who are the main arm on any land battlefied, are often forgotten. From the beginning of history, it has always been the foot soldier who has ultimately played the main role in land warfare and even with every modern development and scientific discovery, it is quite clear that he will play this role for some considerable time to come. His importance lies in the fact that he can traverse ground impossible to any other arm, that he can move comparatively freely and silently in conditions of darkness or fog, that he can physically clear and hold in detail an objective and that he is easy to train, obtain and maintain. Aircraft can saturate an area with fire and so can the artillery but this weight of fire alone cannot eliminate all the defenders. Armour can sieze an objective if the ground is suitable for mechanised movement, but in holding, it becomes static and vulnerable, nor can they clear it in detail. Other arms of the Service help the infantry on to the objective and maintain it there. But where the objective has to be siezed, cleared and held (war is a series of movements from objective to objective) the ultimate task is that of the infantry.

The best type of infantryman has always come from solid, stolid, and yeoman farmer stock. This breed produces a type who is strongly built, used to hard work and adverse living conditions, observant and wise in fieldcraft. He has individuality but is not over-imaginative, too much imagination being a handicap when faced with the machines of destruction. He has the peasant's basic ruthlessness, an indifference to the vagaries of nature and a stubborn determination. It would be incorrect to say that other material can not be trained up to make good infantry but the type described starts with many intrinsic advantages and over a long period always produces the best results. In the more highly developed countries, with increased technical education and a soaring standard of living, this breed is dying out. Recruitment to the technical arms with possible advantages later in civil life, is more popular and advantageous; the infantry quota is getting harder to fill.

It is said that the infantryman belongs to the only trade in the world that still walks to its work. This is perhaps basically true, as the last stages of any tactical battle consist of clearing, reorganisation and consolidation and this task is done by the infantry on foot. Modern methods of military transportation have, however, considerably shortened this walk, particularly the approach march state. Under present day conditions, infantry, is carried forward, on 'soft' vehicles, armoured infantry carriers and on the back of tanks. Air-borne infantry, in principle is exactly the same.

From the earliest times with every new military development there has been a tendency to overload the infantryman. As the cross bow with its harder hitting projectile replaced the long bow, shields became

heavier and infantry were even equipped with the cuirass and the chain mail shirt, with the advent of gunpower, the blunderbuss and musket became standard equipment but in case these failed and also for close quarter fighting, the pike and the heavy sword still lingered on. In addition, the infantryman was always expected to carry his own personal maintenance load designed for all contingencies and consequently of considerable weight. This increasing weight, insidiously added from time to time, always tended to defeat the main object which is the need for infantry to be mobile.

The present day infantry soldier seems to be not only overloaded but also over-equipped and over-maintained, transforming him from a non-technical, highly mobile fighting man into a semi-technical, road and transport bound individual. In most armies of the world the infantry unit is equipped with and has to know how to use, four types of personal weapons, two types of mortar, up to two types of automatic, a close defence anti-tank weapon and sometimes even an infantry field gun. To this must be added wireless equipment, anti-gas equipment and all connected stores such as different types of ammunition, batteries and spare parts as well as personal belongings. As all these stores obviously cannot be carried on the man, vehicles are allotted which the infantryman has to drive. With the high standard of living of some armies, amenities often follow closely, the cumulative affect being a static, transport bound force unable to move away from main lines of communications for any but the briefest periods.

Asian countries who are redesigning their armies, which will operate in semi-developed terrain. have an excellent opportunity of reorganising their infantry.

Equipment, difficult and expensive to get anyway, can be reduced and standardised down to essentials. Non-essential frills, originally added for West European conditions, can be eliminated while the acceptance of a tougher standard of living reduces the amenities required. There is no need for modernity to be sacrificed but only that must be taken from modern development which suits the role and conditions prevalent. In fact, properly planned the new force would be more modern for their actual task than the present limitation of Western armies.

These countries have some of the best infantry material in the world. Properly organised and led they can be that highly mobile and a tough combination of "cat burglar, gunman and poacher" which was Lord Wavell's definition of the ideal infantryman.

It is of vital importance that the load of an infantry soldier is reduced, specially, for operations in mountainous terrain and at high altitude without doing away with utility and effectiveness of his arms and equipments—

- (a) Weight of rifle should not be more than 6 lbs, like the revolutionary, American AR 15 Rifle which was put on trials around 1960/61. It's bore was only .22 inch. It's ammunition was correspondingly lighter. Muzzle velocity of the ammunition was increased. Body was turned out of strong and light compound fibre glass instead of wood. This rifle had, the best performance in trials but was rejected on two counts. Its bayonet was small and new factories were needed to be set up to manufacture the rifle and its ammunition. Conditions have changed now. Bayonet fighting has lost much of its importance

and new factories can be easily set up, under modern industrial advancement.

- (b) There is much scope for reducing the weight of boots and web equipment as lighter material than leather and webbing is now available for manufacturing these items.
- (c) Strong plastic material or other material can be used instead of metal, such as titanium and magnesium for manufacture of water bottle and steel helmet.
- (d) Much lighter, comfortable and warmer material is now available in the market for manufacturing the uniform, blanket, doree and water cap.
- (e) There is also a necessity to reduce the weight of grenade by using lighter material such as plastic.
- (f) Lighter 2 inch and 3 in mortars should be introduced with lighter ammunition.

Welfare of the Troops

Every officer should have the welfare of the troops at heart. I may recount for interest, that in 1956-57 as an Adjutant of the Battalion I had initiated some progressive steps for the good and the welfare of the troops.

Havildar Karm Singh PVC, MM was stuck up for JCOs rank, being overage and due to lack of certain educational qualifications, for a long time. I had drafted a forceful letter to higher authorities for waiving of these conditions for the hero who was a recipient of the highest gallantry award. The plea was accepted

and Karam Singh got the rank. Later he was granted the honorary rank of Captain also. As a result letter promotion conditions for all other PVC holders were also waived in entire defence forces. In fact this rule was made permanent and universal.

Secondly, promotion rules for the Battalion were not favourable to individuals who were good sportsmen and had higher educational qualifications. They were stagnating and wasted away prematurely. I drafted new rules and got these implemented with the concurrence of Commanding Officer and all ranks at a Durbar.

I had written a paper in which I had recommended that second-in-command of a rifle company be an officer instead of JCO. The paper contained other recommendations also. All these recommendations were accepted by Army headquarters in due course of time.

Shape of Future Armed Forces

I can say clairvoyantly that the threat from the crescent countries from the West, will persist and last forever. So we should keep abreast of new weapons, doctrine and concepts to keep the country's defences constantly in trim.

The pattern of war has been the same throughout the ages and it has persisted in the three wars fought with Pakistan. So with the added sense of Nostradamus I can prognosticate and forecast that the future Armed Forces will be highly integrated. There will be a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) who along with the Service chiefs will be responsible to the Civil Government formed on the pattern of the American system. The Army, Air Force and Navy will continue to have their own respective chiefs who will be members of the defence

committee presided over by the CDS and also be responsible through the CDS to the government and not directly as at present.

Regional Commands of Army, Air Force and Navy will also be completely integrated. There will be no separate Army, Air Force and Naval Commands.

A command will control all Army, Air Force and Naval field units and formations in its area. A command will have at its head an officer of the Army, Air Force or Navy, depending on operational importance of the particular service in that region. For example in Northern Command, due to its high mountainous region, if the Air Force has an edge over the Army in providing operational and administrative support in the form of offensive air support and air maintenance, its chief will be an Air Force Officer. Similarly, if in the Southern Command, Navy has conspicuous role to play as compared with Army and Air Force on account of sea front, its command will devolve on a Naval Officer. His deputies will be Army and Air Force Officers. At the lower level joint staffs will be functioning.

Weapons of the future will be guided missiles capable of firing conventional projectiles and lighter nuclear shells. Tanks, armoured carrier vehicle, vertical take off aircraft, helicopter and submarine will assume greater importance. Electronics and laser will play a very prominent role. Non lethal weaponry and exotic technologies will also play their roles.

The present turbulent age necessitates the maintenance of large and powerful army. The organisation of the government is to be dominated by the military needs of the state. India will also move closer to Japan, China, Indo China, Russia, USA, and other Western countries, and Israel

CHAPTER-ELEVEN

EXPOSITION AND APPRAISAL

When the crusade of communism recognised no lines or bounds conches were sounded by India and 7th Infantry Brigade was hurled against the enemy without any battle preparations in the most inclement weather and under the most adverse conditions. There were no logistical lines, no proper clothing provided, no food arrangements, inadequate weapons and a shortage of ammunitions and stores. Yet there were many shining acts of gallantry and bravery.

Our troops at the border outposts at Namka Chu Bumla, in Walong and Ladakh fought excellent defensive action against the Chinese hordes. The platoon of Subedar Joginder Singh was almost wiped out at Bumla but its superlative performance and sacrifice and the stiff and stubborn resistance put up by the company at Tong Pengla had a salutary and sobering effect on the advance of the Chinese on the main Bumla-Tawang axis. They were delivered a staggering blow and they became wary and did not resume the offensive against our main defensive position at Sela till the enemy had connected Bumla and Tawang with a road to bring forward the heavy supporting arms and re-inforcements and had extended their logistics.

According to British General Tukar, to be besieged on the battlefield is the final act of disaster for an army. However, the Indian troops escaped being besieged by the Chinese army though they tried hard. No Indian Army unit ever showed a white flag and surrendered as a unit or individual in both NEFA and Ladakh. The foot bound Indian Army, all the way from Namka Chu, over Sela and upto Chaku kept the Chinese army, (backed by motor transport) at an arm's length inflicting heavy casualties and allowing them no chance for a siege, or spectacular break through and eventually the Chinese after their pyrrhic victory, were forced to declare a unilateral ceasefire lest they be caught on the wrong side by the deep snow fall of winter and bombing by the Indian Air Force.

All along the Chinese Command remained very cautious and all their moves were calculated. In their activities ahead of Sela the Chinese were harassed by our patrols and artillery and they were forced to act in unduly large patrol groups and also waited for fresh reinforcements. They took no chances. They marked time in front of Sela for almost a month. When they regrouped their forces, for their offensive, though they had amassed overwhelming strength 5 to 1 and at places 10 to 1, the Chinese could not close up in one easy go. They had to inch forward in the face of very stiff resistance. Like field Marshal Rommel, the brilliant German General they did not dare to make a deep thrust as in North Africa in the Second World War, but advanced continuously enmass on a 50 km front spread from Sela to Bomdila.

Again at the Nyukmadong ridge the Indian troops uprooted four successive Chinese roadblocks and proved that they were not found wanting in offensive spirit and boldness. If the troops were not withdrawn

from Sela and had an opportunity to fight many Bumla and Nyukmadong type feats of bravery and sacrifice could have been enacted. Still troops at Sela did match the Indian Army performance at Bumla and Nyukmadong to a great extent.

At Namka Chu, Bumla, Nyukmadong, Walong and Chushul our troops did very well considering the overwhelming numerical strength of the enemy. They performed many most noteworthy acts of bravery which remained unrecognised.

Our poor logistics and the higher direction of war did not match up to the fighting qualities, especially, high spirit, courage and valour of our troops who were ready to fight under adverse circumstances and show results. They were ready to make sacrifices. It was, however, for the higher authorities to see that these sacrifices were properly utilised and did not go abegging at the whims of a few eccentric individuals.

It is reiterated that troops though heavily outnumbered had the will and courage to fight and defensive positions were not indefensible for a limited period. The Indian Army was on the verge of enacting the greatest epic of its history at Sela when it was suddenly switched on 17 November 1962 by the orders of higher ups and moreover, the final decisive place for the combat remained in doubt and was not clearly and firmly chosen by the higher command. Withdrawal from Sela was very untimely and preposterous since by the time the pullout was ordered, the road in the rear was cut off at a number of places and as a result of this our troops were trapped in pockets. Reconnaissance of Intermediate and New Main Position was also not planned and carried out. When our troops reached there, these positions had already been occupied by

the enemy. Moreover, the pullout did not meet other basic considerations of withdrawal. The withdrawal was contemplated on the spur of the moment and it was decided to shift the Division to the area of Bomdila. The higher command dilly dallied till the last. This mistake proved disastrous.

Many critics are of the view that if Namka Chu position was tactically and administratively most unsound Brigadier Dalvi, Commander 7th Infantry Brigade should have changed its location from Namka Chu right on McMahon Line under the enemy's gaze and deployed the brigade in better position available to the rear of Namka Chu. This had much logic but against their view I hold the opinion that the whole of Tawang Wedge was, militarily a most unsound area to hold and it was immaterial taking a position a few miles this side or that side within the 'Wedge'. When the Chinese intention of a major offensive became clear the Indian Army should have evacuated the Tawang enclave leaving a guerilla type force and concentrated outside the Tawang salient and waited for the direction of their offensive. Indian Army could have given a delaying fight at even hundred places but should have planned the main battle on the ridges around Bomdila and further in depth into the plains of Assam north of the Brahmaputra River.

As explained the withdrawal from Sela was untimely, half hearted and a slipshod affair. Moreover, it is not understood why the 2nd Sikh LI which was detailed to occupy Intermediate Defensive Position at Nyukmadong ridge, was delayed, and reached the site only after the Chinese had forestalled and taken their roadblock positions at Nyukmadong ridge, which was a crucial and tactically very important place, for an Intermediate Defensive Position between Sela and

Dirang Dzong. This delay was the major cause of the catastrophe. It was also seen that initially, the Ridge was lightly held by the Chinese till the time their supporting arms had joined up. Only the commanding Officer of 2nd Sikh LI, could have explained why they arrived late and could not oust the enemy and occupy the ridge for safe passage of the Brigade.

Nonetheless, Brigadier Hoshiar Singh could have been successful if withdrawal of the Brigade had been put in motion a little earlier. This is indicated by the arrival at Dirang of Captain Tara, the Regimental Medical Officer of 1st Sikhs from Sela. Tara, who had left Sela in a Jonga at midnight was not intercepted by the Chinese troops on the way. It appears he had a hair breadth escape. Some non-essential personnel who had also left Sela sometimes earlier on foot were also not challenged by the enemy. Most probably, the Chinese had not reached their ambush positions at that time or they had withheld their fire till the main body came in their net. When Tara reached Dirang, HQ 4 Infantry Division personnel were in the process of pulling-out cross-country as the Chinese had penetrated deep and cut off the road to Bomdila. The Dirang Dzong itself was captured by the enemy after some time. Captain Tara accompanied the Divisional Headquarters column and reached the Foothills safely, by-passing Bomdila which later fell in the Chinese hands.

