the date of our intended attack, and to allow the forward dumping programme to continue unhindered. 5th Indian Division was to arrive in accordance with the following programme. Artillery—one gun per Battery and reconnaissance parties would arrive on 8th March; the remainder, 12th March. Infantry—the reconnaissance parties and one battalion from the leading infantry brigade on 10th March; balance of the leading infantry brigade on 11th March, and the second and third infantry brigades on the 13th and 15th March respectively. By this time 9th Indian Infantry Brigade Group from Gallabat, less one company of 3/12 Frontier Force Regiment and 21 Field Company, had rejoined 5th Indian Division from Gedaref. Certain Sappers and Miners companies were also sent forward in advance of 5th Indian Division for essential work in the forward area and the making of an advanced landing ground.

Administrative Arrangements.

Administrative layout was to remain on a divisional basis: 4th Indian Division's installations north of the road, 5th Indian Division's south of the road. An exception was made to this in the case of medical arrangements, in which 5th Indian Division was superimposed on 4th Indian Division, co-ordinated by A.D.M.S. 5th Indian Division.

By 8th March the 4th Indian Divisional plan was taking shape. It consisted of two attacks known as the right and left attacks. The right attack was to be carried out by 11th Indian Infantry Brigade, which had two additional battalions placed under its command. These were 1 Royal Fusiliers, borrowed from 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, and 2/5 Mahratta Light Infantry, which had been the L. of C. Battalion in the Sudan. The attack was to be on a three battalion front. Right—2 Camerons on M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak; centre—1/6 Rajputana Rifles on to Saddle and Hogs Back; on the left 2/5 Mahratta Light Infantry on Flat Top Hill. 1 Royal Fusiliers and 4/6 Rajputana Rifles were to hold a firm base on Cameron Ridge and Rajputana Ridge. The role of these two battalions was in reality a reserve under the Divisional Commander for exploiting from M. Sanchil to Keren in conformity with the success gained by 5th Indian Division.

In the left attack 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, less 1 Royal Fusiliers plus 51 Commando, was to secure the left flank of 11th Indian Infantry Brigade from counter-attacks from the M. Amba direction by taking the three ring contours, known as left, centre and right bumps, of M. Samanna.

Artillery.

The artillery programme for 4th Indian Division was almost ready, and involved dumping 300 rounds per gun at the gun positions, with another 450 rounds per gun readily available behind. The provisional estimate for the 5th Indian Division attack was 600 rounds a gun.

5th Indian Division's Plan.

After reconnaissance 5th Indian Division was directed to capture M. Zeban by way of Fort Dologorodoc. This objective, though most formidable, had certain advantages. The attack was to be in close co-operation with 4th Indian Division; each division could effectively help the other. The time-lag between the two attacks could be reduced to a minimum as the gunner problem of switching from support of 4th Indian Division to support of 5th Indian Division was comparatively simple. These objectives were within range of almost all the artillery of both divisions without guns having to be moved. The reduction of the time between the attacks automatically relieved the strain on 4th Indian Division which was bound to be counter-attacked strongly shortly after reaching its objectives.

The alternative was to attempt once again to force the Acqua Gap. Success in this area offered the chance of cutting-off and capturing the greater part of the Keren garrison. Its disadvantages were that the two divisions could not effectively support each other; the artillery problem was intensified and 5th Indian Division would not get the benefit of all the 4th Indian Division's guns; maintenance of a division through the bottleneck between Fort Dologorodoc and the bridge would be liable to enemy interference; there was no chance of getting the tanks and carriers up the Acqua Gap; against a numerically superior enemy there was a chance that both attacks would fail from lack of weight. Although a drive through the Dongolaas Gorge would not succeed in cutting-off so many of the enemy forces, it offered a better chance of opening the road to Asmara.

The task of assaulting Fort Dologorodoc was given to 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, and 2 Highland Light Infantry from 10th Indian Infantry Brigade was placed under its command. 29th Indian Infantry Brigade was initially concentrated close behind 9th Indian Infantry Brigade, and was to be prepared to go through and capture M. Zeban, and thence onwards to M. Canabai. Exploitation eastwards over Falestoh Col between M. Falestoh and M. Zeban was to be limited to point 1565.

Effect on 4th Indian Division Plan.

The decision to attack Fort Dologorodoc enabled Commander 4th Indian Division to place the two battalions holding Cameron Ridge and Rajputana Ridge at the disposal of Commander 11th Indian Infantry Brigade, to give the assault on M. Sanchil and Brigs Peak a greater chance of success. Should M. Sanchil not be captured, enemy fire from there would have a serious effect on 9th Indian Infantry Brigade on Fort Dologorodoc.

R.A.F.

In support of these operations, one squadron and one flight of Army Co-operation aircraft were available, based on the main landing ground at Agordat, and using the advanced landing ground at Force Headquarters to keep in the closest touch with the tactical situation. Three bomber and one fighter squadrons and a fighter flight were kept under direct control of the Air Officer Commanding. These formations were warned that detachments of bombers and fighters might be called for in close support of ground troops. For the day of the attack, six sorties were placed at the disposal of C.R.A.'s, and six sorties were retained for tactical reconnaissance.

Operations on 15th March.

Zero hour for the 4th Indian Divisional attack was timed for 0700 hours 15th March. Sunrise