

was begun. This feat was completed in five days, on the 21st December. On the fleet of over 600 craft the maintenance and transport of 53 Brigade depended. It will be remembered (paragraph 140) that they had been collected at Maungdaw and then transported across the Mayu Range, by the hill road and its tunnels, to Buthidaung.

150. Meanwhile, by the 18th December, 53 Brigade had occupied Seinnyinbya, seven miles south of Buthidaung. Leaving a detachment heavily engaged in this area, the Brigade effected a double river crossing and occupied the large village of Kwazon on the 21st December; while another detachment advanced, against opposition, down the east bank of the river. On the 19th December, 1 Brigade of 82 (West African) Division to the north made a great stride forward and occupied Kindaung, forcing the crossing of the Saingdin Chaung. 4 Brigade, released from its protective rôle at Taung Bazaar, was at this time rounding up scattered enemy parties north of Buthidaung, preparatory to rejoining the Division in its advance on Htizwe. After securing Kindaung, 82 (West African) Division encountered stubborn resistance. A number of attacks failed to dislodge the enemy rearguards from their strong hill positions, despite concentrated air support. On the 22nd December, however, the enemy was outflanked by a strong force which moved down the river in boats and seized the high ground north of Zedidaung against stiff opposition. From this area, we were able to overlook the enemy's line of retreat and his resistance collapsed. The Kalapanzin Plain, north of the Saingdin Chaung, had been cleared of the enemy.

151. On the 27th December, when 74 Brigade had already reached Foul Point, 53 Brigade began their last bound. It entailed the crossing of the Mayu River (two miles wide), the capture of Rathedaung, and finally of Kudaung Island, which was the objective. This island lies due north of Akyab, in the junction of the estuaries of the Mayu and Kywede Rivers. One battalion, ferried from Kwazon to the west bank of the Mayu, drove on to Pyinshe (seven miles south of Kwazon), sweeping prisoners into their net. On the 29th December, they crossed the river to Htizwe, forestalling the West Africans in the occupation of this objective. Two days later they occupied Rathedaung unopposed, after it had been bombarded from the sea by the destroyer NEPAL. On the same day (31st December) another battalion occupied Kudaung Island, thus fulfilling the Brigade's task.

152. The success of all the foregoing operations of 53 Brigade had been made possible by the fleet of boats already mentioned. Not only were they vital for the supply of the Brigade but they conferred the tactical mobility which was so essential. The great effort which they had involved was fully justified. The task of maintenance of the Brigade still remained. Navigational difficulties were not at an end, for the lower Mayu is an arm of the sea rather than a river. Great assistance was, at this stage, rendered by Naval motor launches, which by the end of the month were able to round Foul Point.

153. On the 17th December, 22 (East African) Brigade began to take over the defence of the Tunnels area, thereby releasing 51 Brigade to mop up a number of bewildered Japanese detachments, who were garrisoning strongholds on the Mayu Ridge, by-passed by the advance of the other two brigades of 25 Indian Division. By the 22nd December, 51 Brigade began to spread southwards down the coastal plain and concentrate at Indin, where it remained until it later rejoined 25 Indian Division in Akyab. It had taken 25 Indian Division less than three weeks to secure their final objectives on either side of the Mayu Range, a fortnight ahead of schedule. The enemy had withdrawn east to Kanzauk and a large column was known to have moved from there to Myohaung. It thus appeared unlikely that 82 (West African) Division would encounter much determined resistance on its way into the Kaladan Valley.

154. Earlier, during their advance down the Kaladan Valley in the Spring of 1944, 81 (West African) Division had suffered a check at Kyauktaw. They were unaccustomed to open country and Kyauktaw lies in a cultivated valley four miles south of the confluence of the Kaladan River and the Pi Chaung. This time it had been planned to cross the river north of the confluence and to outflank Kyauktaw to the east, while leaving a holding force on the west bank. This would act as a protective detachment against any counter-thrust and mislead the enemy as to our intentions. Accordingly, on the 4th December, 6 (West African) Brigade advanced east from Kyingri on the Pi Chaung, with the intention of crossing the Kaladan at a point some ten miles north of the confluence of the two rivers. The first troops of the Brigade made the crossing on the 6th December; by the 9th the whole of 6 Brigade and Divisional Headquarters were across, and three days later only a detachment of battalion strength remained west of the river. Beyond shelling the bridgehead, the Japanese were slow to react to this crossing and subsequent concentration, and it was not until the 15th December that they launched a night attack against 6 Brigade, which was covering the bridgehead. This attack was repulsed after bloody fighting.

155. It should be noted here that the Japanese had a heavy preponderance in guns; 81 (West African) Division only possessed pack artillery, whereas the enemy possessed not only field but a considerable number of medium guns. In this close country, air support could not always redress the balance. In order to maintain the momentum of our advance, despite the fact that we were out-gunned, it was desirable to avoid open fighting. It was therefore decided to execute a wide hook through the hills to the east, by-passing Thayettabin (through which the road runs from Kyauktaw) and emerging only to cut the enemy's communications about Myohaung.

156. The advance from the bridgehead started on the 19th December and the leading troops of 6 Brigade, with 5 (West African) Brigade following, were already eight miles south-east of Tinma on the following day, with a major left hook developing. A small deception detachment was left in the Tinma area for several days, which successfully diverted the enemy's attention from the main outflanking