

199. It will be recalled (*vide* paragraph 185) that, by the 9th February, 2 Brigade of 82 (West African) Division had nearly reached Kangaw, while 1 and 4 Brigades were *en route* from Hpontha to Kyweguseik to intercept the Japanese forces withdrawing from Kangaw. 82 (West African) Division (less 2 Brigade) was now directed to advance on An with all possible speed, leaving a detachment to mask Kyweguseik, which was found to be strongly held. Maintenance would be by air, since they would be going through some of the thickest and most mountainous country in the whole of Arakan. While 82 (West African) Division was continuing its difficult approach march towards An, 53 Brigade (25 Indian Division) was to make yet another landing, this time at Ru-Ywa, a village some 14 miles due west of An. 2 (West African) Brigade, from Kangaw, was then to pass through this bridgehead and advance on An from the south-west, thus forming the southern arm of the pincer movement against this village, the northern arm being formed by the other two brigades of 82 (West African) Division. After 2 (West African) Brigade had passed through the bridgehead, 74 Brigade of 25 Indian Division was to land and, advancing north up the coast, capture Tamandu, a village three miles east of the enemy's inland water transport base of Kantaunggyi, and the western terminus of the road to An. 25 Indian Division was also directed to find a small pursuit force to follow up its success at Kangaw, which was to press rapidly south, through Kyweguseik, on to Tamandu from the north. This secondary pincer movement was designed to destroy the large body of enemy troops known to have been virtually trapped in that area.

200. It was also decided to carry out a combined naval and artillery bombardment of Tamandu while the Ru-Ywa operation was being mounted. This had the double object of riveting the Japanese commander's attention to this area (since it was known that the enemy there expected attack), and of destroying important installations. This bombardment, which was carried out by the NARBADA, KISTNA, JUMNA and FLAMINGO, began on the 5th February and lasted for ten days and nights. The area was utterly wrecked and, later, when the Ru-Ywa landing was made, it became apparent that, as a deception measure, this operation had achieved its object.

201. On the 16th February, naval forces, commanded by Captain D. C. Hill, R.N., landed 53 Brigade at Ru-Ywa against slight opposition. Enemy gunfire from the Tamandu area was dealt with by the NARBADA and JUMNA. This initial success, and the subsequent build-up, were largely due to audacious minor operations carried out during the three nights preceding the landing. Detailed reconnaissance by 3 Commando Brigade of the mangrove swamps west of Ru-Ywa revealed an unoccupied island four miles from the proposed bridgehead. A battery of medium artillery was unobtrusively transported to it by naval landing craft, a light airstrip was constructed, and supplies dumped. The enemy never succeeded in locating this battery and its support proved invaluable. The Japanese made a determined attack on the bridgehead on the 19th February,

which was only beaten off after severe hand-to-hand fighting. On the 20th, while the enemy were still attempting to dislodge our troops, the first flight of 2 (West African) Brigade arrived from Kangaw. By the 25th, this Brigade was four miles east of Ru-Ywa, having passed through 53 Brigade. On the 25th February also, 74 Brigade started to land. In spite of most difficult conditions the supply of the troops ashore was maintained by naval landing craft, and the sloops, motor launches and support craft continued to afford fire support to the Army, especially in the Dalet—Tamandu area.

202. In the north of the sector, 82 (West African) Division, which had occupied Kyweguseik on the 24th February, was making surprisingly good progress despite physical difficulties; every step of the path had to be cut and impassable cliffs imposed wide diversions. They were, however, doing useful work as they were continually cutting off and destroying enemy parties, of the order of 50 strong who had formed part of the Kangaw garrison.

203. Meanwhile, 74 Brigade, supported by tanks, had begun its advance north. By the end of February, it had pushed the enemy back over the Me Chaung and this obstacle was crossed on the 3rd March. 53 Brigade was carrying out extensive patrolling east and south of Ru-Ywa and several small clashes occurred. 2 (West African) Brigade continued its advance on An from the south-west, meeting only slight opposition, but experiencing great topographical difficulties. 74 Brigade after crossing the Me Chaung, pushed ahead towards Tamandu against considerable opposition. On the 4th March, with the aid of tanks, they overran several enemy positions, the enemy's anti-tank artillery making no impression on our Shermans. After a sharp but successful engagement in the vicinity of the road junction south of Tamandu they exploited northwards to the village, which they found derelict and deserted and which was proudly handed over to them by a naval party which had landed a few hours earlier. Severe fighting, however, continued east and north of Tamandu for some days until the enemy's fierce resistance was broken by the combined efforts of 74 Brigade and the West Africans advancing from the north. On the 7th March 1 Brigade crossed the Dalet Chaung and occupied Dalet Village. Simultaneously, 4 (West African) Brigade crossed the Chaung further south and established itself in the hills five miles north-north-east of Tamandu. 2 (West African) Brigade had reached the Tamandu—An road and established a block at the Me Chaung crossing.

204. It was at this stage that the overall shortage of transport aircraft forced me to intervene and upset the Corps plan. When I issued General Christison with his orders as given in paragraph 193, he had been allotted 130 tons per day of the air supply capacity. But in early March Fourteenth Army was heavily engaged in the Mandalay and Meiktila areas and the continued success of its operations, with Rangoon as the goal, depended largely on increasing its air supply. At the same time, the build-up of supplies at Akyab and Ramree had to be speeded up, if sufficient stocks were to be accumulated on these islands,