When I mention that Brigadier Hoshiar Singh could have ordered early withdrawal of 62nd Infantry Brigade I do it only for the sake of comparison between withdrawal from Bumla and pullout from Sela, as the Brigadier's name had become synonymous with Sela and the 'leit motif' is attributed to him. I do not apportion any blame on Brigadier Hoshiar Singh for

the action. Responsibility lies with higher headquarters ie, Corps and Division Headquarters. Moreover, there were very long distances involved between different headquarters and extraordinarily large gaps existed between Army formations which were assigned the role for the defence of borders. It was not a closely knit and compact arrangement. Consequently the state of communications between higher and lower headquarters was not such that was desired. Higher command were not abreast with the situation in forward areas, and as such they were incapable of taking proper and timely decisions. Higher headquarter also could not exercise proper control over the lower headquarters.

It is interesting to study and compare the two acts of withdrawal ie one from Bumla and the other from Sela. A withdrawal operation is valid only if it is undertaken in pressing circumstances and in furtherance of an ultimate victory. I do not go into the merits and demerits of withdrawals from the two places ie Bumla and Sela area. I also do not go into the question of withdrawal out of wider strategical vision and angle. However, when seen purely from a tactical angle, withdrawal of the 4th Artillery Brigade from Tawang/Bumla was a definite success as compared with the one ordered from Sela. The Tawang action was timely and tactically sound. As said earlier, orders to withdraw from Sela, and hold out at Dirang/Bomdila were too late. Had these orders come a week or so earlier after delaying the enemy for a fortnight or had it been initially decided to roll down to Bomdila when the troops had upstuck from Tawang/Bumla, the disaster that occurred in the wake of the withdrawal on 17 November from Sela could have been averted. A formidable Divisional sector could have been got ready at Bomdila Ridge. This position could have given the

Chinese a staggering and sharp rebuff. Initially, when the Chinese hordes had uprooted us from Tawang area we could have withdrawn far and fast to Bomdila. In fact Bomdila should have, initially, been organised as a defended sector that could have stopped the enemy when the tide of war had flowed against us.

To translate the strategy of 'defence in depth', into practice, a radical change in our defence doctrine is imperative. We have to discard the simple policy of defending every inch of our frontier territory and instead try to destroy the intruding enemy, at the time and place of our choosing by luring him deep into our territory. Though resources have to be organised for this drastic measure. The present system is a positional type of defence. It is designed to deny every inch of our territory to the enemy and hold the entire border area at all cost with no option of withdrawal to successive positions. Mobile defence in which the Chinese believe is the hit and run type of defence. It consists of a series of defensive actions followed by controlled holding-back. The aim is to inflict maximum loss on the enemy. Retention of territory is not of much importance. Our border defences have to be a combination of mobile and positional postures. In the case of Kameng Frontier Division defences have to be mobile beyond Bomdila and change over to positional warfare as we approach Bomdila area or rear area.

I hold the view that who-so-ever crosses Sela or holds it with over a Battalion strength and stays put is doomed, as maintenance during rainy and snow season is a gamble, fraught with dire consequences. The system of chain patrolling, a part of mobile defence, whether, it envisages standing or fighting patrols, and aerial reconnaissance is feasible. Patrolling any where is a very potent and flexible tool in the hands of a

commander endowed with skill and imagination. Patrolling also keeps every one on one's toes at all times.

Our utter unpreparedness for a war in 1962 indicated that we had no inkling of the impending enemy offensive, or the enemy offensive was launched with extreme secrecy and deception like the wily German offensive against the Russians in 1941. Our reach on was slow and we look too long to assume defence future. Another major weakness in our defence set up was that there was no planning for a counter offensive and no counter attack force was earmarked at any level.

Conversaly, India was unnecessarily perturbed and piqued by the Indian Army's defeat in 1962, whereas bigger disasters have overtaken nations in the past history. This is more so at the beginning of hostilities. Glaring examples are the British Army's Malaya and Burma retreats in the face of Japanese onslaughts in the Second World War. On the night of 19/20 July, 1945, when the Japanese 28th Army made a bid to break away eastwards from the Pegyoma siege, this Army was completely destroyed by 17th and 19th Indian Infantry Divisions on the banks of river Sittang in Burma. Seldom in the history has an army suffered such complete destruction. Napoleon's retreat from Moscow is another famous episode. Dunkirk is an equally world famous case of retreat. The United Kingdom took the defeat stoically without becoming unduly emotional or alarmed. What is more important is that we can learn lessons from setbacks and take corrective measures.

We have learnt from the 1962 conflict that the Chinese mode of waging war against their enemy is

cunning. It has been noted that their first phase starts with negotiations with the adversary. The enemy is implicated in some controversy. Then parleys are cleverly protracted and prolonged to divert the opponent's attention. Their suspicions against them are dispelled. However, in the meantime, the Chinese surreptitiously prepare for the all-out war. When the enemy is lulled into inaction and is utterly unprepared, the Chinese launch a surprise military offensive, which involves baiting and enticing the enemy to a remote and difficult terrain devoid of supply line. When the enemy comes forward with meagre supply then he is encircled and destroyed by wide enveloping pincer movements.

At Namka Chu, Bumla, Sela and elsewhere the Chinese had a set and consistent pattern of offensive. It unfolded somewhat like this. They skillfully selected an objective or site of fighting which was geographically and administratively favourable to them and unfavourable to us. For this, factors like supply line, supply bases, logistic build up, surprise and deception were weighed up. Then they concentrated their forces, including supporting arms, in front of their objective indicating that the major attack was to be mounted at this point. Simultaneously, they established their superiority in patrolling around the objective and subjected our forward echelons to intense artillery bombardment. Surprisingly this was only a feint. While we were tied down in front the Chinese infiltrated to our rear stealthily and severed our supply line making us jittery and panicky and with the thought that we were surrounded and cut off we decamped, but at a late hour, thus we were caught off-balance and destroyed. On the other hand if we chose to stick to our defences, we were further, mercilessly subjected to intense artillery bombardment and determined and

repeated infantry assaults, and were eventually subdued. We succumbed to these clever and drastic Chinese tactics at Namka Chu and Sela and suffered. However, we forestalled their intentions at Bumla and withdrew in time. This enabled us to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy and withdraw to Sela intact and successfully reset our defences.

Based on empirical estimates it was known that there was a gap of about a month between the successive offensives by the Chinese. This proved true as the attack, on Bumla cum Namka Chu took place from 20 to 23 October and that Sela was attacked on 17 November, but we did not make use of this lull period for providing re-inforcements and stocking of ammunition, rations and provision of defence stores, while the Chinese in the meantime swelled to three divisions and constructed the road from Bumla to Tawang and improved one from Tawang to Jang.

We were very slow in perceiving and responding to enemy intentions. In October 1962 it was quite clear that the Chinese had no plan to violate Bhutan's sovereignty and advance through that country as, firstly they did not pursue the remnants of the 7th Infantry Brigade into Bhutan, and secondly they undertook the construction of the 12 mile stretch of road, a missing link-between Bumla and Tawang. So when the direction of their thrust was obvious, i.e. it was directed towards Bomdila-Mandala, one fails to comprehend why 181st Infantry Brigade, located at Darrang, to checkmate the enemy advance through Bhutan, was not moved to Bomdila/Mandala region to bolster the defences of Kameng Frontier Division and why 67th Infantry Brigade was held back at Misamari and was not moved to the lightly held Bomdila area, though there was talk

of moving forward two battalions at the fag end of the war.

I have already mentioned that Tezpur-Udalgiri area is eminently fit for tank warfare. so one fails to understand, why after the debacle at Sela and Bomdila, it was planned to evacuate Tezpur-Misamari Plain and move IV Corps to Guwahati on the south bank of Brahmaputra river, when it was quite possible to organise the defence of this area based on armour and heavy artillery. It was even more so when the Chinese had advanced towards Chaku with small arms only. It is a pity that the Eastern Command and the IV Corps had no contingency plans to fight in the plains of Tezpur-Udalgiri.

The location of superior headquarters and the order of battle also deserve mention. The location of HQ Eastern Command²⁰ was a case in point. The Army Commander from his headquarters 2000 km away at Lucknow could hardly make an assessment or control the battle. IV Corps was widely dispersed and did not have it's even quote of troops. On the one hand it had its responsibility in Kameng Frontier Division and on

20. Even now the location of HQ Eastern Command is at Calcutta, 1600 km away from its most important area of operations. The role of this command is unique. It has to cope with the internal security duties of eleven states. It has to look after the borders of four foreign countries, China, Burma, Bangla Desh and Bhutan. In its domain lie high mountains, high seas and dense jungles. The HQ Eastern Command is separated from seven north eastern states, by the narrow Sillguri corridor. The corridor is dominated by Bangla Desh and Bhutan. It is high time that the HQ Eastern Command is shifted to Guwahati and Bengal, Bay of Bengal, Sikkim are entrusted to the Central command which is operationally less committed at present. The Eastern Air Command is already located at Shillong. Shifting of HQ Eastern Command will afford good co-ordination between the Army and Air force.

the other hand its 2nd Infantry Division was deployed in the far flung Lohit Frontier Division at a distance of 800 KM in addition to responsibility for the Subansiri and Siang FDs.

The IV Corps should have been allotted at least three divisions-its normal share of which two should have been located exclusively in Kameng Frontier Division only. Their detailed locations should have been left to the Corps Commander.

I am of the strong view that we have the skill and resources to face the Chinese challenge. But, firstly, we have to ensure that we do not play into the enemy hands in selecting the site of battle. Rather, it should be of our choosing. We should make clear to them that if they violate the borders at any place we are not bound to that site but instead we are at liberty to strike at any other point at our discretion. Secondly, we should declare that we are at liberty to use our missiles and Air Force apart from the Army. As far as the ground battle is concerned, the Chinese offensive should be initially countered, right on the border as in the case of Namka Chu. Our main defences should be laid quite deep with sufficient space in front that should absorb the enemy's advance and allow us time to actuate our defences in depth. The defences should be supported by artillery, armour and offensive air support. Strong patrols and mobile columns should operate in front of the defences to harass and wear out the enemy. Also on the flanks and rear of the defences mobile columns, if possible based on armour and mechanised infantry and supported by the Air Force, should deal with infiltrating enemy detachments. The Main Defensive Position should have a good Line of Maintenance. Reverting to the aspect of withdrawal it is seen that the Chinese could not interrupt withdrawal

of 4 Arty Bde which pulled back to Sela almost intact and in good shape, albeit, some casualties were suffered at Jang due to sporadic enemy mortar shelling. It was a clean break. The brigade quickly dug its feet at Sela and was again ready to give a fight to the enemy. This was also a very good example of resilience, a quality needed in a soldier. The process of skillfull withdrawal of covering troops slows down the enemy offensive and imposes caution on him.

After their success at Bumla and the capture of Towang, the Chinese did not pursue the withdrawing Indian troops. In case a pursuit had taken place it would have been a blessing in disguise and Indian troops would have hurried, in a long bound to the new Main Defensive Position at Bomdila and not Sela. In that case the fighting would have stalemated in front of Bomdila and not at Chaku, near the Foothills. Whereas political needs and military requirements should form part of a unified overall policy, these clashed in the case of Sela. Holding it could mean giving up less territory but at the same time sticking to it steadfastly would mean isolation of a strong force as the Chinese could by-pass it. Moreover, the position was administratively untenable due to its height and hazardous supply line.

When we knew we were so weak, it is strange, that we did not withdraw straight from one advantageous position to the next in a long bound but dilly dallied so long as to be severely dealt with each time when our flanks were eventually turned or our weak linear position penetrated by the light footed Chinese. We dithered at Namka Chu and then at Sela, in doing so, we lost heavily in men and equipment at these places.

Let us now study the performance of the 4th Infantry Division and its handicaps and constraints. It will be seen that Major General Anant Pathania had lost the game of patrolling around Sela and Bomdila and the enemy artillery had knocked hell out of 4th Garhwal Rifles at Nuranaung. It was only a matter of time before they had overrun the heroic Garhwalis in front of Sela defences. Our artillery was less effective. Whosoever, went forward from Sela to watch the artillery bombardment of Garhwalis by the Chinese artillery talked of the terrific results. Some fearless and patronising officers who went forward to watch the spectacle of the Chinese artillery in action, as sports lovers go to watch sports events, had commented on the performance of the Chinese artillery and complimented them.

Moreover, the overland line of maintenance to Sela was virtually non-existent and air maintenance was not reliable due to the vagaries of weather and the very high altitude over which the transport planes had to operate. Full pay load could not be hauled. As winter approached, severe cold and non-availability of snow clothing was hindering the battle worthiness and operational efficiency of the troops. Moreover, 48th Infantry Brigade, deployed at Bomdila was weak and over stretched and could not stand and face the Chinese all alone. So it was apparent that the two formations would be defeated one by one. As such it was not a mistake to withdraw 62nd Infantry Brigade from Sela and concentrate all formations at Bomdila-Mandala ridge which had a suitable environment, terrain and logistic conditions required of a battle field. For artillery and armour support also Bomdila-Mandala Ridge was the right place. Due to the above objective considerations it was right to use discretion and pull-back before the onslaught of the Chinese avalanche.

Unfortunately what went haywire during link up was the time factor and the tardy drill for withdrawal. Leapfrogging, the exacting manoeuvre, did not materialise, during withdrawal.

The battle was not a touch and go affair. The 62nd Infantry Brigade pulled back from Sela in a proper form fixing its check and rendezvous points. It was only at the road block sites at Nyukmadong ridge that control was lost. It is claimed that there was no fleeing from Sela and it was a proper and planned withdrawal, which was dictated by the tactical and administrative situation and was ordered from the top and it was not a local decision of any battalion or the brigade commander. There was no walkover. The Chinese had to pay an unduly and disproportionately heavy price and for them it was a pyrrhic victory.

What the 48th, 62nd and 65th Infantry Brigades could not achieve in linear defence over a distance of 50 km, could have been attained if they had been afforded an opportunity to fight conjointly at the Bomdila-Mandala Range. So if Major General Pathania could have ultimately, reformed his command and consolidated his Division at Bomdila-Mandala Range, which he appeared to have been contemplating, the position would have been quite different:

The site of the Main Defensive Position and vital ground will ever remain debatable. Let me say some words about it. Rejecting Tawang, out of hand, as a Main Defensive Position, the rival positions of Sela and Bomdila-Mandala could be compared from the altitude point of view. Bomdila (peak height 11,000 feet) is preferable from the altitude point of view to Sela (peak height 16,000). The excessive altitude adversely affects the efficient functioning of the troops.

