

Taungdwingyi would have opened the right flank and rear of the Chinese Fifth Army, whose advanced troops were still south of Pyinmana, and it would also have uncovered the communications of the Imperial Forces through Mandalay.

On the 12th April therefore, I ordered 1 Burcorps to hold Taungdwingyi at all costs. This order was received at Headquarters 1 Burcorps on the morning of the 13th April and orders were then issued for the 48 Brigade and the 7 Hussars to come under command of the 17 Division and 7 Armoured Brigade less one regiment to come under command 1 Burma Division. Enemy pressure on the 1 Burma Division south of Magwe continued on the 13th and 14th and this caused a wide gap to be opened between the two Divisions. Moving across country the enemy pushed into this gap threatening the oilfields. Orders for the destruction of the Yenangyaung oilfields were issued on the night of the 14th April and the denial scheme was successfully carried out during the following 48 hours. It required two full daylight hours to complete the destruction ending with the blowing of the power house, which took place when the Japanese were already in the outskirts of Yenangyaung.

By the 16th April 1 Burma Division, less 2 Burma Brigade on the right bank of the Irrawaddy, had withdrawn to Kadaung Chaung, seventeen miles south of Yenangyaung. The 2 K.O.Y.L.I. who had been cut off in Myingun fought their way out and rejoined their Division.

33. *The Fight at Yenangyaung.* On the 17th April the enemy established road blocks north and south of the Pinchaung, immediately north of Yenangyaung, cutting off 1 Burma Division and some of the Corps Troops. The 2 Royal Tanks and Corps Troops fought their way out north but, by the time 1 Burma Division reached Yenangyaung on the night of the 17th April, the road blocks had been re-established. After this action the greater number of the enemy dead were found to be clad in khaki uniforms and wearing felt hats of the type used by Gurkha and Burma Rifle units.

34. Meanwhile the 113 Regiment of the Chinese 38 Division had been moved from Mandalay to Kyaukpadaung and placed under command 1 Burcorps. On the morning of the 18th April this Regiment and the 2 Royal Tanks attacked the enemy road block north of the Pinchaung, but the attack went wide and failed to dislodge the enemy. An attack by 1 Burma Division failed to clear the block to the south. On the evening of the 18th April information was received that an enemy column was moving north by Magwe. During this time the 17 Division and 7 Hussars holding Taungdwingyi and Natmawk were unmolested by the enemy.

35. On the 16th and 17th April, I visited Corps Headquarters and Headquarters of the Chinese Armies at Pyawbwe. At this time, and indeed previously, I impressed on General Stilwell the importance of Meiktila as a big centre of communications and I promised that, if possible, I would make the 7 Armoured Brigade available for the defence of this place. Arrangements had already been put in hand to dump at Meiktila stocks of 87 octane spirit and lubricants and a dump of supplies had already

been formed there since the 17 Division had, at this time, to be supplied through Meiktila and Pyawbwe.

At our meeting on the 17th April, General Stilwell discussed with me his plan for a counter attack south of Pyinmana and I promised to make the 7 Hussars available to assist the Chinese in this operation and orders were issued for them to be prepared to move to Pyawbwe. On the 18th April it became clear to me that the projected Chinese counter attack would not take place and, in view of the situation on the Irrawaddy front, and in the Shan States, I again visited General Stilwell's Headquarters at Pyawbwe on the 19th, having arranged to meet the Commander 1 Burcorps there. At this meeting, I stressed the importance of holding strongly the centres of communication from Chauk to Kyaukpadaung-Meiktila-Thazi. General Stilwell and I were in full agreement and it was arranged that the whole of the 38 Chinese Division should be placed under the command of 1 Burcorps.

36. We then discussed plans for offensive action. The deep penetration made by the Japanese 33 Division at Yenangyaung appeared to present a favourable opportunity for a counter stroke but, owing to the nature and extent of the country, this was beyond the capacity of 1 Burcorps alone, as considerable forces were required merely to find the enemy should he elect to move into the jungle. General Stilwell agreed to make available for a counter stroke the 200 Chinese Division and one regiment of the 22 Division in addition to the 38 Division, and arrangements were made to set in motion the moves of these formations towards Kyaukpadaung and Ywamun as soon as possible. Having made these arrangements I accompanied the Commander 1 Burcorps to his Headquarters between Meiktila and Kyaukpadaung. On arrival there I found that the attacks of the 113 Chinese Regiment and the 2 Royal Tanks had succeeded in clearing the northern bank of the Pinchaung but that 1 Burma Division had been unable to clear the Japanese from the south bank. 1 Burma Division were being attacked by an enemy column which had moved north from Magwe and columns sent out by the 17 Division from Taungdwingyi and Natmawk had not succeeded in relieving the pressure. I told the Corps Commander that 1 Burma Division must fight its way out and that, if necessary, it would have to abandon its wheeled transport. Commander 1 Burcorps issued orders to this effect on the evening of the 19th and by the morning of the 20th 1 Burma Division had succeeded in extricating itself with the loss of a great part of its M.T. On the 21st April, 113 Chinese Regiment crossed the Pinchaung and entered the outskirts of Yenangyaung where it inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy.

37. *Operations on the Chinese Front.* At this point it is necessary to turn to the events on the Chinese front east of the Pegu Yomas. After the withdrawal of the Chinese 200 Division from Toungoo on the 1st April, the situation on the Fifth Army front was as follows:—

- the 22 Division at Yedashe,
- the 96 Division in the area Pyinmana,
- the 200 Division in the area Yezin with Fifth Army Headquarters at Pyawbwe.