

35. The second phase of these operations, which took place concurrently with the first phase which I have already described, was the advance of 20 Indian Division along the Imphal - Ukhrul road to join the forces about Ukhrul and sever all possible lines of escape of the enemy. Like the first phase, the period was one of great activity, and much fierce fighting. A Japanese force some 2,000 strong had been isolated and was trying to escape to the south-west. Bitter fighting developed between a desperate enemy trying to fight his way out of the net thrown round him and troops equally determined to hold him. Very heavy casualties were inflicted, but our losses were not light. The enemy's forces were gradually compressed into a small area and 20 Indian Division made contact with 7 Indian Division on the 11th July.

36. On the 17th July, 20 Indian Division was withdrawn from the Ukhrul sector after destroying the remnant, about 300 strong, of this Japanese force and capturing all its guns and transport. The Division was now concentrated to rest and refit about Wanjing, 16 miles south-east of Imphal, where it could, if necessary, easily move in either direction and act as a reserve to 23 Indian Division on the Tamu road or to 5 and 17 Indian Divisions about Bishenpur. 50 Indian Parachute Brigade (two battalions) which had been operating most successfully on the flank of 20 Indian Division across the tracks running south from the Imphal - Ukhrul road, was similarly withdrawn for rest and re-organization in India.

37. The operations of 23 L.R.P. Brigade, which belonged to Special Force (Long-Range Penetration troops), but which had not been flown into North Burma with that formation in March, deserve special mention. In their advance south from Kharasom to the Ukhrul area, they operated in eight small columns across exceptionally difficult country and inflicted severe casualties on 31 Japanese Division retreating from Kohima. Four of these columns, advancing from the north, co-ordinated their movements with those of 7 Indian Division on Ukhrul from the west. The other four columns moved to the east and south-east of Ukhrul to cut the enemy's communications.

By the 11th July, all tracks leading east towards Homalin on the Chindwin had been blocked and many enemy destroyed, our own casualties being negligible. In the third week in July, 23 L.R.P. Brigade was concentrated at Ukhrul before being withdrawn to India.

38. *23 Indian Division—Tamu Sector.* By the middle of July, the enemy had been driven from the Ukhrul area, and the operations ended with the complete rout of the Japanese, who retreated down the tracks to Humaine and Tamu abandoning guns and lorries and leaving many dead. With the withdrawal of 20 Indian Division and 23 L.R.P. Brigade, interest switched to the Tamu sector where 23 Indian Division was engaged in driving the enemy from his strongly prepared positions east and south-east of Palel.

For some time past, the enemy had been active in this sector, but his counter-attack failed to make any headway. His only success was early in the month when a small raiding party reached the Palel airstrip at night and damaged three aircraft. By the middle of

July, however, he had lost the initiative and was being driven back. The fact that over 100 Japanese were taken prisoner in one week was some evidence of decreasing morale.

39. The opening of 23 Indian Division's offensive down the Tamu road in the middle of July began another phase of the campaign to drive the Japanese forces across the Chindwin. The situation on the 24th July was that one brigade, after making a wide turning movement via the Sibong track, had outflanked the enemy's positions, established blocks on the Tamu road south of Sibong and in the Lokchao bridge area, and achieved complete surprise. The enemy was thus caught between these blocks and the two brigades advancing on them from the north which, on that date, had captured the strong Japanese positions at Tenguoupal after severe fighting. The enemy's defence in this area disintegrated and they withdrew, abandoning much heavy equipment, including some guns. By the 25th, we had cleared an enemy block at Milestone 49 and were exploiting to the south-east.

40. 23 Indian Division continued its advance down the Palel - Tamu road supported by tanks, over-running successive enemy positions and capturing nine guns. 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade, an independent formation, operating north of the road, protected the left flank of 23 Indian Division. Enemy casualties in the last week of July had been heavy and his stubborn resistance had been fruitless.

41. On the 31st July, 33 Corps assumed command of 5 and 17 Indian Divisions and took over responsibility for the Tiddim road sector. On the 1st August, Headquarters, 4 Corps, was withdrawn to India for rest and training in mobile operations.

Summary of Operations in July.

42. *Arakan.* Apart from local patrolling in typical monsoon weather, there was no activity on either side.

43. *Chin Hills and Chindwin.* Our troops continued to press the Japanese withdrawal:—

In the Ukhrul sector, the enemy were driven back to a point 18 miles south of Ukhrul.

In the Palel area, 23 Indian Division reached a point five miles north-west of Tamu.

On the Imphal - Tiddim road, 5 Indian Division reached the area 21 miles south of Bishenpur, capturing a number of guns, tanks and armoured cars in this advance.

44. The general situation at the end of July was that the Japanese were still retiring and it seemed likely they might decide to hold the line Tiddim - Kalewa and northwards, along the Chindwin River, for the rest of the monsoon. Rain continued to hamper our operations, floods and continual landslides impeding our progress and breaking our communications.

45. *North Burma.* Operations against Myitkyina had continued. 77 L.R.P. Brigade (Special Force) which had been operating under General Stilwell's command in the Mogaung area, and some columns of 111 L.R.P. Brigade, had been withdrawn to India by air. On the 19th July, 14 L.R.P. Brigade captured Ngusharaung, an important