Troops become sluggish at dizzy heights both in reaction and movement. The next factor is the distance from the maintenance area. Whilst Bomdila's distance is 65 km from the Foothills, that of Sela it is over 120 KM ie, more than double the distance of Bomdila. There was a good one ton road upto Bomdila which afforded reasonably good turn round for supply vehicles. Though, there was a one ton road upto Sela, it was a virgin cut and could not be used due to extensive land slides. It was a long, tenuous and insuperable line of maintenance. So one had to depend solely on attenuated air maintenance with its inherent weaknesses. Also, the road to Sela runs more or less, parallel to the Indo- Tibetan border and it is liable to be severed easily by enemy action. Conversely, Sela is too close to the enemy maintenance area, located in the rear of Bumla stocked by 7 ton vehicles. This was a great advantage for the enemy. From the point of view of armour and artillery support, Bomdila had an added advantage due to easy approach and concentration of heavy vehicles alongwith stores and their ammunition. There were overwhelming risks involved at Sela when weighed against its advantage of dominance conferred by its altitude. Infact the conception of Bomdila-Mandala as the Main Defensive Position, was originaly the brain child of General Palit and Sela, as propounded by him as Main Defensive Position later was only an after thought caused by political needs. It smacks of the 'Policy of every inch of land to be defended', with its attendant risks of overstretched resources.

At Namka Chu, Bumla and Sela, the Chinese ensured that we fought unsupported by good maintenance line and remained dependant upon unreliable airdrops whilst they were supported from good supply bases situated nearby which were served

by 7 tonners. If we had drawn them to Bomdila we could have turned the tables on them. That we did not do and had to face defeat. We were not only defeated physically but were also outclassed in strategy and un-necessarily lost two senior officers (one killed and the other taken prisoner of war) amongst the many other officers and men who were killed, wounded, disabled and fell into enemy hands as prisoners of war. Our national honour was thus besmirched.

Troops, remained highly disciplined under extreme trying conditions, patrolling was carried out very vigorously; there were no cases of hiding and whiling away time during patrolling and no fanciful and cooked reports were received. There were no cases of shirking of duty, weapon snatching, or sentry grabbing in the line of defence. Neither was there any loss on account of negligence of a sentry and no one slipped out of the rear-guard under my command. In spite of severe cold and frozen water men maintained their turnout and personal cleanliness. All men remained correct in paying respects to their seniors to the end and their demeanour was commendable. In spite of appalling conditions troops kept themselves in good fighting trim. Morale remained high and there was no bickering or nostalgia.

Tactically, Namka Chu, Tawang, Bumla and Sela positions were to be exploited to allow time to actuate the defences at Bomdila-Mandala ridge²¹ and provide space to wear out the enemy. But we were made to fight the main battle there; the warloards stood aside

21. *In peace Bomdila-Mandala ridge should be held by a nucleus garrison. In the event of conflict, depth positions of these twin fortress should be bolstered from reserves, from their peace stations, nearby, which should be waiting for move orders. Bomdila-Mandala obstacle should be held by a division plus, at least.*

silently and watched the melancholic drama of destruction. They were ignorant of the adverse conditions in the forward areas and continued to harp on the meaningless slogan of 'evict the Chinese'.

It is also baffling that the Chinese did not pursue the troops who had abandoned Tawang/Bumla. It is not known whether this was a deliberate action or circumstantial. It is possible that the crafty Chinese were enticing the divided Indian General Staff to commit their troops at the attractive but deceptive Sela with the bait of good weather which prevailed in the favourable month of October; as there were better chances of taking on Indian troops there as compared with Bomdila. If it had been snow-capped, the Army Headquarters could not have been lured to the grand suicidal ground of Sela but would have sent the troops straight to Bomdila.

As said earlier, orders to withdraw from Sela and hold out at Bomdila-Mandala came too late. Had these orders come a week or so earlier or had it been decided to roll down initially to Bomdila when the troops had abandoned Tawang area, the situation could have been radically different.

When we had blunted the Chinese offensive we have to choose a suitable place and time favourable for counter attack. It may not be the same place where the Chinese ingress. There are distinctly five border regions where Tibet and India share a common border. These are west to east, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh Hill Area, Sikkim and NEFA. While Ladakh, Sikkim and NEFA are thousands of km away from the heart of India and remotely situated on exterior lines of communications, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh Hill Area, are located nearest to our central

bases and are served by short and good road and rail lines of maintenance. In Himachal Pradesh the old Hindustan road through Simla and Kinnaur had military significance for long. Once, at the time of British rule in India Colonel Francis Young Husband's military expedition was to take this route. It had always been of strategical importance. Likewise a good road is available upto Pithoragarh and Tawaghat from rail head Tanakpur and beyond serving Uttar Pradesh hill areas. These two regions can be said to be fed by good interior lines of communications. So these are strategically the most suitable places to give a fight to the Chinese. Nevertheless, the approaches in Ladakh, Sikkim and NEFA can not be neglected and are also to be guarded. If the Chinese choose the approaches through Ladakh, Sikkim and NEFA for advance they are to be delayed at successive prepared positions by inflicting heavy casualties till we are ready to go on to offensive, elsewhere. They are to be given armour blows if they venture into the plains of Leh, Siliguri or Brahmaputra valley. However, no land is to be conceded in Himachal Pradesh and hills of Uttar Pradesh. It is pre-supposed that the Chinese will not infringe the sovereignty of Nepal and Bhutan as these are independent countries. We have to further improve the line of maintenance in Himachal Pradesh and hills of Uttar Pradesh. Dropping zones and helipads also need further improvement. Where possible, short runways for small aircraft are also a must.

Sometimes our troops were much too frightened by enemy road blocks and ambushes and often fell victims to them. We had forgotten that there was nothing new in the idea of moving round and emerging in the rear and flanks and then planting roadblock or laying an ambush position. It is one of the oldest strategems. The trick was widely employed in Burma

by the Japanese and on a large scale in Russia and North Africa by the Germans in the Second World War. Laying of road blocks and ambushes is also stated in text books on operations of war. The truth is that we did not have troops to counter many roadblocks laid by Chinese and thus suffered heavily.

Retreat from Namka Chu and Bumla was not as big an act of withdrawal as compared to the British retreat in Burma in the Second World War as far as numbers were concerned. However, it was not a small replica so far as distance, losses and pressure on commanders was concerned.

We made a blunder in not employing our Air Force in close and offensive support roles. Though one or two reconnaissance planes did streak past over Sela, the exaggerated fear of strategic bombing by enemy Air Force of important Indian cities deterred us from using the Air Force in close support. Again our intelligence failed in feeding us correct information about the Chinese Air Force. Limitation of the Chinese Air Force that had to operate from high altitude from restricted airfields was not properly assessed. There was much confused thinking about the retaliation by Chinese Air Force and escalation of operations. In fact we did not foresee or imagine the use of the air arm which is a most important part of modern warfare. No attempt was made to acquire additional fighter aircraft and train the required pilots. We were short of aircraft and airfields, and training facilities and there was a lack of radar and other essential equipment. The Artillery was the other arm which if used properly would have given the highest dividends in neutralising and in checking the advance of the determined Chinese. But the movement of artillery was hampered by the terrain of NEFA and Ladakh. The close air support and bombing

of enemy maintenance lines is of paramount importance in areas devoid of roads. The speed and capability of observation over bare hills above 'tree line' could have helped in doing a spectacular job. We are wrong if we think that air power can accomplish every thing. But even if Air Force can not stop movement on the earth in the way of troops or supplies, it can atleast impede and delay it. In the month of November/December if the enemy could be hindered in its offensive and effectively delayed, deep snow on high mountains would have overtaken him and we could have had a respite in the meantime for much desired re-inforcements. Non use of Air Force reminds me of an incident on the use of force at the right time. When Field Martial Viscount Slim as a cadet was pouring over the Principles of War 'listed in the Field Service Regulations', the Sergeant Major came upon him. He surveyed him with kind amusement. 'Don't bother your head about all of them my lad', he said, there is only one principle of war and that is this 'hit the other fellow, as quickly as you can, and as hard as you can, where it hurts him most, when he ain't looking'.

Let me now briefly touch upon the hardships and privations faced by our troops who operated in high altitude areas, for the information of those who have not had an opportunity to witness the forward areas and are keen to know the real facts. Due to bad and nominal line of maintenance the troops had to march for about 300 miles to reach Thagla area. On the way a number of mountains with heights ranging upto 16000 feet or higher were to be crossed. At places one had to go over hardened and slippery snow and wade through a quagmire of knee-deep cold mud, slush and marsh. The ascent on the way is very steep and the decent is treacherous. A false step over slippery lichen-covered boulders could result in a severe injury. On

the map, distances appear short but on the ground these are four fold and tortuous with serpentine bends. The weather during the monsoon and winter was bitterly cold, especially, when the force was only dressed in OG.

The wounded and sick had to be carried up steep and risky paths from about 10,500 to 14,500 feet for over eight hours. This was an ordeal as the stretcher constantly tilted or put down as the bearers tumbled, slipped or got tired. The same men would be required to carry back heavy stores from the dropping zone to their units, on the return journey. Each casualty required eight men as stretcher-bearers and the men had to be found by the units themselves, as the formation had no stretcher bearer units. This was a further drain on units who were already under strength and who had to find their own collecting and carrying parties for fetching airdrops. Few men were left for preparing defences, manning them, patrolling by day and night and providing personnel for observation posts²².

Air Force helicopter pilots must also be praised for their courage and devotion to duty, who, under grave risks carried out non-stop sorties from dawn to dusk, Squadron Leader Williams evacuated 23 wounded men in one day. The last take off was in pitch darkness. It was a great satisfaction that he was decorated in recognition of his gallantry.

22. I apologise to the dependants of late Brig Dalvi for taking the liberty of quoting from his book 'Himalayan Blunder' regarding problems of soldering over heights, supply of rations and communications and evacuation of casualties in Namka Chu region where his 7th Infantry Brigade operated and fought the last ditch action. I regret that it was not possible to contact them for their approval.

Practically every thing had to be dropped due to lack of roads. It was seen that 30 to 40 percent of parachutes were not opening out and the drops were a complete failure when the parachutes were old, wornout, repaired and re-used, as they were most of the time. This economy was not warranted viz-a-viz the requirements of operational efficiency.

The turn-round for load carrying man from Lumpu, the main dropping zone to the Namka Chu, the site of Chinese attack on 7th Infantry Brigade was about four days. Pioneers, porteraging loads, had to carry sufficient personal clothing and bedding to survive the bitterly cold nights. In the circumstances the effective payload for the troops, of a pioneer porter would be meagre. Not more than ten pounds per carrier were delivered to forward troops. The more unscrupulous pioneers delivered nothing as they either dumped their burden enroute or themselves consumed the rations sent for the troops on the battle line.

The troops who went to Namka Chu had no required rations and were also short of ammunition. They had gone there with hard scales and pouch ammunition. Every precious round had to be carried by the men for several miles over 13,000 to 14,000 feet high passes.

At Namka Chu there was no artillery support and a few guns which were air dropped got damaged. At Tawang the role of gunners was altered to that of infantry men as they were not required since the gun pieces needed were not available. At Bumla though full complement of artillery was provided timely fire was not available due to some technical snag. At Sela the artillery was also in position but did not prove to be very effective probably due to inaccurate maps and

the infantry had to fight the battle single handed. Armour and offensive air support were out of question. The armour (four tanks) which had gone a little beyond Bomdila were ambushed and destroyed by the infiltrating enemy and did not see any action. The Air Force fighters and bombers remained parked up on airfield and did not even warm up.

In certain areas troops are to be stationed and sheltered inside expensive arctic tents which were imported at astronomical cost. To save the troops from the rigours of extreme weather and altitude which culminate in disabilities, some doctrine has to be evolved by which mountain peaks can be guarded against intrusion of the enemy by holding lower heights as manpower cannot be exposed constantly and mercilessly to the vagaries of extreme weather and altitude. One has to strike a balance in holding extraordinary high peaks. One needs to hold lower alternative features nicknamed 'guardians'. Meanwhile, peaks can be kept under constant observation and patrolling.

Tawang Dzong salient runs between Tibet and Eastern Bhutan. For its defence our troops can not be located inside Eastern Bhutan to add depth to our defences. Also our mainline of communications passes through a narrow strip (Siliguri Corridor) of land running between southern Bhutan and northern Bangladesh. Main line of communication is not safe during military operations in the North East. So for proper defence of Tawang salient and to have a reliable line of communication for the eastern states there is a need for a military pact between Bangladesh, Bhutan and India. Till this pact comes into force defence in depth of the Salient by the Army should be pending but patrolling by the Army be continued for its security

and to keep abreast with the knowledge of the terrain and environment. It is important that special Central Government attention be paid to Tawang area, declaring it as a most backward region.

1962 Sino-India operations had valuable lessons for the Army. Some of these are expressed here-(a) For operating on these heights for Infantry a light rifle weighing not more than 6 lbs is required, light machines gun and 2 inch mortar should be commensurately lighter. (b) To make it more action oriented and aggressive the rifle platoon should be commanded by a young dashing officer as in the case of western armies and not by an old, slow, and less educated and less adventurous JCO; A JCO can continue as second-in-command. (c) Defences are to be more compact with greater depth and lesser gaps. (d) A fighting patrol should be stronger in number. (e) As far as possible no infantry toops should be used for dropping zone duties or on other fatigues to conserve manpower for preparation of defences, and for patrols and counter attacks. (f) On high mountains, where animal transport can not be used due to administrative reasons and lack of tracks, there is greater need of pioneers and porter units. Locals can also be mobilised for the purpose.

A mention may also be made of antiquated weapons and equipment used in these operations. The obsolete First World War vintage rifle was still in service in the 1962 operations. The selfloading rifle had not yet been introduced in the services; 2 and 3 inch mortar and 25 pounder gun were also still in use. However, Chinese were much advanced. They were using self loading and lighter rifle. They also used 76mm guns, which were fed and fired automatically; 120 mm mortars were also in use. Though our troops were operating at

high altitude in a deep snow bound region, no snow clothing was issued and cotton clothes were still in use.

