

Irrawaddy attacked the 17 Division reconnaissance unit, the 1 Glosters, at Paungde and fighting continued throughout the day. Commander 1 Burcorps decided that this was a good opportunity for offensive action. Accordingly a force consisting of one armoured regiment and two infantry battalions attacked early on the 29th March and recaptured Paungde, but during the day a strong enemy force appeared at Padigon, six miles to the north. Another enemy force in considerable strength, after surprising and overcoming a commando unit on the west bank, crossed the river from Padaung and occupied Shwedaung establishing road blocks across the main road, thus cutting off the force at Paungde.

28. During the following 48 hours fierce fighting took place and, although the tactical situation was not unfavourable to the Imperial Forces, the familiar Japanese tactics of establishing road blocks in their rear forced the 17 Division to abandon their main object of destroying the enemy in the Paungde area in order to reopen their L. of C. This brought about the withdrawal of the 17 Division to the Prome area, which was completed by the evening of the 30th March. During this fighting the enemy was actively assisted by traitor Burmans and some Japanese were found to be wearing Burmese clothes. The commando unit referred to in paragraph 27 was surprised by Japanese soldiers who had disguised themselves in this manner.

29. *Withdrawal to the Dry Zone.* On the 30th March the Commander-in-Chief in India arrived by air in Burma and on the 1st April I accompanied him by air from Mandalay to Magwe, proceeding by road to Corps Headquarters at Allanmyo. At a conference which took place here on the afternoon of the 1st April the Commander-in-Chief agreed that, in view of the difficulties of the country and the fatigue of the troops in 17 Division, a withdrawal from Prome to the Allanmyo area should commence forthwith, and that this withdrawal might have to be continued even further north into the dry zone south of Taungdwingyi, where the country was more open and more suitable for the employment of tanks. On the evening of the 1st April the enemy attacked Prome and penetrated the defences held by the 63 Infantry Brigade securing the high ground south of the town. The 17 Division was forced to withdraw on the 2nd April north and north-east of Prome. On the 3rd April the 17 Division moved back through 1 Burma Division, in position in the area Dayindabo-Pyalo, to the area Ywataung-Kyaukpadaung-Bwetkyichaung, the 48 Infantry Brigade and the 7 Armoured Brigade, less one regiment, moving during the night of the 3rd to 4th April to Sathwa. On the 3rd April 1 Burcorps issued an Operation Instruction covering the possibility of a withdrawal to the line Minhla-Taungdwingyi and the withdrawal from Prome, which was originally intended to stop at Allanmyo, was, in view of the tired state of the troops, continued to this line, which was reached by the night of the 4th-5th April except by the 2 Burma Brigade, moving up the west bank, which did not reach Minhla till the night of the 8th-9th April.

During this period the enemy air force was very active and there was a considerable

amount of bombing and machine gunning in the forward area.

30. *Dispositions for the Defence of the Oilfields.* The dispositions of 1 Burcorps on the 9th April were on the general line Minhla, Migyaungye, Nyaungyatsan, Thadodan and Taungdwingyi. It will be noted that the stretch of front from Minhla to Taungdwingyi was over 40 miles and that in consequence there was no depth. With this in mind, I had on the 4th April requested General Tu Yu Ming, commanding Chinese Fifth Army, to send one Chinese regiment\* to hold Taungdwingyi so as to enable 1 Burcorps to form a reserve. General Tu informed me that he had already ordered one battalion to Taungdwingyi. The fire power of the Chinese battalion was, however, not more than that of a company of Imperial troops. A regiment was therefore promised.

After further consideration I decided that at least one Chinese division was required to hold Taungdwingyi and accordingly I asked the Generalissimo, who arrived in Maymyo on the 6th April, to make a division available for this purpose. He promised that he would do so. In the event, however, only one Chinese battalion reached the Taungdwingyi area. The failure of the Chinese to supply a division for the defence of Taungdwingyi had the most serious consequences.

31. *Lack of Information.* I feel it is necessary to comment here on the lack of intelligence at my disposal. Owing to the hostility of the local population and to the total lack of air reconnaissance, information was most difficult to get. It appeared, however, from such identifications as were obtained that 1 Burcorps were opposed only by the Japanese 33 Division but that this Division was assisted by a considerable number of traitor Burmans. On the Chinese front only the Japanese 55 Division had been identified. The operations which took place about this time illustrate clearly the advantage which the initiative confers on a highly trained force which has the assistance of the local population in a country of great distances and poor communications. The successes which the Japanese gained cannot all be ascribed to their superior training and, at this time, superior morale.

32. *Destruction of the Oilfields.* On the 10th April it became apparent that enemy columns were moving north on tracks south-west of Taungdwingyi. On the 11th April a Corps striking force consisting of the 7 Armoured Brigade and the 48 Infantry Brigade moved south to attack the most easterly of these columns. Contact was established on the morning of the 12th April and by 0800 hours the 48 Infantry Brigade was being heavily pressed and bitter fighting took place in which the Corps striking force more than held its own. Another enemy column on the east bank of the Irrawaddy was attacked by the 1 Burma Brigade. Owing to the non-arrival of the Chinese division which had been promised for the defence of Taungdwingyi, the Commander 1 Burcorps now felt that he could not continue to hold Taungdwingyi and also cover the direct approach to the oilfields, and he represented this opinion to me. To have abandoned

\* A Chinese division was organised on the basis of three regiments each consisting of three battalions