

shall, therefore, throughout this Despatch briefly describe the Allied progress in North Burma.

24. Early in July, after the successful clearing of the Kamaing-Mogaung road, there were signs that the enemy intended to fight successive delaying actions in Taungni and Pinbaw, and then make a determined stand at Hopin. The Myitkyina garrison seemed likely to fight it out, but no major reinforcements were being sent to its assistance. As I have already said, the task allotted to Northern Combat Area Command was to capture the Mogaung-Myitkyina area and to establish an outpost line to cover it.

25. Concurrently with General Slim's Operation Instruction, General Stilwell issued orders to the Mogaung and Myitkyina Task Forces. The former, composed of 22 and 38 Chinese Divisions, with parts of 50 Chinese Division and Special Force, subsequently joined by 36 British Division, was to capture the area from Lonkin to Taungni. The latter, comprising parts of 30 and 14 Chinese Divisions, a United States regiment, and a small detachment of Special Force, was to capture the area from Talawgyi to Seniku.

#### *Operations in July.*

26. 15 Indian Corps. Operations in Arakan during the month were confined to active patrolling in which several very successful small actions were fought. Some idea of the difficult conditions on this front can be gathered from the fact that the weekly rainfall sometimes exceeded 20 inches.

27. 4 Corps—Bishenpur Area. By the end of June, 5 Indian Division had finished mopping up on both sides of the southern sector of the Kohima-Imphal road and had concentrated at Imphal, except for one brigade which had been sent to join 17 Indian Light Division in its operations in the Bishenpur area. During the first week in July these two Divisions cleared the area north of the Silchar-Bishenpur track. To the south, enemy resistance showed signs of weakening—many positions being evacuated in the face of our continued frontal pressure and attacks against his flanks. 33 Japanese Division was, however, reinforced by tanks and a composite regiment drawn from their 53 and 54 Divisions and made a determined stand between the 12th and the 16th July on hills overlooking the track from the south. After sharp fighting, 5 Indian Division pressed southwards through these hills and reached an area three miles west of Ningthoukhong. By the 18th, one brigade had established itself three miles west of Milestone 24 on the Tiddim road.

28. In the meantime, 17 Indian Light Division was attacking strongly held Japanese positions about Ningthoukhong. The enemy held these till the 16th, when, assisted by the operations of 5 Indian Division, 17 Indian Light Division captured the village. The enemy were closely pursued and we captured much equipment, including 12 tanks. By the 18th, we were following a retreating enemy, having regained four miles of the Tiddim road. On this date, 5 Indian Division assumed responsibility for operations on the Tiddim road with one brigade of 17 Indian Light Division under command. The remainder of 17 Indian Division was withdrawn into reserve.

29. The Japanese withdrawal down the Tiddim road was steadily and successfully pressed. By the 25th July the enemy had been driven out of the Imphal Plain and, by the 1st August, a flanking movement to the west reached the road at Milestone 44.

Thus, by the end of July, 20 miles of the Tiddim road had been recovered, with considerable loss to the enemy in men and material: captured equipment included 21 tanks. The advance had been made in spite of the destruction of bridges and the laying of minefields and booby traps. The enemy was much helped by continual heavy rain, which turned every stream into a serious obstacle and greatly increased the difficulties of movement off the road.

30. 33 Corps—Ukhrul Sector. During the first few days of July responsibilities for the protection of the line of communication, the defence of Imphal, the mopping up of enemy parties and operations for the capture of Ukhrul were redistributed between 4 and 33 Corps. 33 Corps had already taken over from 4 Corps the responsibility for operations against Ukhrul on the 30th June, and 20 Indian Division came under its command.

31. Until the 4th July 2 British Division continued to mop up the remaining parties of the enemy who were still resisting fiercely in certain areas to the east and west of the main road. With the eastward advance on Ukhrul in full swing, however, operations on the Kohima-Imphal road ceased, and 2 British Division, less one brigade which was operating in the Palel-Tamu sector under 23 Indian Division, was disposed for the protection of the main road.

32. At the beginning of July, the two brigades of 7 Indian Division, which were advancing towards Ukhrul from the west, made good progress in spite of bad weather, which greatly handicapped not only the marching men but also the air supply on which they depended. It was said at the time that for every two feet a man climbed up the muddy slippery tracks he slid back one. On the 2nd July, they made contact with 23 L.R.P. Brigade, which was advancing from the north to attack Ukhrul and block the enemy's escape to the east. The third brigade of 7 Indian Division moved back to Kohima, which was to be its rest area.

33. Ukhrul was captured on the 3rd July, but opposition in the area was by no means at an end, as the Japanese continued to hold out in strongly entrenched positions, north, south and west of the village. On the 6th one brigade of 7 Indian Division captured the highest hill feature north of Ukhrul while the other moved south and south-east to block all exits. The other enemy positions were assaulted successively and, by the 10th July, all resistance had been overcome.

34. 7 Indian Division continued its advance along the Ukhrul-Humine track, enemy road blocks being passed and left for troops in rear to remove. By the 17th, our leading troops had reached Milestone 22, four miles south of Maoku. The Division was then withdrawn to rest at Kohima and was relieved by 4 Brigade of 2 British Division.