It is heartening that there was greater harmony and a sense of secularism amongst the troops of different communities during the operations. In the difficult days of retreat when the troops did not have any rations and sufficient clothing, I remember that a Dogra NCO offered me a much needed chunk of sugar and a Sikh Light Infantry officer parted with his share of precious and attractive lump of cheese. I am very particular about my water bottle. It was filled at the first opportunity. I offered water to many thirsty soldiers. Ironically, there were also instances of people pinching water from my water bottle in the hours of darkness when I had gone to sleep !

Fear is the greatest bane of soldiering. A soldier may be par excellence in physical strength, weapon skills, tactical know how and in discipline. But if he has fear, anxiety and phobia the aforesaid characteristics are nullified. In the 1962 operations and in its aftermath, it was held that Indian troops had developed a phobia regarding the Chinese soldier and they had obsessive fear. It was said that they had trepidations and felt alarmed in the close proximity of the Chinese soldiers and hesitated to close in to fight them. The Chinese soldier was regarded as a phantom, bogeyman or a genie. It was also said that Indian soldiers were looking over their shoulders out of worry for lack of welfare and neglect of their families in their absence on duty. All this talk may not be entirely true but most of it was quite genuine. There is a need to strengthen the psyche of the Indian soldier to deal with this problem. One way of removing this fear and phobia is in the emotive psychology which Guru Gobind

Singh and Dronacharya used. The other method is to expose the soldiers to imaginative field firing treatment. The example is that a soldier is required to crawl whilst the fire is directed very close above him; yet another way is to confine the soldier to a slit trench and let an armoured vehicle make a sortie over the trench. These methods were used in Second World War; there can be scores of other similar innovations.

There is much desired to be done on the side of defence forces for the co-operation of civil authorities and public relations organisations. During the war whilst response was satisfactory from Uttar Pradesh and Punjab elsewhere it was rather poor. To illustrate this it is appropriate to quote some instances. I referred a case regarding my land problem to the civil authorities in Punjab. They were very prompt in action. Within two weeks I got an encouraging reply from the late Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, the then dynamic Chief Minister of Punjab giving a favourable response. He was a great revolutionary and administrator and full of imagination and energy. Unfortunately; he had to forego his Chief Ministership under the Kamraj Plan. Later he was assassinated by his opponents for personal revenge and thus Punjab lost one of its most illustrious sons and a great leader. A civil official visited my parents on our farm in Uttar Pradesh to find out whether they were well and not beset with any problems. These small gestures were very much appreciated. However, there were two unpleasant instances of admission of my children to schools where I met with utter disappointment. I had registered my son for admission to the Lawrence School, Sanawar. I was offered a vacancy on my unit address when I was posted at Tawang 1961. But the letter reached me late, since as per rules, it was routed through advance and

field post offices and the vacancy was cancelled as the acceptance of the vacancy was delayed. When the Principal of the school was personally contacted by my relatives and explained that the letter was delayed the principal of the school refused to listen. At Shillong, my baby daughter was refused a vacancy in a convent school inspite of my submission that I deserved the favour as I had been on active service and had suffered an injury in the field during the battle.

A soldier, for uninhibited performance of his duties, under stress and strain, needs help and encouragement for his family from all sources. So more sympathetic attention is needed from the civil authorities and the public. For this Public Relations organisation need bolstering up for the welfare of the soldier so that he does not look over his shoulder in the battlefield. I strongly feel that there should be a training school for this subject for civil officials just as we have schools for other technical and tactical military training. At the same time Public Relations Organisation can be made more vigorous to prevail over state governments to look after defence services personnel and their dependents more effectively.

Miseries of troops during withdrawal should also be mentioned. The troops toiled up the high hills swept by piercing cold wind; it was all a misery. Plodding up the steep ridges on risky tracks through thorny bushes, illfed, shivering in cold, troops covered more than hundred and fifty hard miles. The only rest during the night was to lie on the hard and sodden ground without a blanket or any other cover thinking of the harder days that may be approaching.

In utter contrast to what the Germans had done to British Army at Dunkirk and had facilitated its

retreat, China denied the golden bridge, to Indian troops.

It is a known fact of history that India taught and brought home the Buddhist message of peace and non-violence to Japan and China while they in turn acknowledged it and widely accepted this religion. Buddhism like wild fire, spread to every nook and corner and has taken firm roots in the two countries. They, ironically, flouted these noble principles and used force against India, the benefactor, twice in a century. Notwithstanding their unfortunate re-action India continued to profess and flash the same lofty messages of peace and non-violence. Moreover, this message was further repeated very intensely, by Nanak and Gandhi but still they showed vicissitude and exhibited volte face and made use of force and war. It will be interesting to watch the feelings of Huen Tsang and Fa Hien, the two famous Chinese travellers who visited India in the early periods. If they were to be born again to update the history of the continent they would, surely, be surprised to find that Aksai chin and Kameng fell to their country's wiles.

This analysis will not be complete without referring to the famous Thorat Defence Plan for NEFA. This plan envisages that the main enemy approaches from Tibet were to be kept under observation by unobtrusive forward posts and secondary line of strong fighting posts at appropriate tactical positions in the rear were to be established to delay and retard the enemy advance by offensive action by disorganising and forcing the enemy to regroup. The third tier of defence was supposed to finally blunt and break the invader's offensive when it had reached the end of his overstretched supply line and conversely our main

defences were being served by shorter maintenance line emanating from plains fed by railway network and good roads. Bomdila in NEFA could be developed as Alamein defensive position where Allied Army turned the tables on Germans during World War II. The renowned general had made a good appreciation but while laying the Defence Line, he had stipulated so short a separating distance (depth) between McMahon Line and his Defence Line that the two lines at places appear to have almost merged and thus his plan had lost some of its meaning.

As for as Forward Policy is concerned Shri Mullik the Director of Intelligence Bureau in 1962 had said that it was wrong to call this policy by the name of "Forward Policy" at all. In fact, the Prime Minister never referred to it as a Forward Policy, nor did anyone looked upon it as anything but safeguarding our own territory. If it was necessary to give it any name, it could appropriately be called. "No more surrender policy".

Krishna Menon explained "Whether the fighting in 1962 was unavoidable is a question which any responsible person cannot answer very easily. Nothing is unavoidable and yet you cannot create synthetic history to suit your convenience... A war which may be avoidable at a particular stage becomes unavoidable at another stage."

"The war with China became unavoidable to the extent that no independent country irrespective of its strength can refrain from defending itself. In undertaking defensive operations the country can never consider the odds. It is not like playing chess. If we are attacked, we have to defend ourselves even if we are beaten.

"I know some people have said that what has come to be known as India's Forward Policy, the Policy of establishing forward posts, was at least partly responsible for converting the situation from one of confrontation to that of armed conflict I think that this is an entirely wrong view. We never followed any Forward Policy. A Forward Policy means our trying to get into someone else's territory like Lord Curzon tried to do. There has been at no time an attempt by us to take anything that was not our territory. Establishing posts in an area which belongs to us cannot be called a Forward Policy. It is like saying that we committed aggression in Kashmir; that is what our enemies say. It was China which was following a Forward Policy in our territory."

To take off monotony from the mind of the readers certain interesting facts anecdotes are included in these pages.

All units were strangers to the area and were unfamiliar with the local topography. As accurate Survey maps of the area were non-existent operational planning was mainly done with the help of patrols; and field sketches which were prepared by the Assam Rifles and the army, who of necessity, penetrated and explored remote areas in NEFA. One inch maps were not at all available and four inch editions, were very old and vague. Even field sketches were misleading as these were often prepared by junior non-commissioned officers. One such sketch baffled Brigadier Dalvi when he was planning operations of 7th Infantry Brigade in Thagla area. The rough sketch was made by a Lance Naik of the Assam Rifles detachment which established Dhola Post in May 1962. He had drawn it, by pacing, showing approximate distances as accurate pacing was

not possible due to mud, snow and frequent detours to avoid bluffs and other obstacles such as thick patches of jungle. The sketch had one major discrepancy which very adversely affected the operational planning and execution of plans. As the Lance Naik was running out of the fullscape sheet that he was using for drawing the field sketch, he showed a hut, named Tsangle used by the local graziers, at the extreme left hand corner. In the sketch it appeared to be a few miles from Dhola Post but in fact it was two days march away. It misled everyone, right from the Government down to lower formations and units.

A word about a funny signal set up will not be out of place. This is illustrated by the procedure adopted to transmit General Kaul's signal from remote Namka Chu meant for the highest at Delhi. A sturdy Sikh soldier was to be detailed to run with the vital message to Lumpu 25 km away. From there it was phoned through to Zimithaung, where it was enciphered and transmitted to Tezpur, Lucknow and Delhi. The message reached through 'tribal' signal set-up after three days. The Defence Minister was in a rage and demanded dismissal of the Chief Signal Officer of the Command. It took a great deal of tact and persuasion to convince the Minister of the primitive signal's channel that existed in 1962.

A few lines about the so-called bridges in Namka Chu area will not be out of place. In fact these bridges were just a few logs, tied together, and put across the the nullahs to enable herders and their cattle to cross to the pastures beyond. Whilst these bridges had utility when the current was fast they had much less military significance during the non monsoon period. Higher authorities, being ignorant of the ground conditions,

sometimes issued unnecessary orders for the security of these bridges which became famous during fighting.

There were three tiers of Chinese defences at Thagla Ridge which the Indian troops were ordered to capture. First was on the northern bank of Namka Chu river opposite our own line of linear defence on the southern bank; the second enemy defence line was half-way on the Paitsai spur and third on the crest of the Ridge. This was a good example of defence in depth. The southern slopes of Thagla were less wooded than the Namka Chu Valley, with good field of fire and it would be suicidal to resort to frontal attack. To silence the network of machine guns of the forward slopes and mortars on the reverse slopes, would require much more gun fire than we could muster. But we did not have a single gun or heavy mortar, in neutralising role, for any stage of the attack. There was no Medium Machine Gun support either. The fate of attacking troops without covering fire of heavy weapons is well known - it was the impending slaughter.

It is curious that the most important order of 22 September 1962 for the eviction of the Chinese forces from Indian territory was only issued to the Army and no mention was made of the Air Force. Moreover, this order was signed by a Joint Secretary, a junior officer, only and not by the Secretary of Defence himself.

Another vital point I want to make is that Shri Chavan, the Defence Minister, speaking on the inquiry on the failure of the Army did not touch even once on the aspect of the non-employment of Indian Air Force in the war. Neither a single member of our Parliament had any question to ask regarding the Air Force for its non offensive role.

The Indian Army of 1962 had no 'emergency or survival rations. Those of its officers and men who fought in World War II remembered the solid emergency rations that came in a flat, compact tin, with an opener soldered to it; every officer and man carried it in his heaversack as a matter of routine. Even in World War I the Indian soldier never went in to a battle without his emergency ration, though at that time it consisted of a quantity of parched gram and a handful of jaggery-humble fare but quite sustaining. The main content of the World War II variety was chocolate; we had many brands of chocolate of indigenous manufacture in the market. It was not only Brigadier Dalvi and his party that suffered the pangs of hunger while trekking in the wilderness of NEFA; many others died of starvation, hundreds suffered extreme exhaustion due to lack of food while trudging back to the plains. It was not that, 15 years after independence we did not have the capacity to manufacture an emergency ration.

There is world of difference between operating in plains viz-a-viz on excessive heights. One has to be fit for fighting on high altitude mountains. In 1962 senior officers avoided living on heights like that of Sela. Resultantly, troops lacked the benefit of proximity to generals and other senior officers and remained bereft of the personal touch and quick and balanced decisions. General Kaul and Pathania tended to stick to Walong and Dirang Dzong respectively as these places had lower heights and higher dose of oxygen.

Though operational situations in the north-west and north-east was more or less the same it is strange that the Eastern Command could concentrate two divisions in their sector in NEFA while Western Command could muster only a brigade in Ladakh, the sector which was the scene of initial trouble though

major means of supply in the two sectors was air dropping and Ladakh became scene of fighting in 1947 also.

Perhaps 1962 war could be avoided, firstly, if the Indian Army had not set up their Forward Policy posts behind Chinese posts in Ladakh and, secondly, if 7th Indian Infantry Brigade had not set up post of Dhola in NEFA.

Some Words about Air Force transport planes. Air Force transport fleet in 1962 consisted of Dakotas, Packets C-119. There were some AN-12 and Ilushan-14 also. These operated from inadequate ground facilities such as radar and radio link. Rough and dusty surface of the landing grounds was another shortcoming. Approaches to many landing strips or dropping zones were narrow and difficult. In NEFA landing strips were available at Walong, Along and Tezu only and in Ladakh at Leh, Kargil, Chushul, Thoise and DBO. Air transport operation in defiance of many risks was a high tribute to the skill and dedication to duty of pilots and engineers. They won one MVC and eight VrC awards.

Transport fleet in 1962 had		
Dakotas	—	90
Packets	—	50
AN-12	—	6
IL-14	—	20
Others	—	34

The aircraft were employed for landing supplies and troops and dropping loads on forward airfields and DZs.

On the air supply side (there was no question of road supply as there were no roads) the Air Force was forced to use Packets (C-119) heavier transport aircraft to drop the heavy tonnages, on unsuitable and small dropping zones. They scattered their valuable loads in deep ravines, from where these could not be retrieved. They even attempted to drop artillery guns and their ammunition. These drops, in full view of the Chinese, clearly gave indications of Indian army build up.

In conclusion I may mention that though 1962 war was predominantly an infantry effort, other arms also did well though in isolated instances. Armour made a heroic effort to limp up towards Sela under Maj Jamwal. AMXs performed well at Chushul and Capt Dewan won VrC. Artillery distinguished itself at Walong; and Chushul and Lt Goswami was awarded MVC and Gnr Gurdip Singh VrC. Engineers made their mark when they destroyed Jang Bridge after 4 Arty Bde had passed over in the course of withdrawal from Tawang. Services also came into limelight. ASC, AMC and also Ordnance acquitted well in the invisible rear. Airforce made name in dropping heavy loads. Combat aircraft, also served in 'waiting'.

