

war. If they could have been pulled out for a few weeks to rest and refit, and if it had been possible to provide their deficiencies in personnel, equipment and transport, no doubt they would have recovered. In existing conditions this was of course impossible and after only a short pause they were again engaged in the severe fighting at Pegu which eventually culminated in the loss of Rangoon.

It was afterwards ascertained that the enemy had brought up for this action part at any rate of another Division—the 33rd. This Division moved via Paan and jungle tracks north east of the Thaton-Bilin-Kyaikto road and was no doubt intended to annihilate our forces east of the River Sittang. Our timely withdrawal, however, prevented his carrying out his plan in full. By forced marches he was able to launch an attack on the bridgehead at the Sittang and thus bring about its premature destruction. He was also able to ambush our columns on the march and inflict heavy casualties. The success of the latter operation was no doubt partly due to the disorganisation caused by the bombing already referred to. It is interesting to note that it was reported by stragglers that the tracks used by the enemy were most carefully marked with paper arrows and that the enemy undoubtedly had the assistance of local guides.

There is no doubt that the battle of the River Sittang was nothing less than a disaster. Except for about two battalions which both suffered heavy casualties the Division had lost practically all its equipment, transport, guns and ammunition. The men that were eventually collected had in some cases retained their rifles but many had lost them in crossing the River Sittang and others had had in addition to discard some of their uniform including even their boots. Their morale was naturally low and many were utterly exhausted. Steps were of course immediately taken to distribute such transport, arms, clothing and equipment as could be made available, though this amounted to little. A large number of men who were unarmed had to be put on trains and evacuated to reinforcement camps up country where they could be rested, re-armed and equipped. Owing to transportation difficulties many of them did not rejoin their units until after the loss of Prome. The 46 Indian Infantry Brigade had to be broken up and many units were amalgamated or re-distributed, among these were 5/17 Dogras, 7/10 Baluch, 1/7 Gurkhas, 3/7 Gurkhas, 1/3 Gurkhas. The following table shows the state of battalions of 17 Indian Division on the evening of 24th February.

STATE OF INFANTRY OF 17 INDIAN DIVISION (EVENING 24TH FEBRUARY)

Bde.	Bn.	B.Os.	V.C Os	O.Rs.	Rifles	Brens	T.S. M.Gs.
16	2 K O.Y.L.I.	6		200	50	2	2
	1/9 R. Jats	8	10	550	50		2
	1/7 G R.	6	4	290	50	2	
	8 Burma Rifles . .	3	3	90	60	2	
	Total 16 th Bde. ...	23	17	1,130	210*	6	4
46	7/10 Baluchi . . .	5	3	200	90		2
	5/17 Dogra . . .	1	3	100	70		
	3/7 G.R. . . .	5	5	160	30		
	2 D.W.R. . . .	16		300	150	4	6
	Total 46 Bde. ...	27	11	760	340*	4	8
48	1/3 G R . . .	3	4	100	40	5	8
	1/4 G R. . . .	12	18	650	600	30	30
	2/5 R G R . . .	16	6	215	30	2	2
	4/12 F F.R . . .	9	13	480	200	9	16
	Total 48 Bde ...	30	41	1,445	870*	46	56
	Total Div ...	80	69	3,335	1,420*	56	68
Approximate Deficiency . . .		100	65	4,500	5,800	300	300
Immediate deficiency of weapons ...					1,700	120	100

* Note the small number of rifles available

IX.—PEGU AND THE LOSS OF RANGOON.

103. *Troops available.* On the 23rd February, I met the Commander 17 Indian Division near Pegu and was able to ascertain the state of the Division. One squadron of tanks was now available for operations and as it could not get across the Sittang-Rangoon

River canal at Waw it was decided to concentrate and reorganise the remnants of the 17 Indian Division in the area Waw-Pegu.

In addition to the 17 Indian Division the forces that now became available were 7 Armoured Brigade which included 7 Hussars, 2 R. Tanks and 414 Bty. R.H.A. The Cameronians were attached to the Armoured