

(c) The Sittaung track from Pael to the Chindwin was not a road at all. It was passable for jeeps and 4 × 4 vehicles as far as the Yu River. There a ferry, beyond which only pack or porter transport could be used, was established. Owing to the amount of blasting which would have been necessary, it was not possible to clear a track with bulldozers.

(d) The road to Tiddim was worse, if possible, than the Kabaw Valley road. It was commanded on either side by scrub-covered hills up to 8,000 feet, and some of the more mountainous sections resembled toboggan runs down which vehicles slid on mud instead of snow.

These conditions must be remembered when judging the speed of our advances along the Tiddim road and the Kabaw Valley. We had to overcome not only a determined enemy, but Napoleon's fourth element.

*Situation on the 22nd June and subsequent operations.*

9. (a) *Arakan. 15 Indian Corps (Lieut.-General A. F. P. Christison\*)*.

(i) 25 Indian Division: Maungdaw - Tunnels Area.

(ii) 26 Indian Division:

One Brigade—Bawli Bazaar - Goppe Bazaar - Taung Bazaar.

One Brigade—Taungbro - Tumbru.

One Brigade—Cox's Bazaar.

(iii) 81 (West African) Division:

Divisional H.Q. and one brigade—Chiringa.

One brigade taking up new positions to protect the eastern approaches of the Chiringa - Singpa track, with detachments on the Sangu River to block enemy attempts to penetrate into that area.

(b) *Imphal Front (4 and 33 Corps). 4 Corps (Lieut.-General G. A. P. Scoones†)*.

(i) 17 Indian Light Division, with one brigade of 20 Indian Division under command, was engaged in attacking 33 Japanese Division in the Bishenpur area. Two battalions and one mountain battery had cut the enemy's line of communication about Milestone 33 on the Imphal - Tiddim road by making a wide turning movement from the east, and had then driven north to positions four miles south of Bishenpur. This bold attack on the enemy's rear had thrown them into considerable confusion and inflicted heavy casualties.

(ii) While these operations were in progress south of Imphal, 5 Indian Division, which had taken over the area north of Imphal from 17 Indian Light Division, was attacking the enemy on the road to Kohima. After clearing Kanglatongbi it reached Milestone 109, where it made contact with 2 British Division of 33 Corps driving down from the north.

(iii) 20 Indian Division was engaging the enemy in the Ukhrul sector, with one brigade in the area 16 miles west of the village

astride the Japanese communications, and one brigade on the Imphal - Ukhrul road clearing enemy positions about Milestone 17. The third brigade of this Division was with the 17 Indian Light Division. 50 Indian Parachute Brigade (two battalions) was in action south of the Imphal - Ukhrul road, east of Wangjing.

(iv) 23 Indian Division was engaged with the enemy in an area some three miles east and south-east of Pael.

(c) *33 Corps (Lieut.-General M. G. N. Stopford\*)*.

(i) 7 Indian Division, which had been on the left flank of 2 British Division, was, after the junction of 33 and 4 Corps, ordered to move east on Ukhrul.

(ii) 2 British Division and 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade were responsible for the protection of the Kohima - Imphal road south and north of Milestone 79 respectively.

(iii) 23 L.R.P. Brigade (Long-Range Penetration Group) was clearing the tracks leading down to Ukhrul from the north, and cutting the enemy's routes to the east.

10. Although the picture at the end of June was one of Japanese retreat on all sectors of the Imphal front, I must emphasize that our success had only been achieved after hard fighting and severe losses on both sides. Indeed, the Army Commander described it as the bitterest fighting he had seen in this or any other war. Even when it must have been obvious to the Japanese High Command that our communications to Imphal were about to be re-established, they issued orders to their 33 and 15 Divisions that Imphal was to be taken at all costs. We captured the orders in which the Commander, 33 Japanese Division, informed his troops "The fate of the Empire depends on this battle. You will capture Imphal but you will be annihilated". 33 Japanese Division made a series of heavy attacks, but they were met with steady valour by our 17 Indian Division who saw to it that the "annihilation" of the enemy commander's prophecy was fulfilled.

What was left of the enemy's 33 and 15 Divisions was driven into the inhospitable country south of Bishenpur and south-east of Pael. Elements of 15 Japanese Division, however, had reinforced 31 Japanese Division which then attacked in the area between Ukhrul and Imphal. This attack failed.

*The Situation at the End of June.*

11. *North Burma.* 22 Chinese Division, which had captured Kamaing on the 16th June, was continuing its advance southwards in the face of opposition by part of 18 Japanese Division between Kamaing and Mogaung.

77 L.R.P. Brigade (Special Force), assisted by a Chinese regiment, captured Mogaung on the 26th June, the enemy losing severely in men and material, which included some medium artillery. This was a particularly fine action by 77 L.R.P. Brigade against most stubborn resistance by units of 53 Japanese Division. The capture of Mogaung was important, as it opened the way for further operations southward.

\* Now General Sir A. F. Philip Christison, Bart., G.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

† Now General Sir Geoffrey A. P. Scoones, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C.

\* Now General Sir Montagu G. N. Stopford, G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.