Three important appendices are included :-

- (a) Views of Major K C Praval-Sela Operations. Appendix 'M'.
- (b) Statement of Defence Minister regarding NEFA enquiry. Appendix 'N'.
- (c) Thorat Plan - Appendix 'O'

Appendix 'M'

(Refer to Page 471)

VIEWS OF MAJOR K C PRAVAL FROM HIS BOOK RED EAGLES-HISTORY OF 4 INFANTRY DIVISION

The decision to make Se La the main defensive position of Fourth Division was unwise, but the decision to abandon it on the night of November 17/18 was suicidal. And the manner in which the withdrawal was ordered showed the Indian Army at its nadir. A withdrawal from Se La well before the Chinese attacked would have made sense, but pulling out from this prepared position when the Division was under a multi-pronged attack was sheer folly. There are different versions of the evacuation of Sela. General Kaul gave his version in his book 'The Untold Story'. General Pathania gave his in a report he submitted after the rout. Brigadier Hoshiar Singh, the third important person in the episode, was killed during the withdrawal. This had left a gap in the story of Se La, but the account given here is borne out by the evidence provided by the survivors of 62 Brigade and also the available records.

Around 5 p.m. that day Pathania rang up Brigadier Hoshiar Singh. He told him of the battle of Thembang and gave his assessment that with Chinese presence on the line of communication it would not be possible for 62 Brigade to hold Se La for long and that it should withdraw to Dirang Dzong. Hoshiar Singh declined to leave Se La and said he was prepared to

stay and fight provided he was assured of air supply. Pathania cut short the conversation, but rang up after half an hour to say that air supply could not be guaranteed and that the brigade must withdraw that night. His plan was that 62 Brigade would join up with 65 Brigade and Divisional Headquarters at Dirang Dzong, and the combined force would then fight its way to Bomdila. Hoshiar Singh explained that a withdrawal that night would cause panic, and that in case he was forced to abandon Se La the earliest he could withdraw was on the following night. This did not suit Pathania but he had perforce to agree to the brigade commander's suggestion. The Divisional Commander was, however, very worried about the security of his headquarters and ordered Hoshiar Singh to despatch two companies of infantry for its protection quickly. Two companies of 13 Dogra were accordingly sent to Dirang Dzong during the night. At the same time a company of that battalion sent earlier towards the Twin-Lakes area was recalled to Senge.

According to General Pathania, he telephoned the BGS at Corps Headquarters at 6 p.m. and told him that it was essential to take a decision on the withdrawal of 62 Brigade as Se La could not be held much longer. He was asked to speak to the Army Commander. The reverse at Walong had brought the COAS, his DMO and the Army Commander to Tezpur. The Corps Commander had not yet returned from his aerial tour of the Walong-Hayuliang area. Pathania spoke to General Thapar as well as Sen and explained to them that in case permission for withdrawal was not given the troops at Se La would be in the bag. But the two generals refused to give a decision and Pathania was told to wait for the return of the Corps Commander.

At 7.30 p.m. General Kaul returned to his headquarters. Waiting for him in the operations room were the VIPs from Army Headquarters and Command Headquarters. He met them. Fifteen minutes later the telephone rang: it was GOC Fourth Division seeking permission to withdraw from Sela. Kaul told him that 62 Brigade had a week's supplies, adequate ammunition and prepared positions, and should be able to hold on for at least a week even if it was cut off. He emphasized the importance of retaining a foothold at Sela.

Later that night, while the Corps Commander and his guests were at dinner, General Pathania again telephoned reiterating his request for a withdrawal. Kaul told him that he must hold out at Sela that night and that he would give his final orders next morning. The Corps Commander hoped that the situation might stabilize next day. All the same, due to the persistent requests from Pathania, he sent him the following orders after consultation with the COAS and the Army Commander:

- (a) You will hold on to your present position to the best of your ability.
- (b) When any position becomes untenable, I delegate the authority to you to withdraw to any alternate position you can hold.
- (c) Approximately 400 enemy have cut the road Bomdi La-Dirang Dzong at KM 9 north of Bomdila.
- (d) I have ordered Commander 48 Infantry Brigade at Bomdila to attack the enemy force tonight speedily and resolutely and keep this road clear at all costs.

- (e) You may be cut off by the enemy at Senge (as you had been warned of this possibility in my operational instructions issued to you about 10 days ago).
- (f) Your only course is to fight it out as best as you can.
- (g) Reinforcement of two battalions will reach Bomdila by 18th morning.
- (h) Use your tanks and supporting arms to the fullest extent to clear your lines of communication.

23. Described as masterpiece of military buck-passing, this signal had to be relayed to General Pathania through 48 Brigade as direct communications with Divisional headquarters had by then been lost. It reached him in the early hours of November 18. The operative clauses of the message were not precisely worded and Kaul was later to say that the Divisional Commander's orders to 62 Brigade to withdraw from Sela were against the spirit of his instructions.

Appendix 'N'

(Refer to Page 471)

STATEMENT BY THE DEFENCE MINISTER REGARDING NEFA ENQUIRY NEW DELHI SEPTEMBER 2, 1963

The Defence Minister, Shri Y.B. Chavan, made the following statement in the Lok Sabha :

1. Sir, I wish to inform the House of the results of the enquiry to investigate our reverses in the operations occasioned by the Chinese aggression across our northern borders during the months of October-November 1962.
2. Though the officers appointed to enquire into these reverses were asked to examine the operations with particular reference to the Kameng Division of NEFA, they quite rightly came to the conclusion that the developments in NEFA were closely co-related to those in Ladakh and their study of NEFA operation had to be carried out in conjunction with developments and operations in the Ladakh sector. Thus, the enquiry made and the conclusions emerging from it are results of study into the entire operation on our northern borders.
3. As I had informed the House on 1st April, in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, that with my approval the Chief of Army Staff had ordered a thorough investigation to be carried out to find as to what was wrong with:

- (i) Our training;
 - (ii) Our equipment;
 - (iii) Our system of command;
 - (iv) the physical fitness of our troops; and
 - (v) the capacity of our Commanders at all levels to influence the men under them.
4. While conveying to the house the terms of reference of this enquiry, I had made it clear that the underlying idea in holding this enquiry is to derive military lessons. It was meant to bring out clearly what were the mistakes or deficiencies in the past, so as to ensure that in future such mistakes are not repeated and such deficiencies are quickly made up. Consequently, the enquiring officers had to study in great and intimate detail extent of our preparedness at the time the planning and strategic concepts behind it and the way those plans were adjusted in the course of operations. This also necessitated the examination of the developments and events prior to hostilities as also the plans, posture and the strength of the Army at the outbreak of hostility. In the course of the enquiry a very detailed review of the actual operations in both the sectors had to be carried out with reference to terrain, strategy, tactics and deployment of our troops.
5. The conclusions drawn at the end of the report flow from examination of all these matters in great detail. In these circumstance I am sure, the House would appreciate that by the very nature of the contents it would not be in the public interest to lay the report on the table of the House. Nor it is possible to attempt even an abridged or edited version of it, consistent with the consideration of security, that would not give an unbalanced or incomplete picture to you.

6. I have given deep thought to this matter and it is with great regret that I have to withhold this document from this august House. The publication of this report which contains information about the strength and development of our Forces and their locations would be of invaluable use to our enemies. It would not only endanger our security but affect the morale of those entrusted with safeguarding the security of our borders.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

7. Before I turn to the main conclusions of this enquiry may I bring to the notice of the House, that I had already made clear, that this enquiry is the type of enquiry which the Prime Minister had in mind when he promised such an enquiry to the House in November 1962 into the state of military unpreparedness to meet the Chinese invasion. I would like to assure the House that we had at the outset made it clear to those who were entrusted with this enquiry, and they in turn made it clear to the persons whom found necessary to examine, that our main intention was to derive lessons to help in our future preparedness and not in any way to undertake a witch-hunt into the culpabilities of those who were concerned with or took part in these operations. This was absolutely essential to get a full factual picture of the situation as it obtained in October-November 1962. I may specially mention this to remind the House that in considering these matters, we should never miss the proper sense of perspective or say or do things which could only give heart to the enemy and demoralise our

own men. I have no doubt, that the House would wish to ensure this spirit to be maintained.

8. The enquiring officers submitted their report to the Chief of Army Staff on 12th May 1963. After obtaining some complementary information the Chief of Army Staff submitted this report along with his comments to me on 2nd July. Considering the enormous mass of details that had to be gone into with meticulous care by the enquiring officers, as I have myself seen, I would consider that the report has been completed with commendable speed.

TRAINING OF JAWANS

9. The first question in the terms of reference was whether our training was found wanting.

The enquiry has revealed that our basic training was sound and soldiers adapted themselves to the mountains adequately. It is admitted that the training of our troops did not have orientation towards operations vis-a-vis the particular terrain in which the troops had to operate. Our training of the troops did not have a slant for a war being launched by China. Thus our troops had no requisite knowledge of the Chinese tactics, and ways of war, their weapons, equipment and capabilities. Knowledge of the enemy helps to build up confidence and morale, so essential to the Javan on the front.

10. The enquiry has revealed that there is certainly need for toughening and battle inoculation. It is, therefore, essential that battle schools are opened at training centres and formations, so that gradual

toughening and battle inoculation can be carried out.

11. It has also revealed that the main aspect of training as well as the higher Commanders' concept of mountain warfare requires to be put right.
12. Training alone, however, without correct leadership will pay little dividends. Thus the need of the moment, above all else, is training in leadership.

SHORTAGE OF EQUIPMENT

13. The second question was about our equipment. The enquiry has confirmed that there was indeed an overall shortage of equipment both for training and during operations. But it was not always the case that particular equipment was not available at all with the armed forces anywhere in the country. The crucial difficulty in many cases was that, while the equipment could be reached to the last point in the plains or even beyond it, it was another matter to reach it in time, mostly by air or by animal or by human transport to the forward formations, who took the brunt of fighting. This position of logistics was aggravated by two factors:

- (i) The fast rate at which troops had to be inducted, mostly from plains to high mountain areas; and
- (ii) Lack of properly built roads and other means of communication.

14. This situation was aggravated and made worse because of overall shortage as far as vehicles were concerned and as our fleet was too old and its efficiency not adequate for operating on steep gradients and mountain terrain.
15. Thus, in brief, though the enquiry revealed overall shortage of equipment, it has also revealed that our weapons were adequate to fight the Chinese and compare favourably with theirs. The automatic rifle would have helped in the cold climate and is being introduced. The enquiry has pinpointed the need to make up deficiency in equipment, particularly suited for mountain warfare, but more so to provide means and modes of communication to make it available to the troops at the right place at the right time. Work on these lines has already been taken in hand and is progressing vigorously.

SYSTEM OF COMMAND

16. The third question is regarding our system of command within the Armed Forces. The enquiry has revealed that there is basically nothing wrong with the system and chain of command, provided it is exercised in accepted manner at various levels. There is, however, need for realisation of responsibilities at various levels, which must work with trust and confidence in each other. It is also revealed that during the operations, difficulties arose only when there was departure from accepted chain of command. There again, such departure occurred mainly due to haste and lack of adequate prior planning.

17. The enquiry has also revealed the practice that crept in the higher Army formations of interfering in tactical details even to the extent of detailing troops for specified tasks. It is the duty of Commanders in the field to make on-the-spot decisions, when so required, and details of operations ought to have been left to them.

PHYSICAL FITNESS OF TROOPS

18. The fourth question is of physical fitness of our troops. It is axiomatic that an unacclimatised army cannot be as fit as one which is. The enquiry has revealed that, despite this, our troops both officers and men, stood the rigours of the climate, although most of them were rushed at short notice from plains. Thus in brief, troops were physically fit in every way for their normal tasks, but they were not acclimatised to fight at the heights at which some of them were asked to make a stand. Where acciimitisation had taken place, such as in Ladakh, the height factor presented no difficulty. Among some middle-age-group officers, there had been deterioration in standards of physical fitness. This is a matter which is being rectified. The physical fitness among junior officers was good and is now even better.

CAPACITY OF COMMANDERS

19. The fifth point in the terms of reference was about the capacity of the Commanders at all levels during these operations to influence the men under their command. By and large, it has been found that the general standard amongst the junior officers was fair. At unit level there were good and mediocre Commanding Officers. The

proportion of good commanding Officers and not so-good was perhaps the same as obtained in any army in the last World War. At Brigade level, but for the odd exception, Commanders were able to adequately exercise their command. It was at higher levels that shortcomings became more apparent. It was also revealed that some of the higher Commanders did not depend enough on the initiative of the lower Commanders who alone could have the requisite knowledge of the terrain and local conditions of troops under them.

OTHER ASPECTS EXAMINED

20. Apart from these terms of reference, the enquiry went into some other important aspects pertaining to the operations, and I would like to inform the House about this also. This relates to the following three aspects:
- (i) Our intelligence;
 - (ii) Our Staff Work and Procedures; and
 - (iii) Our "Higher Direction of Operations"
21. As regards, our system and organisation of intelligence, it would obviously not be proper for me to disclose any details. However, it is known that in the Army Headquarters, there is a Directorate of Intelligence under an officer designated as Director of Military Intelligence, briefly known as DMI.
22. The enquiry has brought out that the collection of intelligence in general was not satisfactory. The acquisition of intelligence was slow and the reporting of it vague.

23. Second important aspect of intelligence is its collection and evaluation. Admittedly, because of the vague nature of intelligence, evaluation may not have been accurate. Thus a clear picture of the Chinese build-up was not made available. No attempt was made to link up the new enemy build-up with the old deployment. Thus field formations had little guidance whether there were fresh troops or old ones moving to new locations.
24. The third aspect is dissemination of intelligence. It has come out that much faster means must be employed to send out processed and important information to field formations, if it is to be of any use.
25. There is no doubt that a major over-hauling of the intelligence system is required. A great deal has been done during the last six months. The overhauling of the intelligence system is a complex and lengthy task and, in view of its vital importance, I am paying personal attention to this.

STAFF WORK AND PROCEDURES

26. Now about our staff work and procedures. There are clear procedures of staff work laid down at all levels. The enquiry has however revealed that much more attention will have to be given, than was done in the past, in the work and procedures of the General Staff at the service Headquarter, as well as in the Command Headquarters and below, to long-term operational planning, including logistics as well as to the problems of co-ordination between various Service Headquarters. So, one major lesson learnt is that the quality of general Staff work, and the depth

of its prior planning in time, is going to be one of the most crucial factors in our future preparedness.

DIRECTION OF OPERATIONS

27. That brings me to the next point which is called the higher direction of operations. Even the largest and the best equipped of armies need to be given proper policy guidance and major directives by the Government whose instrument it is. These must bear a reasonable relation to the size of the army and state of its equipment from time to time. An increase in the size or improving the equipment of army costs not only money but also needs them.

LAST YEARS REVERSES

28. The reverses that our Armed Forces admittedly suffered were due to a variety of causes and weaknesses as stated above. While this enquiry has gone deeply into those causes it has also confirmed that the attack was so sudden and in such remote and isolated sectors that the Indian Army as a whole was really not tested. In that period of less than two months last year, only about 24,000 of our troops were actually involved in fighting. Of these, those in Ladakh did an excellent job even when over-whelmed and outnumbered. In the Eastern-most sector, though the troops had to withdraw in the face of vastly superior enemy strength from Walong, they withdrew in an orderly manner and took their toll. It was only in the Kameng Sector that the Army suffered a series of reverses. These battles were fought on our remotest borders and were at heights not known to the Army and at places

which geographically had all the disadvantages for our troops and many advantages for the enemy. But such initial reverses are a part of the tides of war and what matters most is who wins the last battle.

THE FOURTH DIVISION

29. Before I end, I would like to add a word about the famous "Fourth Division", which took part in these operations. It is indeed said that this famous division had to sacrifice its good name in these series of reverses. It is still sadder that this Division during the actual operations was only "Fourth Division" in name, for it was not fighting with its original formations intact. Troops from different formations had to be rushed to the borders to fight under the banner of the "Fourth Division", while the original formation of the Division itself were deployed elsewhere. I am confident, and I am sure the House would share with me that the famous "Fourth Division" would live to win many more battles if there is any future aggression against our country.
30. Before I conclude, I would like to mention that we have certainly not waited for this report to be in our hands to take corrective action. The process of taking corrective action had started simultaneously with the institution of this enquiry and the House would recollect that I had informed it of the same.
31. What happened at Sela and Bomdila were severe reverses for us, but we must remember that other countries with powerful defence forces have

sometimes suffered in the initial stages of war. The aggressor has a certain advantage, more especially, when the aggression is sudden and well-prepared. We are now on the alert and well on the way of preparedness, and this enquiry while bringing home to us our various weaknesses and mistakes would also help to strengthen our defence preparedness and our entire conduct of such operations.

24. Whilst the debate was going on and the Defence Minister had yet to make his reply many allegations were made in the Lok Sabha as well as public about alleged political interference in the operations which was held to be responsible for the reverses. This criticism was based on certain misunderstanding of the facts but yet it was persistent and it was necessary that the misconceptions should be dispelled by a forthright statement in the Lok Sabha, detailing all the facts in their proper perspective to let the country understand the nature of mistakes committed, if any, and then fasten responsibility. Without this, the atmosphere in the country was being vitiated. So, on September, 1963, in the evening, the Cabinet Secretary, Shri Khera met the Prime Minister and suggested to him the necessity of making such a statement. He went over all the facts chronologically in his presence to sort out whether there was any political interference in the Army planning.

Appendix 'O'

(Refer to Page 471)

THORAT DEFENCE PLAN

"It must be appreciated that in the early stages of any war the attacker will always have the initial advantage over the defender because he can choose the time and place for the attack and can therefore apply all his strength at any given point. Therefore, he will get into the defender's territory and make penetrations. If this happens the defender must not lose heart because he will have his say when he has located the main thrust and moves his reserves to meet it- very likely on ground of his choosing. There he will give battle, stabilize the situation, and then steadily push the enemy back. This process may take a long time, but there is no other answer to it when one is on the defensive. I make this statement pointedly because I realise that even small-scale penetrations will have great demoralising effect on the country's morale and may embarrass the government. We must, therefore, condition our minds to expect and accept these inevitable penetrations in the early stages of the war.

Even if I were to disperse my force on a 'thin red line' all along the border, it will serve no useful purpose for I shall be weak every where and strong nowhere. Therefore, I do not propose to do so.

As the enemy comes farther away from his bases on the other side of the McMahon Line, his communications will get stretched. He will find it increasingly more difficult to maintain his forces, and

the situation will get worse day by day. A stage will come when his maintenance difficulties will be the same as mine, and it is then that I shall give him the first real fight. The scene of this battle will be a line running east and west through the middle of NEFA and for purposes of this paper I propose calling it the Defence Line.

The Defence Line will consist of a succession of Vital Points. The choice of these will depend not only on their tactical value but also on our ability to maintain and support them. This presupposes that there should be a roadhead or an airhead at each of these points. Without these the ability of the garrisons to put up a protracted defence will be limited. The Defence Line as I envisage it will be Towang (Kameng division)-Ziro-Daporijo (Subansari division)-Along (Siang division)-Roing-Tezu-Lohitpur-Hayullang (Lohit division) Jairampur (Tirap division).

This line shall be the main defensive position beyond which I shall accept no penetration. In other words, it is on this line that I shall stop the enemy and proceed to drive him back across the McMahan Line. I have confidence that given the necessary resources I will not allow the enemy to cross this line. This line will divide NEFA into two halves. The area north of the Defence Line shall be known as the Northern sector and the area south of it as the Southern Sector."

CHAPTER TWELVE

OFFICIALS AND OFFICERS

President

Shri Radha Krishanan

Prime Minister

Shri Jawharlal Nehru

Ministry of Defence

Shri Krishna Menon

Shri Pulla Reddy

Shri H C Sarin

Defence Minister

Defence Secretary

Joint Secretary Defence

Army Headquarters

Gen P N Thapar

Maj Gen J S Dhillon

Brig D K Palit VrC

Chief of Army Staff

Offg CGS

DMO

Lt Gen P P

Kumarmanglam, DSO

Lt Gen R S Paintal

Lt Gen Dhargalkar

AG

QMG

MGO

HQ Central Command

Lt Gen L P Sen DSO

Brig H K Sibal

GOC-in-C

BGS

HQ IV Corps

Lt Gen B M Kaul	GOC
Brig K K Singh	BGS
Brig M R Rajwade MC	CE

HQ 4 Inf Div (Zimithaung, Dirang)

Maj Gen Naranjan Prasad	GOC (Tawang)
Maj Gen A S Pathania	
MVC, MC	GOC (Sela-Bomdila)
Lt Col Manohar Singh	GSO I
Lt Col Shamsher Singh	AQ
Maj Narinder Singh	GSO 2 (Ops)

HQ 7 Inf Bde

Brig JP Dalvi	Cdr
Maj Rex Kharbanda	BM
Maj Bertie Pereira	DQ
Capt Gupta	10

**Commanding Officers
Infantry Battalions**

Lt Col RN Mishra	9 Punjab
Lt Col MS Rikh	2 Rajput
Lt Col BS Ahluwalia	1/9 GR
Lt Col Harihar Singh	4 GRENADIERS
Dispositions 7 Infantry Brigade 20 Oct 62 on Day Chinese Attacked	
4 Grenadiers (less two Coys)	holding Bridge I
One Coy	Drokung Samba Br (directly under Div HQ)
One Coy	Serkhim, with one of its platoons at Hathung La

9 Punjab (less One Coy)	Bridge II
One Coy	Bridge V and Tsangle
2 Rajput (less three Coy)	Bridge IV
One Coy	Bridge III
One Coy 1/9 GR (less two Coys)	Log Bridge Astride the Che Dong-Tsangdhar track
One Coy	Behind Bridge II (near Bde HQ)
One Coy (less Pl)	Tsangdhar
One pl	Between Tsangdhar and Bridge V
One pl of 5 Assam Rifles	Che Dong
34 Hy Mor Bty less Th	Tsangdhar
Troop 17 Para Regt (two guns)	Tsangdhar
Coy 6 Mahar (MG) less a pl	One pl 1/9 GR
	One pl with 2 Rajput at Bridge IV
100 Fd Coy (less a pl)	Rong La

Order of Battle and Dispositions
62 Infantry Brigade

Sela Operations, 1962

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---|
| 1. | HQ 62 Inf bde | South of Sela, km 90 |
| 2. | 4 GARH RIF | Screen, Br 3 |
| 3. | 4 SIKH LI | Two Coys, Twin Lakes
one coy Km 108. Bn 3
Coys west shoulder
Sela. |
| 5. | 2 SIKH LA | Two Coys Kela, Bn less
Two Coys East of Rd fwd
of Sela between km 102
and 104. |
| 5. | 1 SIKH | East shoulder Sela (in
depth) |
| 6. | 13 DOGRA | Senge Dzong, On High
ground overlooking DZ. |
| 7. | 36/37 Bty 6 FD Regt | Nuranaung |
| 8. | 2 DERAJAT Mtn Bty | Nuranaung |
| 9. | 95 Fd Bty 5 FD Regt | MS 96 |
| 10. | 96 Fd Bty 5 FD Regt | Near Bde HQ/km 90 |
| 11. | 19 Fd Coy (Tuskers) | Shukla Camp |
| 12. | A Coy 7 Mahar | |
| 13. | ADS and Sb Coy | Near Bde HQ, KM 90 |
| 14. | Comp Pl | DZ, Senge Dzong |
| 15. | AWD | Senge Dzong |

**Officers
Headquarter 62 Infantry Brigade**

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1. | Brig Hoshiar Singh
1OM, IDSM, Croix de
Guerre | Cdr. Killed in
action |
| 2. | Maj Jaideo Singh Datta | BM |
| 3. | Maj Alexander | DQ |
| 4. | Capt Abraham | GSO 3 |

List of officers at Bumla 1962
1st Battalion The Sikh Regiment²⁵

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Lt Col BN Mehta | CO |
| 2. | Maj Gurdip Singh Kler | 2IC |
| 3. | Maj GJ Edulji | 'C' Coy Cdr |
| 4. | Maj AC Lahiri | 'A' Coy Cdr
(On long patrol) |
| 5. | Lt BS Randhawa | 'B' Coy Cdr |
| 6. | Lt Hari Pal Kaushik | 'D' Coy Cdr |
| 7. | Capt Mahabir Prasad Adjt | Att 1/9 GR |
| 8. | Capt Krishan Khorana | Adjt |
| 9. | Capt Ramraj Singh | QM |
| 10. | 2/Lt Balbir Verma | Pl Cdr, Later
Killed in J&K in
mine blast |
| 11. | 2/Lt Surrendar Dagar | Pl Cdr |
| 12. | Capt NP Tara, AMC | RMO |
| 13. | Capt GS Gosal, Arty | OP Mtn Bty |
| 14. | Lt Birbal Sharma, Arty | OP Hy Mor Tp |
| 15. | Sub Maj Gurcharan
Singh VrC | Sub Maj |
| 16. | Jem Darshan Singh | JA |
| 17. | Jem Gurdev Singh | JQM |

25. Maj Durjan Singh and Maj Inamdar accompanied the 1st Sikhs to Tawang as Coy Cdr and Adjt respectively but were posted away before the unit moved to op location in Bumla area. Earlier the unit lost experienced Santa, Surat, Somesh, Tankha and Plare on their postings out.

Officers at Sela 1962
1st Battalion The Sikh Regiment

1.	Lt Col BN Mehta	CO, Killed in action
2.	Maj Gurdip Singh Kler	21C
3.	Maj AC Lahiri	Coy Cdr, POW
4.	Capt BS Randhawa**	Coy Cdr, on SLR Course
5.	Capt Haripal Kaushik VrC	Adjt
6.	Capt Krishan Khorana*	QM
7.	2/Lt Surrender Dagar	Pl C, killed in action
8.	2/Lt Balbir Verma	Pl C, on SLR Course
9.	Capt NP Tara, AMC	RMO
10.	Sub Maj Gurcharan Singh VrC	Sub Maj
11.	Jem Darshan Singh	JA
17.	Jem Gurdev Singh	JQM

* Later Maj Gen

** Later Lt Gen

Officers at Tawang and Sela 1962
4th Battalion The Garhwal Rifles

1.	Lt Col BM Bhattacharjea	CO (Later Maj Gen & MVC)
2.	Maj Umrao Singh	'B' Coy Cdr
3.	Maj HM Rai	'C' Coy Cdr
4.	2/Lt SN Tandon	'A' Coy Cdr (Later VrC)
5.	Capt Dharmपाल Singh	Adjt
7.	2/Lt VK Goswami	(Later VrC)
8.	Capt BK Nath, AMC	RMO

Officers at Sela 1962
4th Battalion The Sikh Light Infantry

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|----|
| 1. | Lt Col RB Nanda | CO |
| 2. | Maj SB Naidu | |
| 3. | Maj S Raju | |
| 4. | Capt RD Rosario | |
| 5. | Capt KL Shukla | |
| 6. | Lt Gurdip Singh | |
| 7. | 2/Lt Rialu | |
- (Incomplete list)²⁶

Officers at Sela 1962
2nd Battalion The Sikh Light Infantry

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Lt Col AR Irani | CO |
| 2. | Maj Surrender Singh | 21C |
| | Jaspal | |
| 3. | Capt Basant Singh | Coy Cdr |
| 4. | Lt Khera | Killed in action |

Officers at Senge Dzong
13th Battalion The Dogra Regiment

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---------|
| 1. | Lt Col MS Oberoi MC | CO |
| 2. | Maj JS Bhullar | Coy Cdr |
| 3. | Maj Joginder Singh | Coy Cdr |
| 4. | Maj Jagjit Singh | Coy Cdr |
| 5. | Maj Mall Singh | Coy Cdr |
| 6. | Capt KS Singh | Adjt |
| 7. | Capt RS Mandal | 10 |
| 8. | Capt IR Puri | POW |
| 9. | Capt MV Natu | POW |
| 10. | Capt NM Vardeo | |

26. (Incomplete list)

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|----------------------|
| 11. | Capt JL Bakshi | |
| 12. | Lt KD Ashwani | |
| 13. | 2/Lt KB Thapa | |
| 14. | 2/Lt Tek Singh (SL) | Killed in action |
| 15. | 2/Lt GC Bhojwani | Killed in action |
| 16. | Sub Maj Rajinder Singh | SM, Killed in action |

Dispositions
65th Infantry Brigade
Cdr Brig Sayeed

Bde HQ	— Ewang near Dirang
19 Maratha LI	— Ewang with 2 Coys. north-east & west.
4 Rajput	— Br No 1 Area Coys widely dispersed.
Bty 6 Fd Regt	— Between rd and village Sagor
Sec Mtn Guns	— With Coy 4 Rajput
Pl 7 MAHAR (MG)	— Bde tps

Order of Battle and Dispositions
48 Infantry Brigade

HQ 48 Inf Bde	HQ Circuit House
Brig Gurbakhsh Singh	Cdr
Maj MN Rawat	BM
5 Guards less 3 Coys	Between Circuit House and DC's Bunglow
Two Coys	Near Power House
Coy	Near Cinema
1 Sikh LI less one Coy	Between DC's Bunglow and Pt 2902

Coy	Phutang
1 Madras	Astride Pass Road Bomdila Dirang
Pl 5 Assam Rifles	Poshingla
Pl 5 Guards	Poshingla
One Bty 6 Fd Regt	Helipad area
Mtn Bty	Helipad area
Tp 135 Hy Mor Bty	Helipad area wef 16 Nov
One pl 7 Mahar (MG) Tp 7 Cav	Near Circuit House
3 JAK Rif	Inducted in final stages

—0—

67 Inf Bde (4 Div res)
Brig MS Chatterjee MC Cdr

3 Jak Rif
5/5 GR
6/8 GR

List of Officers
6th Battalion Kumaon Regiment Walong (NEFA)
November 1962

1.	Lt Col CN Mudia	CO
2.		21C
3.	Maj S Gamathina Yagm	'A' Coy Cdr
4.	Maj BN Sharma	'B' Coy Cdr
5.	Maj BN Bhatia	'C' Coy Cdr
7.	Capt TS Pall	'D' Coy Cdr

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|----------|
| 8. | Capt RK Mathur | |
| 9. | Lt Bikram Singh | Coy Offr |
| 10. | 2/Lt AS Khatri | Coy Offr |
| 11. | 2/Lt PK Jindal | Coy Offr |
| 12. | Capt BC Chopra AMC | RMO |

**List of Officers
4th Battalion The Sikh Regiment
Battle of Walong**

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Lt Col Al Behl | CO |
| 2. | Maj Anant Singh | 21C |
| | Posted to 124 Bn (TA) Later | |
| 3. | Maj PM Samvatsar | 'A' Coy Cdr, killed
in action |
| 4. | Maj Harbans Singh | 'B' Coy Cdr |
| 5. | Maj Sandhu | 'C' Coy Cdr |
| 6. | Maj Malik later | 'D' Coy Cdr |
| 7. | Lt YR Palta | Killed in action |
| 8. | Capt Parkash Singh | Adjt |
| 9. | Capt IJ Kumar | QM |
| 10. | Lt Amar Singh Sudan | Coy Offr |
| 11. | Sub Maj Piara Singh | SM |
| | Descendant of Hav Ishar
Singh of Saragarhi fame.
He was JQM during my
tenure with 4th Sikhs in
1948-49 when I was Adjt. | |

5 Inf Bde Subansiri FD
Brig G S Gill Cdr
1/4 GR
2 J& K Rif
Sec 6 Mahar (MG)
69 Hy Mor Bty of
44 Hy Mor Regt

27. It is regretted that names of many officers, have not been included as I could not get these from formation/units concerned.

192 Inf Bde Slang FD
Brig Shiv Charan Singh Cdr
2/8 GR
2 Madras
11 AR

East Central Region

Sikkim

HQ 20 Inf Div (Gangtok)
HQ 66 Inf Bde (Gangtok)
3/9 GR
1 Maratha
Sp Arms
HQ 165 Inf Bde (Karponang)
16 Madras
1 Dogra
3 Jat
5/11 GR
Sp Arms

HQ 202 Inf VBde (Kopup)

4 Guard
15 Punjab
14 Dogra
Sp Arms

HQ 9 Inf bde Gp (Lucknow) For West Centre Sector

8 Dogra For joshimath Sub Sector
14 Rajput
4 Maratha

HQ Western Command (Simla)

Lt. Gen Daulet Singh

HQ LV Corps

Lt Gen Bikram Singh (Udhampur)

HQ 3 Inf Div (Leh) Raised on 26 Oct 62
Maj Gen Budh Singh MC
HQ 163 Inf Bde (Leh) Role close def Leh
13 Fd Regt Less Two Btys

HQ 114 Inf Bde (Chusul) Frontage 40 km
Apr 27 Oct

Brig TN Raina Cdr
Maj Jagjit Singh BM

1 Jat
1/8 GR
13 Kumaon
5 Jat
Tp 20 L (AMX-13 Tps)

Two Btys 7 Fd Regt
Tp Hy Mor Bty

HQ 70 Inf Bde (Dungti) Arr 27 Oct for
Indus Valley Sector

Brig R S Grewal MC Cdr
7 J&K Mila
114 Mor Bty
Bty 7 Fd Regt

HQ Delta Sector (Thoise) For Northern Sector
Raised 24 Oct
14 J&K Militia

Note:

9 Dogra, 3/4 GR and 3 Sikh LI
were under induction
HQ PH&HP Area
Sugar Sector (HP)
9 Madras

Gallantry Award Winners

Param Vir Chakra

Name	Unit	Place
Maj Dhan Bahadur Thapa*	1/8 GR	Srijap
Maj Shaitan Singh*	13 Kumaon	Razangla
Sub Joginder Singh*	1 SIKH	Bumla

Maha Vir Chakra

Brig TN Raina	114 Inf Bde	Chushul
Lt Col BM Bhattacharjea	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Maj Gardial Singh	2 Rajput	Dhola
Maj MS Chowdhry*	9 Punjab	Dhola
Maj SPS Srikant	1/9 GR	Dhola
2/Lt BD Dogra	1/9 GR	Dhola
Capt Mahabir Prasad*	1 Sikh	Dhola
2/Lt GVP Rao*	4 Grenadiers	Dhola
Nk Chain Singh	9 Punjab	Dhola
Sep Kanshi Ram	9 Punjab	Dhola
Rfn Jaswant Singh Rawat*	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Sep Kewal Singh*	4 Sikh	Walong
Sub Sonam Stopadam*	14 J&K	Ladakh
Hav Sarup Singh *	Militia	(Bhujang)
Maj SS Randhawa	Militia	Ladakh
		(DBO)
Jem Ishi Tandup*	7 J&K	Karakoram
	Militia	
Lt SD Goswami	Arty	Chushul
Nk RI Thapa	1/8 GR	Srijap
Hav Stangin Phunchuk*	7 J&K	Changla
	Militia	
Maj Ajit Singh	5 Jat	Nulla (Ladakh)
Sq Ldr Jagmohan Nath	Air Force	

Vir Chakra

Lt Haripal Kaushik	1 Sikh	Bumla
Lt YR Palta	4 Sikh	Walong
Hav Kirpa Ram*	4 Sikh	Walong
2/Lt VK Gowwami	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Sub VS Rawat	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Sub JS Gosain	4 Garh Rif	Sela
L/Nk JS Negi	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Rfn Nandan Singh	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Rfn GS Gosain	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Rfn NS Rawat	4 Garh Rif	Sela

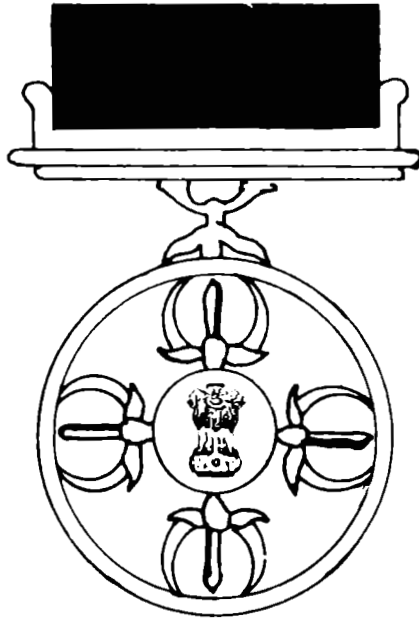
Name	Unit	Place
2/Lt SN Tandon	4 Garh Rif	Sela
Capt RD Rosario*	2 Sikh LI	Sela
Capt AS Diwan	20 L	Chusul
Jem TB Gurung*	1/8 GR	Chusul
Nk TR Thapa	1/8 GR	Sirijap
Gnr Gurdip Singh*	Arty	Chusul
Capt RR Arirthalingam	AMC	Ladhakh
Jem Rigzim Phunchok	14 J&K	Ladakh
Hav Tuls Ram	Militia	(Phunjung Post) (Ramu Post)
Nk Gulab Singh*	13 Kumaon	Rezangla
L/Nk Singh Ram*	13 Kumaon	Rezanla
Sep DS Dahiya*	AMC	Rezangla
Sep Sonam Rabgar	7J&K Mila	Ladakh
Sgm Dharm Chand	Signals	Ladakh
L/Nk Raghvan	Engr	Ladakh
L/Nk Chhimat Dorje	7 Ladakh Scouts	Ladakh
Capt GS Bhatia*	2 Rajput	Dhola
Sep Jagpal Singh*	2 Rajput	Dhola
Sub Jagpal Singh*	2 Rajput	Dhola
Sub BC Roy	2 Rajput	Dhola
Hav Saudagar Singh	2 Rajput	Dhola
Sub BB Katwal*	1/9 GR	Dhola
Hav GB Rawat*	1/9 GR	Dhola
Hav KS Thapa*	1/9 GR	Dhola
Hav KS Thapa*	1/9 GR	Dhola
Maj RN Anant	Assam Rif (4 Dogra)	NEFA Slang FD
Sep Dorje Phunchok	14 J&K Militia	Ladakh Chandni Post
Sub Dewan Chand	Militia	Ladakh Takkar Post
CHM Anand Ram	Militia	Ladakh (DBO)
Sep Sonam Wang Chuk	Militia	Ladakh
Sep Dobezeang Chhiring*	Militia	Ladakh (Chandni Post)
Sub Nihal Singh*	5 Jat	Galwan
L/Hav Dharam Singh	5 Jat	Ladakh
Nk Munshi Ram*	5 Jat	Ladakh
2/Lt HC Gujral	Jat	Ladakh
Jem Ram Chandar	13 Kumaon	Rezangla
Jem Surju Ram*	13 Kumaon	Rezangla
Jem Hari Ram*	13 Kumaon	Rezangla

502 / UNSUNG BATTLES

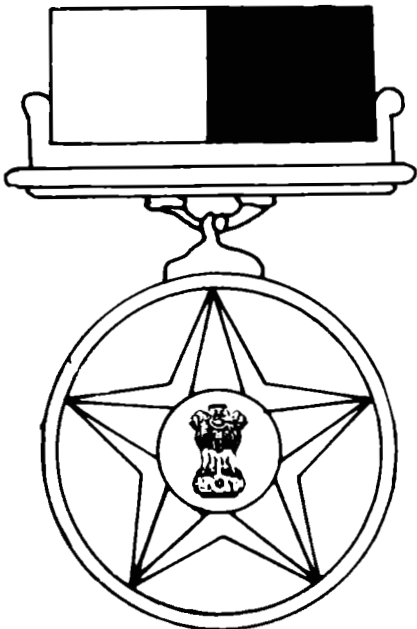
Name	Unit	Place
Nk Hukam Chand*	13 Kumaon	Rezangla
Harl Govind Kamble	7 Mahar	Sela
Nk Bahadur Singh*	6 Kumaon	Walong
2/Lt PS Bhandari	Arty	Walong
Sub JD Limbu	2 AR	Walong
Rfn PB Tamang	2 AR	Walong
Capt EN Iyengar	AMC	
Hav Bhag Singh*	9 Dogra	J&K
Maj PN Bhatia	6 Kumaon	Walong
Capt RM Mathur	6 Kumaon	Walong
Capt BC Chopra AMC	6 Kumaon	Walong
2/Lt AS Khatri	6 Kumaon	Walong
L/Nk HB Gurung	11 AR	Walong
Rfn Bajrang Thapa	11 AR	Walong
2/Lt NC Kohli*	9 Punjab	Dhola
Hav Malkiat Singh*	9 Punjab	Dhola
Sep Suran Chand	9 Punjab	Dhola
Sep S Joseph	24 Fd Amb	
L/Nk Sardar Singh*	4 Grenadiers	Dhola
Wg Cdr PL Dhawan	Air Force	J&k
Wg Cdr TLA Anderson	Air Force	Ladakh
Sqn Ldr Chandan Singh	Air Force	Ladakh (Chip Chap)
Sqn Ldr AS Williams	Air Force	NEFA
Sqn Ldr SK Badiwar	Air Force	Ladakh
Flt Lt VB Sawant	Air Force	
Flt Lt KK Saini	Air Force	NEFA
Flt Lt KL Naraynan	Air Force	Ladakh

* Posthumous

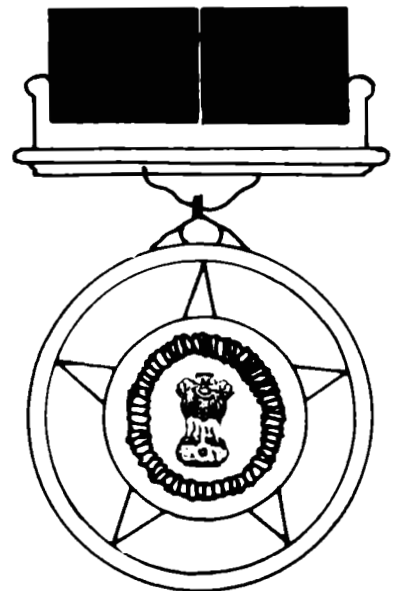
For Bravery and Blood



PARAMVIR CHAKRA (OBVERSE)



MAHAVIR CHAKRA (OBVERSE)



VIR CHAKRA (OBVERSE)



Major DS Thapa, PVC, 1/8 GR



Sub Joginder Singh, PVC, 1 SIKH



Major Shantan Singh, PVC, 13 KUMAON



Gen TN Raina, MVC



Maj Gen BM Bhattacharjea, MVC,
4 Garh Rif



Capt Mahavir Prasad, MVC,
1 SIKH (Posthumous)

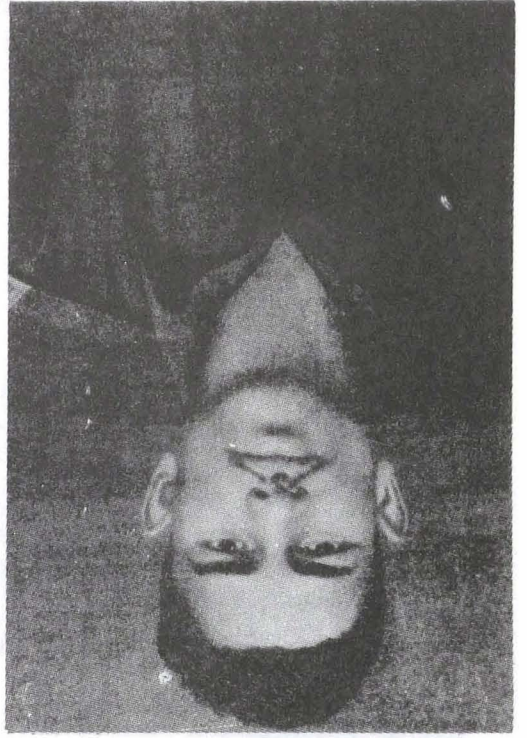


Major MS Chaudhary, MVC,
9 PUNJAB

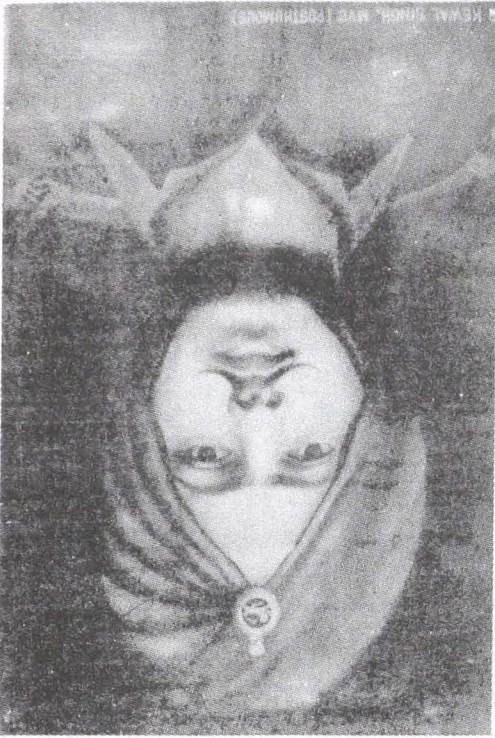


2/Lt GVP Rao, MVC (Posthumous)
4 GRENADIERS

Rfn JS Rawat, MVC, 4 Garh Rif



Sep Kewal Singh, MVC, 4 SIKH



Nk Chain Singh, MVC (Posthumous)
9 PUNJAB



Sep Kansl Ram, MVC, 9 PUNJAB





Major AS Khatri, VrC, 6 KUMAON



Capt Haripal Kaushik, VrC,
1 SIKH



Capt PL Kher, VrC, 1/8 GR



Capt RK Mathur, VrC, 6 KUMAON



Capt PN Bhatia, VrC, 6 KUMAON



Lt Yog Raj Palta, VrC, 4 SIKH



2/Lt NC Kohli, VrC, 9 PUNJAB



2/Lt SN Tandon, VrC, 4 Garh Rif



2/Lt VK Goswami, VrC, (Posthu)
4 Garh Rif



Sub US Rawat, VrC, 4 Garh Rif

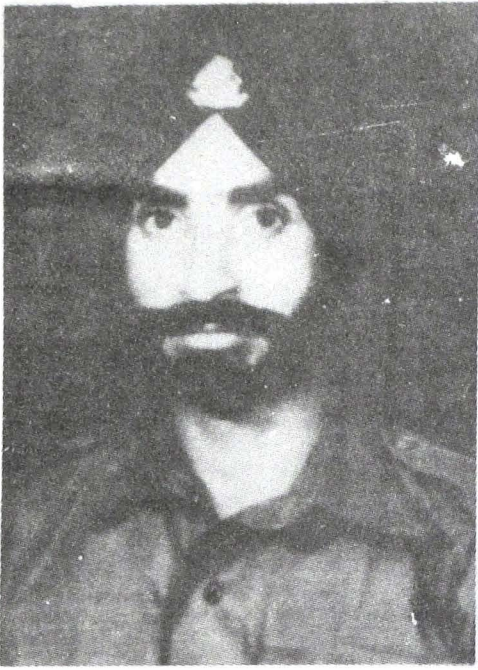


HAV/EBR KIRPA RAM, VrC (POSTHUMOUS)

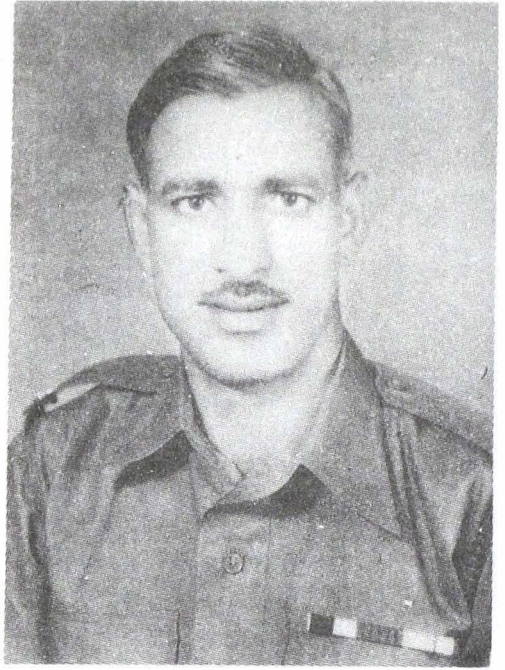
Hav Kirpa Ram, VrC, (Posthu)
4 SIKH



Nk Bahadur Singh, VrC, (Posthu)
6 KUMAON



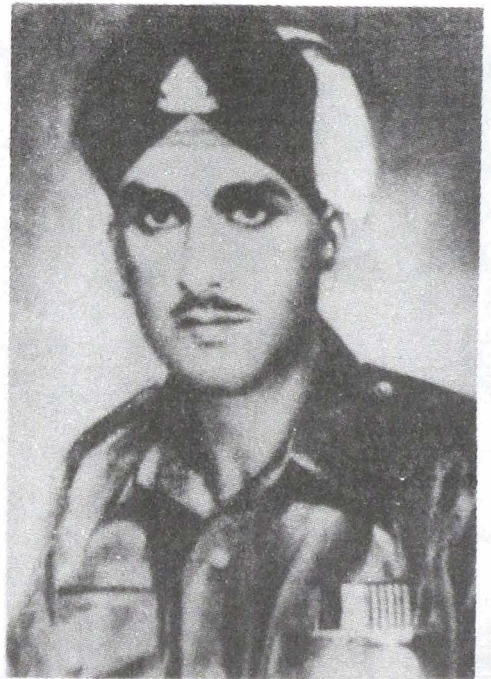
Hav Malkiat Singh, VrC, (Posthu)
9 PUNJAB



Nk RK Yadav, VrC, 13 KUMAON



Rfn Tulsi Ram, VrC, 1/8 GR



Sep Suran Chand, VrC, 9 PUNJAB

Some writers try to be known to the public, others try to be known to their colleagues and yet others try to be known to themselves.

—*Enrico Raamvelli*

EPILOGUE

The Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 lasted for just two months and it was only a border war fought in remote areas, tactically and administratively eminently suiting China, but utterly unfavourable to India.

In fact, the Indian Army did not want this war in the form it helplessly assumed. Indians 'brink of the war' doctrine, the brain child of Lt General BM Kaul, supposed to regain the lost Aksai Chin, went out of control, exploded and fell and resulted in the unnecessary war, Indian Army was not prepared for it, but still it gave a tough fight and made the Chinese Army halt their advance at just the foothills and declare unilateral cease fire and retrace its steps. This was the same strong Chinese Army which had badly bruised the Americans in Korea.

The great lesson that was learnt from the clash was that the Army should always be ready for any eventuality. India should forget Aksai Chin till it falls into its lap like a ripened fruit when Tibet region re-gains freedom which is bound to happen. Who can imagine that so many small European countries could achieve their freedom without acute struggle or semblence of any war?

Chandigarh

Lt Col Gurdip Singh Kler (Retd)

27 October 1994²⁸

28. 27 Oct is Infantry Day. On this day (27 Oct 1947) 1st Sikh landed at Srinagar by air to fight the first battle of independent India.

GLOSSARY OF MILITARY TERMS

Check Point

1. Where routes from units/sub units coverage.

Counter Attack

2. A counter attack is the action taken by the defenders to drive out the enemy who has penetrated the defences.

Counter Penetration

3. The action taken by the defender to halt enemy forces which have penetrated into the defended sector and/or overrun part of it. Such a task is normally given to the mobile reserve.

Dropping Zone

4. A laid down area where equipment, supplies, or ammunition is dropped by aircraft.

Depth formation/unit

5. A formation or a unit disposed to give depth to a defended sector or area in order to break up the momentum of enemy attack and to prevent deep penetration.

Intermediate Position

6. Ground occupied temporarily during withdrawal to delay the enemy advance.

Interdiction

7. The overall destruction of communications to restrict enemy movement. In its tactical application it is designed to isolate the area of the land battle.

H Hour

H hour is the time for the start of an operation.

No Man's land

No man's land between opposing troops over which no one has domination.

Maintenance Area

10. An area in which reserves, personnel and supply depots, hospitals, workshops and other installations are set up for the maintenance of Armed Forces in the field.

Maintenance by Air

11. The term is used to cover the supply by air of all commodities required by formation to enable it to fight.

Patrol

12. A detachment of troops employed to either obtain information or deny information to enemy.

Reconnaissance

13. Reconnaissance is the process of obtaining information by observation of area.

Rendezvous

14. In withdrawal at a rendezvous point units/sub units re-organize.

Rear Guard

15. A moving detachment that protects the rear of a moving column.

Screen

16. Troops employed to interfere with the enemy's preparations for attack.

Turn Round and Circuit of Action

17. a) Turn round is the time which a transport echelon takes to move forward, deliver its load, return to the replenishing area, refill and return to the point from which it started.
- b) Circuit of action is the return distance covered by a transport echelon between the point where it loads and where it delivers its load.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Word
APO	Advance Post Office
Ac	Aircraft
Adjt	Adjutant
AMC	Army Medical Corps
AT	Animal Transport
Arms	Armourer
Arty	Artillery
AR	Assam Rifles
AT	Animal Transport
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
Br	Bridge
Bty	Battery
Capt	Captain
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
Cdr	Commander
Col	Colonel
Coy	Company
DBO	Daulat Beg Oldi
Def	Defence
Dep	Depot
DQ	Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General
Div	Division
Dmr	Drummer
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
Engr	Engineer
ERE	Extra Regimental Employment
Emp	Employment

Abbreviation

Fwd Flt

FD

FEBA

FMC

FM

FOO

FPO

Gen

GS

Gp

Hav

HP

Hosp

HQ

IB

ICV

IMA

IMS

IOM

Inf

JA

Jem

JCO

JQM

Ldr

L of C

Loc

LMG

2/Lt

Lt

Maj

Word

Forward Flight

Frontier Division

Forward Edge of Battle
Area (Chinese)Fire Movement
Controller

Field Marshal

Forward Observation
Officer

Field Post Office

General

General Staff

Group

Havildar

Himachal Pradesh

Hospital,

Headquarters

Inspection Bunglow

Infantry Combat
Vehicle

Indian Military Academy

Indian Medical Service

Indian Order of Merit

Infantry

Jemadar Adjutant

Jemadar

Junior Commissioned
Officer

Jemadar Quarter Master

Leader

Line of Communication

Location, Locality

Light Machine Gun

2/Lieutenant

Lieutenant.

Major

Abbreviation	Word
MC	Military Cross
Mech	Mechanised
MM	Military Medal
MMG	Medium Machine Gun
Mor	Mortar
MFC	Mobile Fire Controller
MP	Member of Parliament
Mtn	Mountain
MT	Mechanical Transport
MVC	Maha Vir Chakra
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
Nk	Naik
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
ORBAT	Order of Battle
Ofir	Officer
Op	Operation, Operational
OP	Observation Post
OR	Other Rank
Pl	Platoon
PLA (Chinese)	Peoples Liberation Army
PM	Prime Minister
PRCA (Chinese)	Peoples Republic of China Army
PVC	Param Vir Chakra
QM	Quarter Master
Rly	Railway
Regt	Regiment, Regimental
RMO	Regiment Medical Officer

Abbreviation**Word**

Sec	Section
SM	Sena Medal
Sep	Sepoy
SLR	Self Loading Rifle
Sta	Station
Sub	Subedar
SM	Subedar Major
Sqn	Squadron
Sup	Supply
Swpr	Sweeper
Tk	Tank
Tp	Troop
UP	Uttar Pradesh
VC	Victoria Cross
Wg	Wing
Wksp	Workshop
L	Lancer
Cav	Cavalry
JAK LI	The Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry
GR	Gorkha Rifles
PUNJAB	The Punjab Regiment
Madras	The Madras Regiment
Grenadiers	The Grenadiers
Rajput	The Rajput Regiment
Jat	The Jat Regiment
Sikh	The Sikh Regiment
Sikh LI	The Sikh Light Infantry
Dogra	The Dogra Regiment
Garh Rif	The Garhwal Rifles
Kumaon	The Kumaon Regiment

Truly, if they had been mindful for that country from where they come out, they might have had opportunity to have returned, Who through faith subdued, promises, stopped the mouth of lions, queched the violence of fire, waxed valient in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens; and other were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection; and other had trails of cruel mockings, yea, moreover of bonds of imprisonment; they were stoned, were sawn as under, were temted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in the descrt, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

—HEBERWS XI

PART-IV

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MISCELLANEOUS

Places as they fell to Chinese 1962

Sr. No.	Place	Fmn Holding	Date captured by Chinese
1.	Namka Chu (Dhola) on McMahon Line	7 Inf Bde	20 Oct 62
2.	Tawang/ Bumla	4 Arty Bde/ 1 Sikh	25 Oct 62
3.	Kibithoo	6 Kumaon	21 Oct 62
4.	Sela	62 Inf Bde	18 Nov 62
5.	Dirang Dzong	65 Inf Bde	18 Nov 62
6.	Bomdila	48 Inft Bde	18 Nov 62
7.	Walong	11 Inf Bde	18 Nov 62
8.	Daulat Beg Oldi*	114 Inf Bde	27 Oct 62
9.	Chusul	114 Inf Bde	18 Nov 62 Gurung/Maggar Hills & Rezangla

* Chip Chap, Galwan, Sirijap & Indus Valley Posts.

Duration of Post Independence Wars

Sr.	Year	War	From	To	Period
1.	1947	Indo-Pak War (J&K)	27 Oct 1947	31 Dec 1948	1 Year 2 months
2.	1948	Hyderabad Action	13 Sep 1948	17 Sep 1948	4 days
3.	1961	Liberation of Goa	18 Dec 1961	20 Dec 1961	3 days
4.	1962	Indo-China War	24 Sep 1962	22 Nov 1962	3 months
5.	1965	Indo-Pak War	1 Sep 1965	22 Sep 1965	22 days
6.	1971	Indo-Pak War	24 Nov 1971	16 Dec 1971	22 days

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